

Border Patrol goes double green



Building to be model for energy efficiency

By Aileen B. Flores

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EL PASO — The first U.S. Border Patrol station to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified is strategically located in an area of quick and easy access to the border, said Assistant Patrol Agent in Charge Salvador Zamora.

The new "environmentally friendly" station in Northeast El Paso, at the corner of Gateway Boulevard South and Hondo Pass Drive, is about 95 percent complete and will house 350 agents.

According to Zamora, about 200 vehicles will travel daily in and out of the station using Highway 54 as the main route to Interstate 10, Paisano Drive and the Border Highway.

"Our response time will increase tremendously," he said. "This (land) was free, positioned in a growing area of the Northeast as well as to immediate access to the major roadways of El Paso."

Agents have to take "surface streets" to access the border driving from the actual Border Patrol station on Montana Avenue, he added.

Currently the Border Patrol operates in a 17,000 square-foot building.

The new 54,000 square-foot building will serve as an administrative and processing center where inmates will usually not stay for more than five hours, Zamora said.

Gerry Hayes, president of Castner Heights Neighborhood Association, said neighbors have reported a rise in crime during the past six months, but she is glad that the presence of the agency will increase the level of law enforcement in the area.

The new station will also boost the area's economy as the agency employees consume products from businesses in the Northeast, Hayes said.

The land was provided to the agency by the U.S. Department of Defense, and the \$15.6 million construction contract was awarded in 2006 to Banes General Contractors, a local company.



Photos by Vanessa Monsivales / El Paso Times

Assistant Agent in Charge Salvador Zamora, left, and Patrol Agent in Charge Eniquio Saldívar stand in the processing room of the new Border Patrol Processing Center

in the Northeast. The room features a large skylight that helped to certify the new building as green. The building will be 50 percent more energy efficient than the norm.



Workers put the finishing touches on a skylight at the new Border Patrol facility. The building features skylights and LED lighting, which helped to get the facility certified as green.

Fred Seibert, company's vice president, said the building is about two to three months away from completion. He said more than 60 people are working on the building.

According to agency officials, about 80 percent of all materials are certified recyclable and the station will be 50 percent more energy efficient than a building using standard construction methods.

"Border Patrol goes green again with the first LEED-certified Border Patrol building in the

country" — Zamora said — out of 150 Border Patrol stations in the nation.

Seibert said construction has taken a year longer than expected because of ecological innovations such as the solar panels that are putting in place.

About 40 percent of the materials were purchased within 300 miles of El Paso, he added.

Many residents near the 45-acre site voiced concerns in the past about developing Castner Range.

Zamora said many cac-

tuses were removed before groundbreaking and will be replaced after construction is finished.

"This is not only a building, this is a second home for many of us; we are happy that we're getting a new home in a beautiful location," he said.

Border Patrol officials expect the new station to be finished at the end of May when the agency will celebrate its 85th anniversary.

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Environmentally friendly

The Border Patrol station at the corner of Gateway Boulevard South and Hondo Pass Drive,



will have the first LEED certified Border Patrol building in the country, Assistant Agent in Charge Salvador Zamora said.

► About 80 percent of all materials are LEED certified and recycled.

► The building will be 50 percent more energy efficient than a building using standard construction methods.

► Skylights in certain station areas and sensor lights in every room are planned.

► Solar panels will generate 12 percent of energy yearly.

► Cactus from the site will be replanted.

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Online extra.

► Link to U.S. Customs and Border Protection site