



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Caldwell County breaks ground on new evacuation center**

Construction is officially underway on a new evacuation center in Luling that will provide a place for residents of Caldwell County and surrounding areas to seek shelter during disasters such as severe storms and widespread power outages.

The approximately 45,000-square foot shelter on 20 acres will be located at 13900 N. Magnolia Avenue in Luling, providing easy access to US 183 and I-10. It will initially be able to hold about 360 people during an evacuation and can serve a secondary purpose as a community event center with an approximately 550-person capacity.

The initial phase of the project is being paid for with a \$17.8 million grant awarded in 2021 by the Texas General Land Office. Century Construction Group was chosen in September to serve as general contractor on the project.

Completion of the initial phase is tentatively planned for May 2026.

“The hard work of dedicated Caldwell County employees working closely with a team of seasoned professionals has brought us to where we are now – breaking ground on a center that will provide our community with not only shelter during disasters and recovery efforts but also a place to gather when times are good,” Caldwell County Judge Hoppy Haden said. “We appreciate the hard work of our staff and the support and hours provided by Century

Construction Group, Langford Community Services, Method Architecture, Doucet & Associates, the Texas General Land Office, Housing and Urban Development, IMEG, the City of Luling, Coleman & Associates and Someday Strategies LLC.”

The initial phase of construction will include a main hall, corridor, concourse, restrooms with private shower stalls, office space and a kitchen, with enough capacity to accommodate round banquet tables.

The general contractor, architect and engineer each expressed enthusiasm for the project.

“Century Construction is honored to be part of this exciting project for Caldwell County. This beautifully designed 45,000-square-foot facility will not only serve as a central hub for community events, but also as a shelter for over 500 people during storms,” said Dason Maloney, President of Century Construction Group. “Being a family-owned company that values relationships and community, we are thrilled to help create a space that brings the community together and supports its needs. Working with Caldwell County, Method Architecture, Doucet Engineers, and Langford Community Management Services has been a pleasure, and we look forward to strengthening our partnership as we bring this project to fruition.”

Renee Bean of Method Architecture added: "I've had a wonderful experience working alongside the Caldwell County team to bring this project to fruition. As an architect, it is truly rewarding to engage in projects that result in facilities that serve as valuable assets to the community."

Tracy Bratton, Senior Project Manager for Doucet, said: “It is a pleasure to see this project break ground this morning. It is an honor to be part of this project. Having served as the County’s engineer since 2011, I have seen many highs and lows for the community. This multipurpose facility will host many wonderful community events but, most importantly, will be a much-needed place of refuge as an emergency evacuation center in the event of future natural disasters.”

The second phase could involve adding up to 10 acres of land on the adjacent property for a riding/rodeo arena and show barn that could double as available facilities for potential evacuees with horses and other animals.

Area officials attended a groundbreaking ceremony at the site on Thursday. Some provided statements about the new evacuation center.

**CJ Watts, Mayor, City of Luling:**

*The City of Luling is excited to announce the development of a new emergency evacuation shelter at the north end of the city, made possible through grant funding and a collaborative partnership with Caldwell County. This vital project underscores the City of Luling and Caldwell County’s commitment to the safety and well-being of its residents and the broader region.*

*The idea for the shelter was first proposed by Caldwell County Judge Hoppy Haden and Grants Administrator Dennis Engelke, who identified available grant funding to support an emergency shelter along the Highway 183 corridor. After Mr. Engelke's retirement, Amber Quinley seamlessly took up the mantle, ensuring the project continued to move forward. The collaborative effort between Quinley and the City of Luling's Grant Writer, Christina 'Ari' Arias, has been instrumental in securing and advancing this opportunity for the community.*

*Thanks to the vision of Judge Haden, the dedication of Dennis Engelke and Amber Quinley, and the work of our own grant writer, Christina 'Ari' Arias, we are making significant strides in enhancing Caldwell County's disaster preparedness and infrastructure. This project represents the best of what can be achieved when passionate individuals come together for the good of the community.*

*The emergency shelter will be strategically located along the Highway 183 corridor to maximize accessibility for evacuees and provide a much-needed resource for the area during times of crisis. This shelter is a testament to the power of collaboration and the shared commitment of our local leaders to prioritize the needs of our community.*

*The City of Luling would like to thank Caldwell County and all those involved in making this project possible. We are excited for what is in store for our city and county as we continue to collaborate with future projects.*

**Lew White, Mayor, City of Lockhart:**

*Caldwell County and Lockhart are quickly growing, and the creation of this evacuation center speaks to how well leaders are preparing for the future. We are thankful for the work that Caldwell County and the Texas General Land Office have done to bring this important asset to fruition.*

**Steven Lewis, City Manager, City of Lockhart:**

*There are a wide variety of emergency situations that might require an evacuation of portions of our area. Caldwell County is in a perfect geographical spot to host an evacuation center for both its residents and our neighbors along the coast.*

**Katherine Glaze, Mayor, City of Martindale:**

*The City of Martindale, along with all Caldwell County cities, along the San Marcos River, will be greatly served by the Caldwell County Evacuation center. Hurricane Harvey and the two floods in 2015 showed local government officials what a great need there is for an evacuation center. This marks a significant milestone in the development of the Caldwell County Emergency management team and will help the residents of the City of Martindale.*

**State Rep. Stan Gerdes, 17<sup>th</sup> District of the Texas House of Representatives**

*Today marks a proud moment for Caldwell County as we break ground on the new Evacuation Center. This facility, designed to keep our neighbors safe in times of crisis, will also serve as a hub for fellowship and community - hosting everything from family reunions to local events for our neighbors.*

*The Caldwell County Evacuation Center is a testament to the strength and resilience of our community—coming together to prepare for challenges while celebrating the good times that bind us.*



*TOP: From left, Pct. 3 Commissioner Ed Theriot, Caldwell County Judge Hoppy Haden, Luling Mayor CJ Watts and Pct. 2 Commissioner Rusty Horne turn ceremonial dirt at a groundbreaking ceremony held at the site of the eventual Caldwell County Evacuation Center.*



