

VA to fill even more space here

Veterans Affairs Department already building major clinic

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MetCenter offers 550 acres to office and industrial tenants. The GSA just signed a major lease there, and sources said it's on behalf of the VA.

The U.S. General Services Administration has signed a 10-year lease for 60,000 square feet at MetCenter, Building 5, in Southeast Austin.

The space at 7600 Metropolis Drive near Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is being leased by the GSA to house a back-office function of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, sources said. It's not far from where the VA is building a \$224 million outpatient clinic, which is scheduled to open in 2012 and add roughly 130 jobs in Austin.

That 185,000-square-foot clinic — which the VA said will be the largest of its kind in the country — will replace a 20-year-old clinic in the same area that is three times smaller and employs about 180.

Real estate experts said the 60,000 square feet leased at MetCenter recently could hold about 250 workers, if used traditionally. The value for the 10-year lease is about \$21.1 million, government documents show. Preliminary solicitation documents mandated occupancy by May 3, 2012.

The GSA, which represents federal governmental agencies in lease transactions, was represented by Jones Lang Lasalle's **Brian Weiss** from the firm's public institutions practice in Washington, D.C., and **Kathy Carbonetti** from the firm's Austin office. **Howard Yancy** and **David Sheldon** of Zydeco Development represented the building's owners, MetCenter Partners-8 Ltd. MetCenter is a 550-acre, mixed-use business park.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is the second-largest of the 15 cabinet departments, serving more than 23.4 million veterans. As of September 2008, it employed 278,565 nationwide. The VA estimates there are 120,000 veterans in the Austin area, 30,000 of whom the clinic treats annually.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin