



For Immediate Release

November 19, 2025

Smith County Courthouse Topping Out Ceremony

More than 150 people attended Smith County’s Topping Out Ceremony for the Courthouse Construction Project on Wednesday, November 19.

The ceremony was a celebration marking the placement of the final beam being placed at the highest point of the eight-story construction project.

Stephen Flournoy, the project executive for Hoar Construction, explained the significance of the Topping Out Ceremony, which comes from an ancient Scandinavian practice of placing the highest leafy branch of a tree on top of a new structure. It is a symbol of where the building began and a marker of its completion.

“Today, we place our highest beam and celebrate structural completion; we align ourselves with those of Seventh Century Scandinavia and raise a tree as a symbol for good luck, prosperity and continued growth for this building and its future architects,” he said.

Smith County officials and employees; members of the architect, construction and contractor teams; as well as members of the community, signed the beam before it was hoisted to the very top of the Courthouse with a crane. The tree, and American and Texas flags were placed on top of the beam. That beam will be one of several that hold the dome in place after it is fabricated.

“As we place the topping out beam and celebrate structural completion, we have asked many of you to come alongside us and sign your name to the beam,” Flournoy said. “Your signatures memorialize the countless hours of collaboration, support and teamwork by community leaders, project stakeholders, design team members and the hundreds of men and women who safely put

work in place every day to create a building of this magnitude. A building that will be home for justice in Smith County and a focal point as an important gathering space for our community.”

Flournoy called the courthouse a “generational, transformational project” for Smith County and Downtown Tyler.

“It is our sincere hope that this courthouse will anchor a revitalized downtown and signify prosperity and continued growth for many years to come,” he said.

The event marks a significant milestone in the construction project, which is about at the halfway point. The Courthouse is expected to be open in December 2026.

“This is an impressive facility, but your courthouse is more than just an impressive facility,” Smith County Judge Neal Franklin said. “Above the entry doors of your new courthouse will be the words, ‘Justice, Mercy and Humility’ – a great reminder of the work being done in our justice system in Smith County.”

Franklin introduced students and staff members from Bell Elementary School who attended the event. Smith County has recently become a partner with this elementary school through the new Community Connect program led by the Tyler Area Business Education Council and Tyler ISD.

Bell Elementary Principal Tamara Johnson and a small group of fourth and fifth grade students attended the event and signed the historic beam.

The Courthouse will be 223 feet tall and will have 268,000 occupiable square feet. Here is a breakdown of its eight levels:

- First floor: security check-in, security offices, law library, jury assembly room, District Clerk’s Office.
- Second floor: County Clerk’s Office, Judicial Compliance/Collections Department, Pre-Trial Release Department, interpreter’s office, and attorney conference room.
- Third and fourth floors: four identical courtrooms on each floor for the five district courts and three county courts-at-law.
- Fifth floor: space for four future courtrooms, with one being finished out and serving as a visiting judge’s courtroom until a new full-time court is needed by the county.
- Sixth floor: District Attorney’s Offices and training room.
- Seventh floor: 12th Court of Appeals, plus an unfinished blank space if another court of appeals is needed.
- Below the first floor will be underground parking for judges and law enforcement. It will also have holding cells for in-custody defendants and an underground tunnel to the jail across the street.

The new Courthouse is all about safety. The judges and staff, the public, and in-custody inmates all have different paths of travel and will never meet until they are in the courtroom.