



NEWS RELEASE OC 04-10
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Two Potential Sites Selected for New Santa Rosa Criminal Courthouse

San Francisco—The State Public Works Board (SPWB) today approved selection of two potential sites in Santa Rosa for a proposed new criminal courthouse for the Superior Court of Sonoma County. The two candidate sites, which are currently equally ranked, are:

- Approximately 4.6 acres on the current county administrative campus. The land is currently occupied by the Old Jail, which Sonoma County plans to demolish later this spring, independent of the courthouse project, plus some additional adjacent land. The county also has offered to provide additional parking for court staff and visitors in lots near the proposed site.
- Approximately 2.5 acres in downtown Santa Rosa at 730 Second Street. The site is currently occupied by the main post office. Existing post office operations would need to be relocated and the building demolished for the new courthouse. Options for additional parking near the proposed site are being explored.

The proposed new courthouse will replace the 45-year-old Hall of Justice, which is overcrowded and has significant security deficiencies and other problems. The proposed new building will house 15 courtrooms in a modern, secure facility of approximately 173,500 square feet. It will include features and services that the court is currently unable to provide because of space restrictions, such as appropriately sized jury assembly and deliberation rooms, adequately sized in-custody holding, attorney interview/witness waiting rooms, a children's waiting room, and security entrance screening of all court users.

“Sonoma County is entitled to a safe and secure courthouse,” said Gary Nadler, Presiding Judge, Superior Court of Sonoma County. “This project will ensure that members of the public, court staff, and the judiciary can attend court proceedings without concern for their safety. It will bring jobs to our economy. We are fortunate to have this opportunity and pleased to be proceeding.”

The proposed project, with an estimated total cost of \$240.1 million, is ranked as an “immediate need” on the Judicial Council’s list of capital-outlay projects. It will be funded by Senate Bill 1407, enacted in 2008 to provide up to \$5 billion in funding for 41 new court facilities using court user fees rather than the state’s General Fund.

The proposed project is still in its initial phase. Today’s approval by the SPWB enables the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), which manages the project, to begin formal acquisition negotiations with owners of both potential sites. Before finalizing a site selection in the next several

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months, the AOC plans to hold a public meeting to gather community input on the two alternative sites. The AOC also needs to assess the level of environmental review required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Environmental review will also be subject to public review and comment. Final site selection will be validated by the project advisory group, which includes community leaders from the city, county, and local legal community.

The architecture firm of Richard Meier & Partners Architects has been selected for the proposed project. The firm is known for signature buildings, including the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the new San Jose City Hall, as well as a range of other civic, institutional, corporate, and residential buildings. Once contract negotiations are completed, the architecture firm will begin validating space and functional needs and developing test fits on the proposed sites, but architectural design must wait until a final site is selected and the acquisition is approved by the SPWB.

The courthouse project is scheduled for completion in fall 2014, but the project team will work to accelerate the schedule if possible.

More about the project can be found on the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_sonomasantarosa.htm.

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.