



NEWS RELEASE OC 06-11
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Architect Selected for New Modesto Courthouse

SAN FRANCISCO—The award-winning global architecture firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP (SOM) has been selected to design the new Modesto Courthouse, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) announced today. The proposed project, which is in the earliest phase of site selection, will provide a new 26-courtroom building in Modesto to replace seven court facilities—five in Modesto and two outlying courthouses in Ceres and Turlock. All of these seven facilities have numerous deficiencies. They are overcrowded, lack security features to current standards, and hinder the court’s efficiency by dispersing services over many locations. The proposed project would create a full-service courthouse and consolidate these seven facilities, enabling the court to increase efficiency.

“We appreciated the opportunity to interview several architect firms, most of whom had experience in the design of courthouses,” said Judge Jack M. Jacobson, chair of the Superior Court of Stanislaus County’s courthouse committee. “We are very pleased with the selection of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, and we look forward to working with their team on this important project.”

This project was ranked in the “immediate need” category of the judicial branch’s capital-outlay plan, making it among the branch’s highest-priority infrastructure projects. The project is currently in site acquisition. The local Court, AOC, and a project advisory group that includes members of the local community are reviewing potential sites. Once engaged, the architecture team can begin preliminary space programming, but architectural design must wait until a site is selected and acquisition is approved by the State Public Works Board. Site selection and acquisition typically take a year or more. The project is scheduled for completion in spring 2016.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill is one of the world’s leading architecture, interior design, engineering, and urban planning firms. In April 2010, the firm was ranked as the number one architectural firm in the nation by *ARCHITECT* magazine, which recognized SOM’s high premium on “ecological commitment and design quality.” Among its award-winning projects, SOM has designed the master plan and major buildings on the University of California, Merced campus, and the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. The firm is already working with the AOC on major courthouse projects in San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ukiah.

The new Modesto courthouse is among 41 projects to be funded by Senate Bill 1407, which finances critically needed courthouse construction, renovation, and repair through a portion of judicial branch fees, penalties, and assessments, without reliance on the state’s General Fund. To date, 36 architectural firms have been selected or hired for trial court capital projects in the AOC’s

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courthouse construction program. The overall program will create thousands more jobs in local communities as the projects proceed through design and construction over the next five years.

More information about the project is on the California Courts website at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_modesto.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.