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Three California Courthouse Projects Recognized for Design and Construction Excellence

Fresno Renovation and New Designs for Hollister and Stockton Honored

SAN FRANCISCO—A recently completed courthouse renovation in Fresno and two California courthouses awaiting construction are being recognized for excellence by the design and construction communities. The renovation of the B. F. Sisk Courthouse in downtown Fresno will receive the 2011 Notable Achievement Award from the Western Council of Construction Consumers. Courthouses designed for Hollister and Stockton will be recognized by the American Institute of Architects' Academy of Architecture for Justice (AIA/AAJ) in its *2011 Justice Facilities Review*. According to the organization, the *Justice Facilities Review* selects for recognition projects that “demonstrate quality of form, functionality, and current architectural responses to complex justice design issues.” The AIA made its selections from an international pool of nearly 100 projects.

The new Hollister courthouse, for the Superior Court of San Benito County, will receive a citation—the highest commendation from the AIA/AAJ. The new Hollister courthouse, designed by SmithGroup Architects of San Francisco, will replace the court's inadequate, overcrowded space in a building shared with the county. Although considered modern when constructed in 1962, the existing courthouse does not meet current standards for judicial services.

The planned two-story structure will contain three courtrooms, a jury assembly room that can also function as a hearing room, a centrally located public counter, and family court services; it will provide significant security improvements as well as nearly double the court administration space as in the current building. The design features a distinctive glass-and-steel exterior with a passive solar awning and a courtyard landscaped with native plants. The design incorporates sustainability measures that will qualify it to receive [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design](#) (LEED) Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. The project is awaiting sale of lease-revenue bonds to start construction. A bond sale is expected this fall.

Judge Steven R. Sanders, Superior Court of San Benito County, who has long been involved with the Hollister courthouse project, commented, “The award from the American Institute of Architects is extremely satisfying for two reasons: First, the design is the result of intense collaborative efforts by SmithGroup, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Superior Court, and the local project advisory group; and second, the goal of developing a design for our community that is accessible, functional, and visually appealing appears well on the way to being met.”

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The new Stockton courthouse, for the Superior Court of San Joaquin County, will also be included in *2011 Justice Facilities Review*. The 30-courtroom new Stockton courthouse will have 13 stories, making it the tallest building in Stockton. It will replace the shared-use Stockton Courthouse, constructed in 1963, which lacks adequate security, is overcrowded, and is in very poor physical condition. The architectural design of the new courthouse, by NBBJ Architects of Seattle, balances classical elements and the modern requirements and scale of a major high-rise. The design incorporates sustainability features that will qualify it for a LEED Gold rating. The project is awaiting completion of site acquisition by the end of 2011. Construction is scheduled to start in early 2013.

"We look forward to our new courthouse, which is so desperately needed," said Presiding Judge Robin Appel, Superior Court of San Joaquin County. "We are privileged to have award-winning architects design a building that not only meets our needs for security and modernization but is also beautifully designed."

The [AIA/AAJ](#) will present the citation award in November 2011 at the group's international conference in Los Angeles, at which Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye is scheduled to speak.

The [Western Council of Construction Consumers](#) will give the renovation of the B. F. Sisk Courthouse in downtown Fresno its 2011 Notable Achievement Award. The project, designed by SmithGroup and completed by Turner Construction, converted the vacant former federal courthouse into a 15-courtroom space now used by the Superior Court of Fresno County for its civil and family cases. The renovation included hazardous materials removal, seismic upgrades, and updated security, life-safety, and data systems.

"The B. F. Sisk Courthouse has allowed the court to greatly improve public access to, and operational efficiency within, our civil, probate, and family law departments," said Court Executive Officer Tamara Lynn Beard, Superior Court of Fresno County. "While many of these cases involve volatile and emotional hearings and services, this beautiful and all-in-one service building seems to have a calming influence on all. Many who regularly use the facility have commented about how well this building remodel was designed and constructed. We at the Fresno Superior Court thank the AOC Office of Court Construction and Management and Turner Construction for doing such an outstanding job."

All of these projects exemplify the approach being taken by California's judicial branch to provide local communities in California with safe, secure, accessible courthouses, responsive in serving the needs of the public. These vital infrastructure projects, funded by court users statewide, generate jobs, thereby contributing to local economies and state tax revenues. The program includes replacement or renovation of more than 50 of the most critically needed courthouses in 42 California counties over the next decade. The resulting buildings will improve access to justice and serve as enduring symbols of the importance of the judicial process to democracy.

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More information:

www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-sanbenito.htm

www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-sanjoaquin-stockton.htm

www.courts.ca.gov/facilities-fresno-sisk.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.