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Fact Sheet

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Sonoma-New Santa Rosa Courthouse

The new Santa Rosa Criminal Courthouse proposed for the Superior Court of Sonoma County will replace and consolidate court space in three facilities in the City of Santa Rosa—the Hall of Justice (including self-help center space in the attached Old Jail building), the Main Adult Detention Facility at the county administrative complex, and space in the offsite Family Court Services leased facility. These facilities are overcrowded, physically deficient, and significantly lacking in security features to current standards.

Scope

The proposed project would provide for centralized criminal, traffic, juvenile dependency, and probate proceedings, family court mediation, probate investigative, and drug court support services.

Courtrooms: 15

Square footage: 173,500

Estimated total cost: \$240.1 million

Current status: Site selection

Architect: Richard Meier & Partners Architects

Expected completion: 3Q 2014

This courthouse is ranked as an Immediate Need on the Judicial Council's list of capital-outlay projects. The proposed project will be funded by Senate Bill 1407, which authorized financing from within the judicial branch for up to \$5 billion for 41 critically needed courthouse construction and renovation projects.

Deficiencies of Current Buildings Drive Need

The proposed courthouse will resolve significant problems with security, overcrowding, and other physical deficiencies in the court's current facilities. The current Hall of Justice has numerous security problems, including:

- Lack of separation in movement of in-custody defendants. Detainees are escorted down public hallways as well as internal hallways used by judges and staff. Modern security standards provide separate hallways for in-custody movement.

- Lack of any weapons screening for the entire first floor, putting two courtrooms and all clerks' offices at risk.
- Inadequate or no holding cells for all courtrooms. In-custody defendants are often seated in jury boxes.
- Lack of fire and smoke alarms, limiting the ability to safely evacuate in any type of emergency.
- Lack of secure parking for judicial officers.

The proposed project would enable the court to provide services not currently possible due to space restrictions, including appropriately sized jury assembly and deliberation rooms, attorney interview/witness waiting rooms, a children's waiting room, and security (entrance) screening of all court users. It would also provide courtrooms large enough to accommodate multi-defendant trials without crowding the gallery area, a current problem that increases security risks.



Inadequate Security Screening Stations Create Long Lines for Access to Second-Floor Courtrooms, Inconveniencing the Public

The proposed project would also create operational efficiencies and ongoing savings by consolidating current court services and eliminating a leased facility. In addition, the project will provide site capacity for a future building addition to accommodate two planned new judgeships.

Local Government Collaboration

Both the County of Sonoma and the City of Santa Rosa are collaborating with the state Administrative Office of the Courts, which is responsible for the project, in identifying potential economic opportunities such as a land donation or a below-market cost for land acquisition.

Senate Bill 1407 Funds Critically Needed Courthouse Construction

This project is funded by SB 1407, landmark legislation signed in 2008 that launched an unprecedented courthouse rebuilding program in California. The law paved the way for up to \$5 billion in new courthouse construction and renovation projects, funded directly by judicial branch revenues or financed through lease-revenue bonds. The law created a revenue stream from court fees, penalties, and assessments to finance these projects, ensuring that they would be paid for from within the judicial branch rather than drawing on the state's general fund.

Changes in SB 1407 funding could delay this project, prolonging security hazards and inconvenience to the public posed by deficiencies in the current buildings, escalating costs, and squandering local economic stimulus opportunities for job creation, growth, and retention. A new construction project of this magnitude is estimated to generate more than 5,800 direct and indirect jobs.

The Judicial Branch Facilities Program

The Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002 gave the judicial branch the responsibility to plan, acquire, design, build, operate, and maintain all court facilities transferred to the state. The Judicial Council has assigned these responsibilities to the AOC, through its Office of Court Construction and Management (OCCM). OCCM manages day-to-day operations and maintenance and facility modifications for more than 19 million square feet in approximately 450 buildings. The current capital program includes more than 50 courthouse projects, with an estimated total cost of over \$6.5 billion.

More Information

Project Web Page:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_sonomasantarosa.htm

Project Feasibility Report:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/documents/bfr-sonoma.pdf

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