



NEWS RELEASE OC 21-11
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Potential Site Approved for New Placerville Courthouse

SAN FRANCISCO—The State Public Works Board (SPWB) today approved selection of a potential site for the proposed new courthouse in Placerville for the Superior Court of El Dorado County. The site, among a number of sites currently under consideration, is approximately 6 acres owned by El Dorado County adjacent to the county jail on Forni Road.

Today's approval is the result of an ongoing site selection process conducted by the state Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), which is managing the courthouse project, with input from a project advisory group composed of local citizens and officials from the Superior Court of El Dorado County. The Judicial Council's site selection policy requires the AOC to submit at least two sites to the SPWB for approval, so other potential sites are still being considered.

"We are glad that progress is being made in this on-going project. This new courthouse will allow the court to provide better service to the community and give the citizens greater access to justice while streamlining the court's operations," said Tania G. Ugrin-Capobianco, Court Executive Officer, on behalf of the El Dorado Superior Court Executive Committee.

Today's approval enables the AOC to undertake further due diligence and begin formal negotiations with the county over acquisition costs as well as such issues as utilities, road improvements, and emergency access at the potential site. The AOC will also conduct an environmental review as required under the California Environmental Quality Act. The AOC expects to finalize site selection later this year and acquire a site by year's end.

The proposed new courthouse would replace the court space in two inadequate facilities: the Placerville Main Street branch, built in 1913, and the Placerville Building C branch in the county government center. Both buildings lack sufficient security and other necessary facilities. The Main Street Branch has no jury assembly room, so prospective jurors must gather and wait in hallways. The building also lacks holding cells, so in-custody defendants are held in jury deliberation rooms. Building C has no security screening for one courtroom, lacks separate hallways for in-custody defendants, and has only two single-person holding cells.

The proposed new building would house six courtrooms with room to add two more courtrooms to accommodate the court's projected needs and plans. The project is funded by Senate Bill 1407, enacted in 2008 to provide up to \$5 billion in funding for 41 new and renovated courthouses using court user fees rather than the state's General Fund.

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The architecture firm of Dreyfuss & Blackford has been selected to design the new Placerville courthouse. However, architectural design must await final site acquisition approval by the SPWB. The courthouse project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2014.

More about the project can be found on the California Courts website at www.courts.ca.gov/2815.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.