



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF MONTEREY

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PRESS RELEASE

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MONTEREY COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT UPDATE ON NEW COURTHOUSE PROJECTS

Monterey County Superior Court has submitted recommendations to the Judicial Council of California (JCC) asking the Council to approve construction of two courthouses, one in Greenfield to serve South County residents and one in the former Ft. Ord to replace the current courthouse located in Monterey.

The proposal is the result of months of studies, conversations and investigations regarding how to best serve the needs of all Monterey County residents, while building a court system for the 21st century.

The need to replace the Monterey courthouse became a priority after the Judicial Council issued a study in the fall of 2017 ranking the facility as one of the most seismically dangerous courthouses in the state. With more than 60 employees and hundreds of jurors, litigants and attorneys conducting business every day, court leadership is obligated to seek a safe replacement. In addition to the seismic vulnerabilities, the building lacks a fire suppression system, contains asbestos, and poses other access to justice issues. The Ft. Ord courthouse will be the most cost-effective way to remedy these safety and access issues, and at the same time move the courthouse closer to the population centers.

With seven courtrooms, the proposed Monterey replacement will allow the court to consolidate family law services, currently spread between Salinas, Marina and Monterey, enabling litigants to resolve all family law matters in one location. This courthouse will also house the civil litigation courtrooms, including probate.

The proposed Greenfield courthouse will include one full-time courtroom for criminal matters, self-help services and one "courtroom of the future". For the first time in the Monterey Court history, residents in South County would have access to a full complement of legal services locally available. These services would include access to family law, probate, civil, traffic court, small claims, and Self-Help Services.

Both proposed courthouses will incorporate the latest technology to help residents and litigants access services remotely as well as in person.

This proposal by the court is the first step in a process initiated by the Judicial Council. The last time the JCC conducted such a process was more than a decade ago. At that time, the JCC ranked the Monterey Superior Court's proposal for a Greenfield courthouse (to replace the old King City facility) as a priority. Construction was to start in 2013, but funding was eliminated during the state budget crisis.

In early 2019, all superior courts were directed by the state legislature to conduct new evaluations of need, based on current data. (See SB 847. The legislature directed the courts to re-evaluate the needs based on the criteria dictated in SB 847.) In response to this mandate, the Monterey County Superior Court began developing a Facility Plan which has been presented to the JCC. The JCC will consider the Monterey Court projects along with the proposed projects from 57 other counties with similar needs. The JCC will then determine the priority ranking of each courthouse. Decisions expected in the fall of this year will determine which projects receive priority.

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