



New Yolo County courthouse could be tallest building in Woodland

By KATHERINE JARVIS / Daily Democrat

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The new Yolo Superior Courthouse could be the tallest building in Woodland when its construction is complete.

While designs have not been finalized, Assistant Court Executive Officer Shawn Landry said proposals slate the courthouse to be built five stories tall. The site, next to the three-story Wiseman building at Sixth and Main streets, was approved March 11.

"We want to make sure it fits into the fabric of the Woodland community," Landry said.

Yolo Superior Court Presiding Judge Dave Rosenberg said it has to be a "notable building."

"You just know it's the courthouse like driving by here," he said, referring to the current building on Court Street.

The new courthouse will hold all 14 courtrooms in one building, rather than in six separate buildings, Rosenberg said. The courtrooms in the current building are about half of the size of a standard courtroom.

"It gives us room to do things correctly," Rosenberg said.

That also includes security. For the main courthouse, there is only one lane for the metal detector. In the new building, there will be three to four lanes of security, since it will be consolidated from multiple facilities.

At the current facilities, inmates go through the courthouse, alongside court employees, the public and witnesses. In the future building, there will be three separate paths for judicial staff, the public and

in-custody defendants.

Defendants will not be coming from the outside into the courthouse

as they do now either. Rosenberg said there is a proposal to use the basement as a garage. The bus carrying inmates could park there, as could judges to provide for extra security.

The basement may also have holding cells that would be linked to an elevator system, enabling defendants to go directly to the courtrooms on the floors above, Rosenberg said. The holding cells are proposed to have restrooms, unlike the current cells.

Jim Perry, Yolo court executive officer, said the first floor would have the "majority of services for everyone." This would include traffic court, small claims courts and other facilities.

Rosenberg said the second floor as proposed would have family and juvenile courts, including rooms for counseling and mediation.

Floors three through five would have courtrooms with four courtrooms per floor. There would be offices on each floor for court employees and judges.

Rosenberg said they want "as high of a building" as can be built to provide for growth.

"We want to have a plan for the future," he said.



Rosenberg noted that too often state buildings are built for today and not for 10 years from now when more space might be needed. He said the court could need 18 courtrooms in 10 years, up from the existing 14.

"By building up, I think we allow the most flexibility," he said.

Perry said 350,000 people come through the courthouse doors each year, which is about 150,000 more than Yolo County's population.

This number includes thousands of people who come to the courthouse for jury duty.

Perry said the current jury room can accommodate about 110 people and this is "not an adequate place" for potential jurors. A typical jury panel is between 60 and 65 people before it is reduced.

"We need to be able to seat 300 to 400 folks," he said. In the future, "they'll be able to come in and be comfortable."

Parking is also an issue for people attending court. Perry said a piece of property is being bought that will have room for 250 spaces. In addition to staff and street parking, 435 parking spots will be available.

"It will be a much better parking situation," Rosenberg said.

To accommodate the traffic, a new traffic signal is being proposed at the intersection of Fifth and Main streets.

More detailed information regarding the layout and design of the building should be available in coming months.

"In the next year, you're going to see what the inside looks like," Perry said.

Design is expected to proceed through 2012, with construction scheduled to start in early 2013. The courthouse project, with an estimated cost of \$165.3 million, is scheduled for completion in late 2014 or early 2015.

Rosenberg said the State Court Facilities Construction Fund helps build courthouse projects throughout the state. The fund comes from a \$30

fee for each count a defendant is convicted.