

denver and the west

Designs for new Colorado Justice Center released

By Mike McPhee
The Denver Post

Posted: 02/02/2010 01:00:00 AM MST

Updated: 02/02/2010 06:07:34 AM MST



In a model photo, the plans for the new Justice Center show the courtroom building's pedestrian entrance off East 14th Avenue and the 12-story judicial office building to the south. (Jason A. Knowles, Fentress Architects)

Preliminary designs of the state's new Justice Center were released Monday, showing a neoclassical, four-story courtroom building

linked to a 12-story office building.

The 150,000-square-foot courtroom building will have a curved pedestrian entrance facing 14th Avenue.

Visitors will enter through a four-column portico into a glass-domed atrium, with glass walls facing northeast for a view of the state Capitol.

"It's a grand space with a sense of dignity, acknowledging the relationship of the judicial to the executive and legislative branches in the statehouse," said architect Martin Eiss, a key member of the design team at Fentress Architects.

Just south of the courtroom building will sit a 12-story judicial office building, done in the same colors and materials as the courthouse but with more of an efficient, boxy feeling with fewer details and smaller windows.

The intent is to have both buildings certified as LEED-Gold — a rating given to buildings that meet new criteria for energy-efficiency and smaller impact on the environment. Gold is the third-highest of four ratings.

The ambitious plan to centralize and modernize the state's judicial branch has been six years in the making. It will involve nearly two full city blocks.

Based on a 100-year growth plan, the judicial branch — including courtrooms and office

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

building — will occupy the entire block bounded by Broadway and Lincoln Street between East 13th and East 14th avenues.

Many state offices now scattered around downtown Denver and paying market rent will move to the 450,000-square-foot office building. Included will be the Colorado attorney general's office, the public defender's office, the court administrator and others.

The plan forced the Colorado History Museum to move one block south from its current location to the southern half of the block bounded between East 12th and East 13th avenues, Broadway and Lincoln.

The blue-glassed 1290 Broadway Building occupies the northern half of that block.

Also included in the project will be a new 325-space parking garage to be built between the 1290 Broadway Building and the new history museum.

The entire project, valued at roughly \$368 million, is expected to generate more than 2,000 "direct" jobs, mostly well-paid construction jobs.

Not a dollar of taxes or general funds will be spent on the project, said State Court Administrator Gerald Marroney.

The entire project already has been funded through the sale of tax-exempt bonds and low-interest certificates of participation. The bonds

are amortized for 37 years and will be paid entirely by court fees, which soon will be increased; office rents paid by state agencies who will become tenants; and gambling revenues already apportioned to the history museum, said Bill Mosher of Trammel Crowe, the project manager.

The museum will be out of its current home by the end of April and expects to occupy its new, \$110 million home by early 2012. Construction is underway.

The two appeals courts are in the process of moving out of their current home into temporary quarters and courtrooms in The Denver Post building at Colfax Avenue and Broadway.

Demolition of the court building and the museum is scheduled to begin in May and will take as long as three months because a large amount of the rubble will be recycled. Construction should begin in September and is scheduled to be completed by winter of 2013.

The judicial center, which will be named the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Complex, is estimated to cost \$259 million.

Fentress Architects, which designed Denver International Airport, is the lead architectural firm. Bill Mosher of Trammel-Crow is the project manager, and MA Mortenson Co., which built Coors Field, is the general contractor.

Mike McPhee: 303-954-1409 or