



**County Executive Office**

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**NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Board Agenda Memo**

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**MEETING DATE:** May 28, 2024

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Alison Lehman, CEO

**SUBJECT:** Resolution approving execution of a Professional Services Contract between the County of Nevada and Nelco Architecture, Inc. dba Nelson for a highest and best use study for the potential re-use of the Nevada County Courthouse for a maximum contract amount of \$295,000 and directing the Auditor-Controller to amend the Fiscal Year 2023-24 County Executive Office budget (4/5 affirmative vote required).

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt the attached Resolution to contract for a highest and best use study for the potential re-use of the Nevada County Courthouse.

**FUNDING:**

The contract in an amount not to exceed \$295,000 is to be funded by American Rescue Plan Act dollars, as approved by the Board of Supervisors in the 2023 Revised ARPA Expenditure Plan (Resolution 23-485). A budget amendment is included for approval. There is no impact to the General Fund.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Judicial Council of California (JCC) has decided to build a new Courthouse in a new location and are currently in the process of site selection in the greater Nevada City area. Under the current timeline, construction of a new courthouse could begin in 2026, with a 2028 move-in date.

It is timely for the County, which has a 49% stake in the existing Nevada County Courthouse located in downtown Nevada City (the State owns the balance), to engage in partnership with the City of Nevada City and other key stakeholders to ensure the planning for the reuse of the facility benefits the community.

The County seeks to identify realistic reuse plans for the facility (including the development of the surface parking area adjacent to the Courthouse). The reuse plan would need to address the community's architectural and design concerns, including the desire to preserve the historic facade and other building elements.

Several ideas have been raised to date including affordable/workforce housing, a hotel, an educational use (e.g. arts college, law school), cultural uses (e.g. museum, gallery) in addition to a potential demolition of parts of the structure to create municipal parking, a public park, etc.

The County is commissioning a "highest and best use" study to determine alternative and realistic reuse options. The study should include:

1. an assessment of the building's condition
2. an assessment of the site's potential for development
3. an outreach and education program that engages the community in the identification of preferred re-use options
4. recommendations for the "highest and best" potential uses of the property
5. a financial study to determine costs associated with reuse, and identification of potential funding sources

The current building offers many challenges to a potential developer including severe safety concerns associated with seismic deficiencies and no sprinkler system.

The County issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the "Nevada County Courthouse Highest and Best Use Study" (RFP No. 179046) in October 2023 and received four qualified submittals in January 2024. The scoring committee included County staff, Nevada City staff, and a resident member selected by the Joint County Courthouse Re-Use Committee (co-chaired by Supervisor Hall and Mayor Fernandez). The committee ranked the four submittals and held in-person interviews with the top two in March 2024 and determined Nelson to be the top ranked firm to work with the County for this project.

Nelson's full scope of work is in Exhibit A of the attached contract. Key elements include:

- Summary of known constraints (e.g., Architecture, Historic Architecture, MEP, Structural, HazMat, Facility Conditions, Civil, Traffic Analysis, Economic Impact)
- Convene Steering Committee of key County and City leaders to lead the process (e.g., review big-picture goals, define what success looks like, and develop the criteria to evaluate the various options)
- Develop a Community and Stakeholder Outreach Engagement Plan featuring community meetings, focus group sessions, and stake holder interviews.
- Prepare real estate market overview to identify viable uses and eliminate any uses that would not have sufficient market support.
- Prepare a final report with three viable concept options and a final recommendation as to the facility's "highest and best use."

Item Initiated by: Caleb Dardick, Assistant County Executive Officer



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Approved by:        Alison Lehman, County Executive Officer