

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Judicial Council of California New Nevada City Courthouse Project

Date: March 11, 2026

To: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Judicial Council of California New Nevada City Courthouse Project

The Judicial Council of California (Judicial Council) will be the lead agency to certify an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") compliant with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") for the proposed Judicial Council New Nevada City Courthouse Project (also referred to as "the Project", "the Proposed Project", or "Project Site"). In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, this Notice of Preparation ("NOP") provides the Project location, brief Project description, and the probable environmental effects from the Project. This NOP also provides a summary of the anticipated CEQA process for the Project.

The purpose of this NOP is to provide an opportunity to comment on the scope and proposed content of the EIR. The Judicial Council invites Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations to provide information relevant to the analysis of environmental resources in the forthcoming EIR. Specifically, input is requested on:

1. Scope of Environmental Analysis – guidance on the scope of analysis for this EIR, including identification of specific issues that will require closer study due to the location, scale, and character of the Project;
2. Alternatives – suggestions for alternatives to the Proposed Project that could potentially reduce or avoid potentially significant or significant impacts; and,
3. Mitigation or Project Conditions – ideas for feasible mitigation, including mitigation that would avoid or reduce potentially significant or significant impacts to environmental resources.

This includes identifying specific environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be explored in the EIR as outlined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b). If there is no response within 30 days, the Judicial Council will assume there are no specific environmental issues, alternatives, or mitigation measures that each Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Interested Parties, and Organizations believe should be incorporated into the EIR.

Written Comments on the Notice of Preparation

Please provide your written comments by **April 10, 2026**. Comments, along with the name and contact information of the appropriate person in your organization, should be addressed to:

Janell Ramirez
Judicial Council of California
2860 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95833-4336
909-515-3579
nvcity-court.project@jud.ca.gov

The Judicial Council will hold a public scoping meeting on **March 25, 2026, from 6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m.** (Pacific Standard Time) at the following location:

Eric Rood Administration Center
Nevada County Board of Supervisors Chambers
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959
United States

Parking: Public parking is available behind the building including ADA-compliant parking.

Information related to the Proposed Project, including how to access Project documents and how to participate in the public review process will be provided at the scoping meeting. Information related to this Project is also available for review on the Judicial Council's website at: [Nevada County, New Nevada City Courthouse | Judicial Branch of California](#)

Project Description

Background

The existing Nevada City Courthouse at 201 Church Street, Nevada City, California is located on a 0.98-acre parcel. The existing courthouse is a three-story, six-courtroom facility and serves approximately two-thirds of the Nevada County population and accommodates criminal, misdemeanor, traffic, family law, juvenile, and civil calendars. The original courthouse was constructed prior to 1850. The courthouse was rebuilt after the 1856 fire and again after the 1863 fire. Since this time, the courts have continually provided justice services from this courthouse for over 150 years. The existing courthouse was remodeled and expanded in 1900 and 1937; and included an interconnected Annex constructed in 1964. Between 1969 and 1984, a new wing of the building was added on the north side of the building. There was an additional remodel done to the building in 1993. The existing courthouse and Annex function as a single, County-owned and managed building. Together, these buildings total 64,864 gross square feet, of which, 24,057 square feet is exclusively occupied by the court and the remaining balance is occupied by various County functions.

The existing courthouse is undersized and outdated and does not comply with current building standards such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and fire protection standards. Furthermore, the

existing courthouse does not include appropriate circulation routes (e.g., separate paths of travel) for judges, court staff, the public, and in-custody defendants.

In 2019, the Judicial Council ranked Nevada County’s court facilities in the “Immediate Need” priority group under the Trial Court Capital-Outlay Plan and Prioritization Methodology. The following needs-based criteria and cost-based criteria were used to rank projects within the priority groups of trial court capital-outlay projects (e.g., Immediate Need, Critical Need, High Need, Medium Need, and Low Need):

- Facility Condition Index
- Physical Condition (composed of seismic rating, fire and life safety, ADA, and environmental hazards)
- Security
- Overcrowding
- Access to Court Services
- Cost Avoidance or Savings Realized through Operational or Organizational Efficiencies
- Minimization of Increases in Ongoing Security, Operations and Maintenance Costs
- Cost of Project per Court User
- Total Costs Spent on a Project as of March 31, 2019

Projects scoring very high in each of the evaluated criteria above fall into the Immediate Need group. A 2021–2022 planning study evaluated alternatives for addressing these deficiencies, including renovation of the existing facility, new construction on the existing site, or new construction on a new site. In June 2022, the Judicial Council concurred with the study’s finding that a new courthouse on a new site is the recommended option to address deficiencies, consolidate operations, and meet long-term public service needs (Judicial Council, 2024).

Project Location and Surrounding Uses

The Proposed Project would be constructed on an approximately 4.22-acre parcel (Assessor Parcel Number 005-310-009) located just northwest of the State Route (SR) 49 and Coyote Street intersection at the northern edge of Nevada City and within roughly 0.5 mile of downtown (Exhibit 1). The Project Site is currently developed with an approximately 39,000-square-foot, wood-framed United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service office building (constructed in 1964) and an ancillary outbuilding; both would be demolished (Exhibit 2). The property is privately owned and zoned Employment Center, Scenic Corridor (EC-SC), consistent with the Nevada City General Plan designation. Surrounding land is predominantly residential with nearby public services uses, including the existing USDA facility and Nevada County Consolidated Fire District Station 84. The area exhibits a suburban development pattern and infrastructure. The Project Site is presently accessed via a single roadway connection to Coyote Street. A Nevada County Transit Route 1 bus stop is located at the SR 49/Coyote Street intersection. Topography slopes generally northward with approximately 20 feet of relief. The Project Site is located above the 100-year flood zone. Existing vegetation is limited due to prior development.

The Sugarloaf Mountain Trail traverses the property in the southwest corner of the parcel and would be realigned to meet courthouse parking requirements.

Existing Utilities at Project Site

The Project Site has existing utilities that are identified in detail below.

Sanitary Sewage System

The City of Nevada City has jurisdiction over the off-site sanitary sewer system for the Project Site. The Project Site is served by a 6-inch gravity sewer system connecting to public infrastructure that runs south across SR 49 and through Coyote Street towards the center of the City. Wastewater from the Project will be treated at the Nevada City wastewater treatment facility (Nevada Irrigation District, 2025).

Storm Drainage System

The existing storm drainage system at the Project Site is provided by the City of Nevada City. Stormwater within the Project Site flows via surface sheet flow to existing local gutters and storm drains. There is a drainage culvert located immediately adjacent to the Project Site at the intersection of SR 49 and Coyote Street.

Electricity and Gas Utilities

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) currently supplies both electricity and natural gas to the existing USDA Forest Service building on the Project Site. PG&E is a large utility company which provides natural gas and electric service to approximately 16 million people throughout a 70,000-square-mile service area in northern and central California.

Telephone and Data Service

AT&T provides telephone and data coverage for the Project Site. AT&T is the largest telecommunications company in the nation that provides integrated communications and entertainment services, including Internet Protocol (IP)-based network capabilities that integrate voice, data, and video.

Water Supply

Domestic, industrial, and commercial water is supplied to the Project Site by the City of Nevada City. The Project Site connects to an existing public water system near the southeast corner of the Project Site. The public system runs towards the south across SR 49.

The City of Nevada City's water supply is provided via the City of Nevada City Water Treatment Plant.

Solid Waste

According to the 2023-2024 Nevada County Progress Report, the McCourtney Road Transfer Station provides solid waste and recycling transfer services for Nevada City (County of Nevada, 2024). Solid waste collection is provided by Waste Management and deposited at the McCourtney Road Transfer Station, approximately 8.3 miles southwest of the Project Site. As of January 2025, the new scales are open and operational with the majority of the project substantially complete (County of Nevada, 2025). In

Nevada City, solid waste is ultimately transported to the Anderson Landfill, located in Shasta County (Raney Planning & Management, Inc., 2021), approximately 106 miles northwest of the Proposed Project.

Proposed Project

The Proposed Project would involve demolition of the existing USDA building and construction of a modern, six-courtroom, approximately 77,000-square-foot courthouse on the 4.22-acre parcel (Exhibit 2). The building would be delivered through a design-build process, with separate secure and public access, approximately 220 to 240 surface parking spaces for staff and visitors, and secure parking for judicial officers and law enforcement. The new courthouse would consolidate Superior Court operations currently split across the courthouse and Annex building, improving efficiency, security, and public service. It would include all case types and filings, judicial chambers, jury services, clerk and administrative offices, and dedicated secure circulation pathways. The Judicial Council, acting as the judicial branch of State government, is not subject to local land use regulations; however, the Judicial Council, as appropriate, considers local policies in evaluating whether the Proposed Project's impacts would be significant.

Specific Proposed Project components would include:

Site Preparation and Demolition. The Project would demolish the existing USDA office building (approximately 39,000 square feet), the ancillary structure, and existing surface parking and circulation improvements. The segment of the Sugarloaf Mountain Trail crossing the site would be realigned to meet parking requirements.

Building Program and Design. The Project would construct a new, approximately 77,000 building gross square foot, six courtroom courthouse, up to four stories in height, delivered via a design-build method. The proposed building design would organize public functions on the ground level, with courtrooms and support spaces on upper floors. Circulation would be separated for the public, staff/judicial officers, and in-custody defendants, with secure holding and transport pathways and a sallyport providing direct access to holding areas.

Access and Parking. Public access to the Project Site is proposed from Coyote Street. The Project would provide approximately 220 to 240 surface parking stalls for jurors, staff, and the public, and approximately 12 secured parking spaces for judges, the Sheriff, and select staff. In-custody transport would utilize a secure sallyport. Emergency access would be feasible given proximity to SR 49 and a nearby fire station; the single point of ingress/egress is a known site constraint to be addressed through design.

Grading and Geotechnical Conditions. To accommodate the proposed building design on the proposed Project Site, conceptual grading indicates a net export of approximately 9,200 cubic yards of soil. Retaining walls up to approximately 13 feet in height and about 700 feet in length would be constructed along the west and north boundaries. An additional retaining wall of approximately 15 feet would be constructed on the east side of the building adjacent to the loading dock drive aisle to address elevation differences between the basement level and upper parking lot. Geotechnical investigations identified undocumented fill up to approximately 25 feet deep in portions of the Project Site. Mitigation may include over excavation- and re-compaction, ground improvement, or deep foundations. Sidewalks and the building pad would utilize low expansive fill to mitigate expansive soil conditions. Seismic hazards such as ground shaking, rupture, and liquefaction are considered low.

Construction Staging. Construction laydown and staging would occur within the Project Site to the extent feasible.

Operations. The courthouse would consolidate Superior Court of Nevada County functions into a single modern facility containing six courtrooms and associated support spaces. Daily operations would include all case types and filings; judicial chambers; clerk and administrative offices; jury services; and building support. Approximately 77 full-time staff and additional part-time staff and visitors would use the facility daily (on the order of 240 individuals). Circulation systems would maintain separation among user groups consistent with judicial facility standards. Potable water demand is preliminarily estimated at approximately 12,000 gallons per day (gpd) for building uses and approximately 1,144 gpd for landscape irrigation (total about 13,144 gpd), based on an assumed average daily occupancy of approximately 400 persons per day (including 77 full-time staff and visitors) and application of the Maximum Applied Water Allowance to landscaped areas. Wastewater generation is anticipated to be approximately 1,019 gpd, based on American Water Works Association (AWWA) office building factors of 693 gpd for 77 full-time staff (9 gpd/person) and 326 gpd for 163 part-time staff and visitors (2 gpd/person).

Project Objectives

The objectives of the Proposed Project are to provide a courthouse that complies with current codes and standards for accessibility, life safety, and security, including fully separated circulation for the public, judicial officers and staff, and in-custody defendants. The Project seeks to remedy existing space shortfalls and functional deficiencies by delivering a sufficient-sized, six-courtroom facility equipped with modern building systems and secure support spaces. It would consolidate Superior Court operations currently dispersed across the courthouse and Annex building into a single, efficient location to improve service delivery and operational effectiveness. The facility would be located on a site with sufficient area and configuration to accommodate secure access, appropriate security setbacks, functional separation of parking, and safe in-custody transport.

Proposed Project Alternatives

CEQA requires an evaluation of project alternatives based on the comparative merits of “a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives” (Title 14, CCR, 15126.6(a)).

The EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives that, consistent with CEQA, meet most of the project objectives and reduce or avoid any significant environmental effects of the project, including a required No Project Alternative. The three alternatives for evaluation being considered for the Proposed Project are:

Alternative 1: No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, the existing Nevada City Courthouse would continue to operate in its current configuration at 201 Church Street. This alternative would avoid all construction-related impacts, including demolition, grading, and utility upgrades. Current levels of accessibility, security, and operational efficiency would remain unchanged. No new construction would occur, and the existing facilities would remain in use. The courthouse would continue to accommodate criminal, civil, family law, juvenile, and traffic calendars within the

existing three-story structure and annex. No demolition, grading, or infrastructure upgrades would be undertaken. The existing circulation routes, building layout, and operational conditions would remain the same.

Alternative 2: Alternate Site – Cement Hill Road (Site 12)

This alternative proposes relocation of the courthouse to Site 12, located approximately one mile from downtown Nevada City (JCC, 2024; p.32). Site 12 comprises parcels owned by both the City of Nevada City and private individuals. Site 12 is located approximately one mile from downtown and is served by a transit facility associated with a neighboring government center. The courthouse would be constructed on this site using a design-build delivery method and would include the same program elements as the Proposed Project, including six courtrooms, secured and public parking, and associated site improvements.

Alternative 3: Reduced Building Program

This alternative would reduce the overall building footprint and gross square footage of the 631 Coyote Street site by consolidating certain administrative and support functions off-site or into shared-use spaces. The courthouse would retain six courtrooms but limit non-essential areas such as conference rooms, staff lounges, and public waiting areas. The building would be designed to fit a smaller footprint on the 631 Coyote Street site, with corresponding reductions in parking, grading, and infrastructure needs. The overall site layout would be adjusted to reflect the reduced program while maintaining core operational functions.

Environmental Review

As required by CEQA, the EIR will describe existing conditions, evaluate the potentially significant environmental effects of the Project, and consider a reasonable range of alternatives including the no project alternative. It will address reasonably foreseeable direct, indirect, cumulative, and growth-inducing effects. The EIR will identify feasible mitigation measures, if mitigation is necessary, to reduce significant and potentially significant impacts on environmental resources to less than significant levels.

Potential Environmental Effects

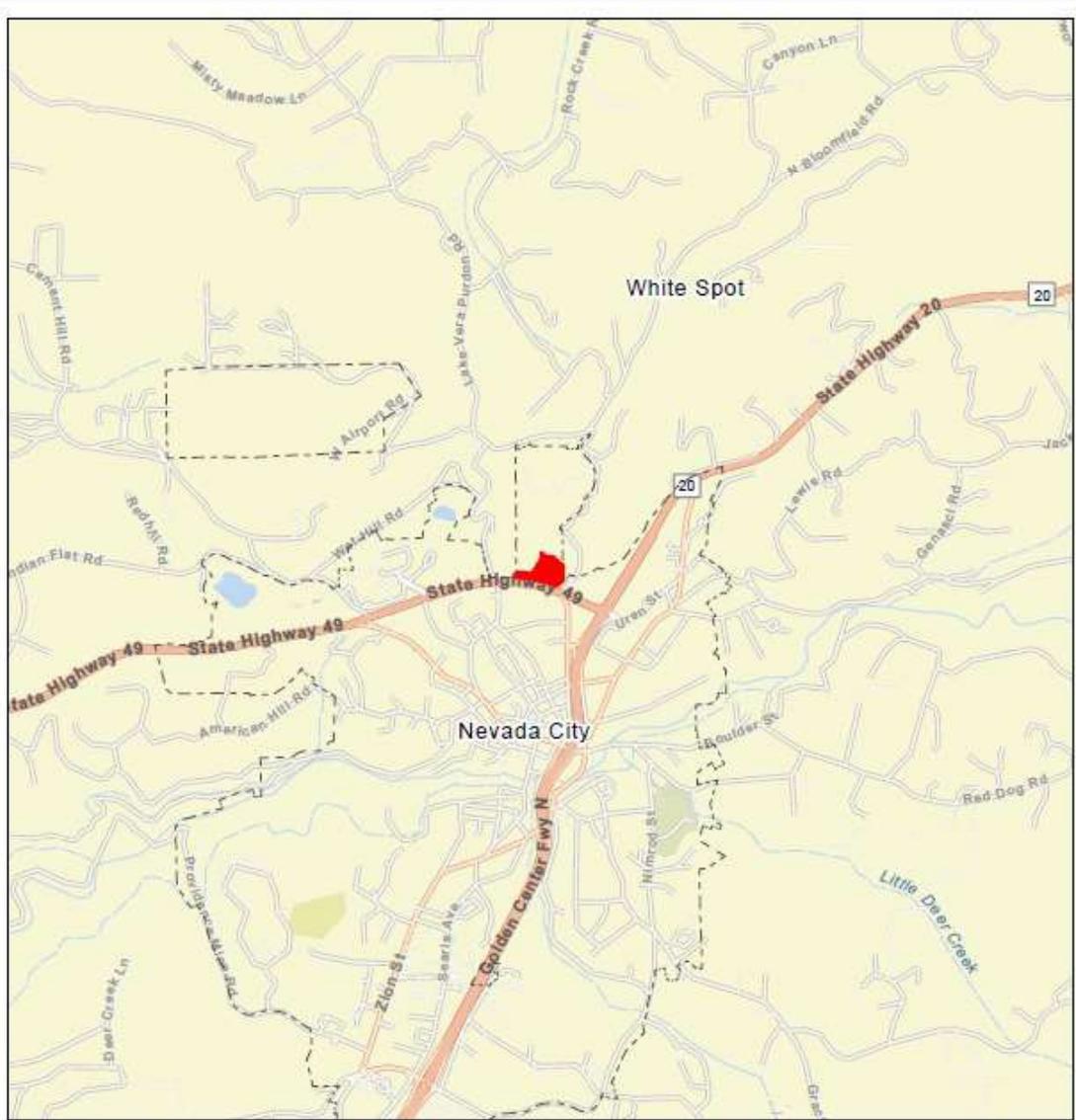
Based on the Project characteristics and site conditions, the EIR will evaluate the following issue areas:

- Aesthetics/Visual
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing

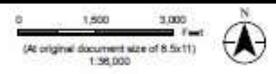
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Cumulative Effects
- Growth Inducing Effects

For each of these areas, the EIR will identify whether the Proposed Project would cause significant or potentially significant impacts. Where impacts are identified, the EIR will recommend feasible mitigation measures designed to avoid, minimize, or offset those impacts. The alternatives analysis will evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives that, consistent with CEQA, meet most of the project objectives and reduce or avoid any significant environmental effects of the project, including a required No Project Alternative. The EIR will therefore serve as the primary disclosure document for decision-makers, agencies, and the public, ensuring that environmental considerations are fully integrated into the planning and approval process for the Proposed Project.

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- Project Site
- Nevada City Boundary



Project Location: Hwy 49 and Coyote St
 Nevada City, California
 Prepared by DET on 2025-06-25
 TR by MD on 2025-06-30
 IR by HJM on 2025-06-30

Client/Project: Judicial Council of California
 City Courthouse Project
 100306610

Figure No.: 1
Site Location

Notes
 1. Coordinate System: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
 2. Data Source(s): JCC, Stantec, 2025
 3. Background: Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, USGS

Disclaimer: This document has been prepared based on information provided by others as cited in the Notes section. Stantec has not verified the accuracy and/or completeness of this information and shall not be responsible for any errors or omissions which may be incorporated herein as a result. Stantec assumes no responsibility for data supplied in electronic format, and the recipient accepts full responsibility for verifying the accuracy and completeness of the data.

References

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Nevada Irrigation District. 2025. *Nevada City treatment plant*. Accessed October 28, 2025 at:
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Raney Planning & Management, Inc. 2021. *Environmental Assessment for [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development]-Funded Proposals*. Available at:
<https://www.nevadacityca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/893/Cashins---Environmental-Assessment-PDF?bidId=>