

# NEWS

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For Immediate Release

## Building for the Future; A Break from the Past

*A light and airy space for public meetings is one feature of a new County of San Mateo building taking shape in downtown Redwood City*

**Redwood City** – On a sunny mid-August day, an Instagrammable view of the past, present and future snaps into focus.

**The Past:** The weathered dome of the 1910 San Mateo County Courthouse, a Neo-Classical beauty meant to evoke tradition where none largely existed.

**The Present:** The San Mateo County Hall of Justice, vertical, rigid, a 1950s buzz-cut of a building if there ever was one, in use since the Eisenhower Administration.

**The Future:** The under-construction San Mateo County civic center, both the new seat of County government and a bold statement, a symbol comprising much more than the sum of its glass, wood and steel: This County with its 750,000-plus residents is no longer content to be an appendage to San Francisco or Silicon Valley.

This new five-story building along with its courtyards is expected to serve as the Peninsula's town square: An inviting gathering place that embodies transparency and public access to government with its banks of windows and meeting places, with beauty coming from landscaping and public art.

### "Civic Gravitas"

The speed at which this addition to the [County Center complex](#) in downtown Redwood City is taking shape may come as a surprise to those who stayed away during the pandemic or have yet to return to nearby offices, restaurants or theaters.

Construction began in 2021 on the site of the old San Mateo County Traffic Court and the historic Lathrop House. The latter was carefully [preserved and moved](#); the former was [unceremoniously demolished](#).

Following a long planning process, the Board of Supervisors [approved the project](#) (called County Office Building 3 throughout) with multiple goals:

- ▶ Consolidate offices and locations to save money in the long term on rents and maintenance. The new building will house about 600 employees over the five stories and 208,000 square feet.
- ▶ Create a welcoming space for the public and employees, with a new Board Chambers and flexibility for future needs.
- ▶ Fashion an iconic design with "civic gravitas" with efficient, modern and flexible workspaces that reflect the County's commitment to sustainability.

The building is laid out in an "H" design, with north- and south-facing public plazas. The idea is to tie it in both to downtown Redwood City from Marshall Street (and the nearby Caltrain and SamTrans stations) and County Center.

### **"Mass Timber" Design**

The building features the extensive use of wood -- a design called mass timber -- both as a structural element and environmental feature for columns, beams, walls and ceilings.

Wood dramatically lowers the building's carbon footprint by reducing the reliance on structural steel and concrete.

While structurally sound, the wood is also substantially lighter than steel and concrete; this translates to a smaller foundation and again the need for less steel.

Designing exposed wood ceilings and walls also eliminates the need for such traditional building features such as acoustical ceiling tiles, dry wall and other non-renewable materials.

To create thick beams, numerous boards are glued together to make cross-laminate timber. The wood comes from second- and third-growth forests and is a renewable resource.

The building is designed to be zero-net energy, meaning it will produce as much energy as it consumes. That energy will come in large part from an array of roof-top solar panels, with energy savings coming from operable windows that let in fresh air, for instance.

The County is seeking [LEED Platinum Certification](#), the highest level achievable from the project from the U.S. Green Building Council.

### **The Future of County Government**

The current chambers for the Board of Supervisors, a five-member elected body that oversees a \$3 billion annual budget, is located in the Hall of Justice, designed and built before the [Space Race](#).



The County shares space in the eight-story Hall of Justice with the San Mateo Superior Court, which is the local arm of the state courts and independent of local County government.

Once construction is complete, County offices from the Hall and other locations will move to the new civic center building with a new (and larger) Board Chambers.

(Note: For the most part, certain County administrative offices will be consolidating at County Center. Services for the public will continue at an array of locations from Daly City to East Palo Alto and all points in between.)

Designed to meet strict earthquake, fire, building and other standards, the new building is expected to serve the public into the latter half of the 22nd Century -- more than 150 years.

### **By the Numbers:**

#### **Project Area**

208,000 square feet

#### **Height**

Five stories: 75 feet, 9 inches

#### **Construction Cost**

\$182 million to \$184 million

#### **Lifespan**

The building is designed for a useful life of 150 years or longer

#### **Departments**

The building is expected to house the:

Board of Supervisors

County Executive Office

Budget and Performance

Human Resources

County Counsel

District Attorney

Human Services Agency

**Construction is expected to be complete in late 2023.**

