



EXPLORATORY REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (RFEI)

Will County Courthouse, Joliet

Introduction

Landmarks Illinois and the Joliet-based Courthouse Preservation Partnership are issuing an exploratory Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) from qualified developers and architectural firms for the reuse of the former Will County Courthouse in Joliet. This RFEI process is an initiative to support efforts to preserve the iconic courthouse and is not in any way affiliated with Will County, which owns the property. All submitted RFEI responses will be presented to the Will County Board to demonstrate the interest in potential reuse of the architecturally significant courthouse.

Project Background

The former Will County Courthouse was built in 1969 and designed by Otto Stark of C.F. Murphy Associates and represents the first and largest brutalist building in the Will County region. Landmarks Illinois included the building on its 2022 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois due to a demolition threat. On December 18, 2017, Will County broke ground on a new county courthouse. On April 18, 2019, the Will County Board passed a resolution calling for demolition of the 1969 courthouse. The new courthouse opened on November 2, 2020, and the 1969 courthouse was subsequently closed and has remained vacant since. To date, the Will County has not engaged in any process to solicit and review redevelopment options for the former courthouse, despite growing and stated interest in the property from citizens and developers.

Purpose

The Will County Executive's office and many members of the Will County Board have insisted that there is no reason to seek redevelopment options for the courthouse because they have not received proactive outreach from developers regarding interest in the building. Landmarks Illinois, along with the Courthouse Preservation Partnership, will provide the county the responses to this RFEI reflecting interest from developers and architectural firms and as a means to encourage the county to issue an official Request for Proposals (RFP) for redevelopment.



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Public or Private Use

County officials have also cited a state's attorney opinion that the building cannot be reused for commercial use due to a land deed that stipulates that the land must remain for public use. Courthouse Preservation Partnership sought and [received a legal opinion](#) that counters the state's attorney's conclusion about public use and said that the county could retain ownership of the building and enter into a long-term lease arrangement with a developer. As such, for the purposes of this exercise, redevelopment proposals should contemplate entering into a long-term lease with the county.

Property Information and Condition

The former Will County Courthouse is located at 14 W. Jefferson St. in downtown Joliet, advantageously adjacent to Historic Route 66 and within close proximity to the Joliet Transportation Center, five wedding venues and Harrah's Casino. The building will be eligible for the 20% Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program and the 25% Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program as it is located within the boundaries of a pending National Register Historic District and a nomination of the building for the National Register has been submitted to the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office.

Original drawings of the building ([located here](#)) show four floors totaling 140,000 square feet of space that may be developed. Additionally, the building was designed to withstand the addition of two floors. While it is county-owned, the courthouse is located within the City of Joliet limits and is zoned as B-2 Central Business District. Asbestos abatement of the building has commenced, and it is unknown what, if any, impact there has been on the integrity of the courthouse interior. Pictures of the interior and exterior of the building are [located here](#).



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Responses Welcome

Any developer, architectural firm or partnership is welcome to respond. This exploratory RFEI is an advocacy exercise only, and responses will not result in any direct benefit to those who submit. There is no opportunity for a building walkthrough, so responses must rely on the drawings and photos in the design process. Our goal is to receive a variety of responses that can be shared with the county, from general expressions of interest to creative reuse ideas. Through discussions with local advocates, the primary reuse options that have been identified include a boutique hotel, market rate apartments with first floor commercial, or a mixed-used and mixed-income development.

Expressions of Interest Submittal Requirements

All submissions should be made to Quinn Adamowski, Landmarks Illinois Regional Advocacy Manager, gadamowski@landmarks.org. Please submit expressions of interest by March 10, 2023.

As this is an advocacy exercise, all general expressions of interest from qualified developers and architectural firms are welcome and encouraged. In addition, submissions with any of the following components would provide valuable context on project feasibility:

1. Proposed Reuse. Describe the vision your firm have for reuse of the site. Floor plans, elevations and/or renderings of the exterior, interior or both are highly desirable.
2. Potential Partners. Please indicate which partners your firm could potentially work with for the proposed reuse project.
3. Funding Sources. Describe potential funding sources and strategies the proposed reuse project would use to pay for rehabilitation costs. As mentioned above, the property is eligible for federal and state historic preservation tax credits.

Landmarks Illinois appreciates your interest in aiding in the advocacy effort to preserve the 1969 Will County Courthouse. For questions, please reach out to Quinn Adamowski at gadamowski@landmarks.org.



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Helpful resources:

- [Photos of the Will County Courthouse](#)
- [Additional exterior photo of the Will County Courthouse by Lee Bey](#)
- [Original Will County Courthouse drawings](#)
- [Video of Will County Courthouse, produced by Unidos Marketing](#)
- [Additional historical information on the Will County Courthouse](#)