

# Groups seeks ideas on potential reuse of old Will County Courthouse

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Felix Sarver



The old Will County Courthouse, 14 W. Jefferson St., Joliet. (Felix Sarver)

January 18, 2023 at 6:00 pm CST

Two groups are seeking proposals from developers and architectural firms on what should be done with the old Will County Courthouse that has been sitting vacant for more than two years and is expected to be demolished.

On Wednesday, [Landmarks Illinois](#) and [Courthouse Preservation Partnership](#) announced [they are requesting](#) developers and architectural firms to submit their ideas of how the old courthouse in [Joliet](#) can be reused.

March 10 is the deadline for [submission of those proposals](#).

Submissions must include a vision for reuse of the courthouse, potential partners who would be involved in the project and potential funding sources.

All submitted responses will then be presented to the Will County Board to “demonstrate the interest in potential reuse of the architecturally significant courthouse,” according to Landmarks Illinois.

In a statement, Bonnie McDonald, Landmarks Illinois president and CEO, said there is a “growing interest” among Will County residents to see their “one-of-a-kind former courthouse reused instead of torn down.”

McDonald said Will County officials continue to insist there is “no reason to initiate any sort of public process that would explore reinvestment of the property.”

“This lack of action has encouraged Landmarks Illinois and its local preservation partner in Joliet, Courthouse Preservation Partnership, to solicit expressions of interest, which we will present to the county as a means to encourage an official Request for Proposals for the building’s reuse,” McDonald said.

In a statement, Will County Executive Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant said the demolition of the vacant courthouse will continue.

“As the project moves forward, Will County will be working with our partners in Joliet to establish a long-term plan to redevelop the property for continued public use,” Bertino-Tarrant said.



Old Will County Courthouse, 14 W. Jefferson St., Joliet. (Lathan Goumas)

The demolition of the courthouse is included in the county's five-year capital improvement plan and \$2.5 million has been allocated in the fiscal year 2023 budget specifically for demolition, according to the county executive's office.

The Will County Board approved a contract for abatement work, which is the first step of the demolition process, and that work has been completed, according to the county executive's office.

The Board is scheduled to vote on Thursday on a contract for design engineering, which will guide the drafting of a demolition request for proposal.

The Will County State's Attorney issued an opinion which said a 1961 court order determined the old courthouse property and adjacent parking lot is held in a public trust by the county. Therefore, the county cannot sell or lease it to a private entity, and the property needs to be used to serve the public.

The glassy new 10-story courthouse has been in operation since November 2020.

The building replaced the old courthouse across Ottawa Street, a building which "embodies the distinctive characteristics of the brutalist architectural style," said Joliet City Planner Jayne Bernhard, in 2018.