



Office of the Will County Board
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Major capital projects set to move forward

*Stage being set for new courthouse in downtown Joliet,
public safety campus on Laraway Road*

JOLIET, IL- The Will County Board's capital improvements committee, after working extensively with the county executive's office, today approved a comprehensive plan to implement a series of major capital projects with an eye to consolidate services, reduce expenses and plan for long-term needs. The completion of several short-term projects could pave the way for construction of a new courthouse in downtown Joliet as well as a public safety campus on Laraway Road.

"Today's actions represent a significant step forward, as we move from the planning stage to actual implementation," said capital improvements committee chair Denise Winfrey (D-Joliet). "We have done our due diligence in formulating a strategy that benefits both the taxpayers as well as all stakeholders."

First on the list of the committee's short-term priorities is the acquisition of the former Social Security Administration building at 158 Scott St. in Joliet. The purchase is near completion and will reduce lease expenses as well as pay for itself within several years. Plans call for moving the land use department into the 12,000-square-foot building.

The second priority is work at the Sheriff's Laraway Road campus to extend sewer and water to the site that is now served by a septic field. Septic field remediation work will be required. This will prepare the campus for future renovations and additions, including new evidence storage and training buildings as well as a new administration building with space to consolidate public safety offices, such as the Coroner's Office and Emergency Management services.

Additional priorities include the acquisition of the First Midwest Bank building at 50 W. Jefferson St. and programming a new courthouse there. Like the Social Security Building, the purchase is near completion and will reduce lease expenses. The First Midwest building's upper floors would temporarily house offices currently in the county's EMCO building while it is being remodeled to consolidate the State's Attorney's Office. A new courthouse could eventually be built on the First Midwest property, which is across the street from the existing courthouse at 14 W. Jefferson St. The capital improvements committee today also took action to implement a secure key card access system on the 3rd and 4th floors of the existing courthouse.

"It's very important to understand this is a process with many moving parts and steps along the way," said Speaker Herbert Brooks, Jr. (D-Joliet). "The county is experiencing growing pains, and we are navigating those in a diligent and intentional manner with both short-term and long-term goals in mind."

(more)

page 2/major capital projects set to move forward

The cost of the short-term projects totals a little over \$15 million with funds coming from cash reserves and budgeted monies. Long-term projects, such as a new public safety campus and courthouse, will require bonding and costs are estimated around \$430 million.

"We must acknowledge the hard work and valuable input of numerous stakeholders in helping us get to this point," said Winfrey. "Our intentions were never to make plans that would sit on a shelf and gather dust, but rather to advance plans in a strategic fashion that helped us reach our goals as quickly as possible."

The full Board is set to approve the capital improvements committee's plan at its August 15 meeting.

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