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Judicial site sought downtown

The proposed complex would house various state legal offices and force the history museum to move.

By Mark P. Couch
Denver Post Staff Writer
DenverPost.com

Colorado officials are studying a plan to construct a new courthouse and office building in downtown Denver that would force the state history museum to move to another site.

The proposed Colorado justice complex would house the state supreme court, the attorney general's office, the state public defender's office and other legal departments of state government.

The bill: up to \$280 million.

The complex would replace the existing Colorado State Judicial Building and the State Historical Museum on the block bounded by Broadway, Lincoln Street and East 13th and East 14th avenues.

"I wanted to alert the committee that we will need money" to research the potential project, Colorado Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary J. Mullarkey told the legislative Joint Budget Committee on Monday.

The judicial branch's budget for next year includes \$450,000 to study relocating the Colorado History Museum and constructing a complex of courtrooms and offices on the site.

The state has already spent \$50,000 to study the possibility of developing a judicial complex on the site.

In November, the Urban Land Institute presented its study to officials of the judicial branch. A written report from the real-estate research nonprofit is due early next year.

The ULI study assumes a 663,000-square-foot court complex would cost \$180 million to build. Moving the history museum, which needs 260,000 square feet, to another site and constructing a new building could cost as much as \$100 million in five years.

The ULI study identified three possible sites for the history museum - remaining at its current location, moving to the block south of the Denver City and County Building or to the Evans School site on Bannock Street between West 11th and West 12th avenues.

Mullarkey said the new judicial complex would make the courts more efficient by reuniting justices and administrative staff under one roof. The state rents space in three locations for administrative staff because the court has outgrown its space at 2 E. 14th Ave. For example, the judiciary's computer experts are in the Denver West office complex near Golden and often shuttle to the downtown site.

Staff writer Mark P. Couch can be reached at 303-820-1794 or mcouch@denverpost.com.