

SARAH ECKHARDT

Travis County Judge



Planning for Justice: Court Capacity Developments in Travis County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 14, 2017

Contact: Loretta Farb, loretta.farb@traviscountytexas.gov, 512-854-1124

Austin, Texas – Today the Commissioners Court made significant strides in addressing the public’s need for additional court capacity. Travis County approved staff to move forward with real estate negotiations on the County-owned 300 block of Guadalupe St. Travis County originally purchased the property for \$22M in 2010 with the intention of constructing expansion space for civil courts at a construction cost of \$287M. In November 2015, the bond election for the \$287M courthouse construction did not pass. Many in the real estate community argued that the specific block was more valuable in private development than in public use as a courthouse. In response, Travis County requested proposals from the private sector to purchase or lease the block with the intention of putting all revenues realized from a sale or lease toward needed expansion of court infrastructure. Although it is not in the taxpayers’ interest to release details during negotiation, based on the responses to the request for proposals it is safe to say the County will receive significant value for this asset above the original purchase price.

In addition to leveraging the value of the 300 Guadalupe block, Travis County has received ownership of the historic federal courthouse from the federal government without purchase cost to Travis County taxpayers. The historic federal courthouse is only large enough to address the public’s need for expanded probate courts. Travis County is in the process of identifying expansion space for civil and family court capacity. Further, Travis County is identifying and implementing adjustments in how our courts operate so that we can achieve maximum efficiency without sacrificing the quality of justice available to Travis County residents.

###