



Construction slated to begin in January on new federal courthouse in Harrisburg

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It seems the long-awaited project to build a new federal courthouse in Harrisburg really is set to move off the drawing board and onto a lot in Midtown.

By federal standards, at least, the project is picking up speed, with a construction start envisioned for this coming January. Completion is projected for 2022, according to the General Services Administration.

The project has picked up its last big dollop of funding, too. [That \\$137.2 million](#) was included in the \$1.3 trillion omnibus budget bill recently signed by President Donald Trump.

And that cash is definitely a lock.

It won't simply vanish when the current federal fiscal year ends in September, said Jacklin Rhoads, an aide to U.S. Sen. Robert P. Casey Jr., D-Pa.

"It will not expire," Rhoads said. "This is called no-year money, so it does not have an expiration date. It will not disappear."

That \$137.2 million comes on top of the roughly \$26 million spent so far to identify, secure and clear the site at 6th and Reilly streets, right across the street from Bethesda Mission. [The feds secured the last few properties at the site by condemnation](#) early this year.

The Harrisburg project is among three federal courthouse projects funded in the omnibus budget bill. Another \$110 million is earmarked for a courthouse in Huntsville, Ala., and \$190 million is allocated for one in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Rhoads cited the Harrisburg project as "unique" because [the site has already been selected](#), it now has received funding from Congress, and a design has been developed.

That design, from Ennead Architects of New York City, looks nothing like the boxy glass Ronald Reagan Federal Building downtown on Walnut Street that the new courthouse will replace.

Ennead's design is artistic, monumental, in fact, with an asymmetrical tower rising above the two- or three-story main building.

Over the next several months, the GSA officials will schedule meetings with local elected officials, U.S. Middle District Court judges and the U.S. marshal, developers and the public, Rhoads said.

GSA spokesman Nick Smith stressed "there are no further funding impediments to the project."

Plans call for a 243,000-square-foot building with 79 parking spaces on the four-acre tract. There will be eight courtrooms - double the current number - and 11 judges' chambers. The design work is to be finished by December, Smith said.

The parking will be reserved for judges, some employees and government services, he said. "All visitor parking and most employee parking will be accommodated off-site, which is typical of a federal facility in an urban area," Smith said.

In addition to Ennead, Hill International Inc. of Philadelphia has been hired as the construction manager and Mascaro Construction Co. of Pittsburgh has been tapped as the constructor.

Talk about replacing the 1960s-era Reagan building has been going on for years. Federal officials contend the current building is inadequate for modern court operations and falls short of security requirements.

Harrisburg officials have been eagerly awaiting the project's launch, anticipating the economic boost the courthouse is expected to bring to that area of the city.

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