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Developer Chosen for Sheriff's Lab Building Supervisors Decide on Hutton Development for Long-Awaited, \$27.9-Million Project; [Orange County Edition]

STEVEN R. CHURM. *Los Angeles Times (pre-1997 Fulltext)*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Jun 21, 1989. pg. 6

Abstract (Summary)

County officials said the promise of substantial parking was a major difference between the Hutton package and the other three proposals that were considered. Each of those plans recommended that the forensic center be built on 1.5-acre site next to the Sheriff's Department on Flower Street across from Santa Ana Stadium. The property, however, would not be large enough to allow any on-site parking, a critical need in the Civic Center area.

Even with a new forensic center now in sight, [Larry Ragle] said, the county may have to spend up to \$100,000 to enlarge the sheriff's crime lab facilities in the 600 block of North Ross Street in Santa Ana. Much of that money is earmarked for special, high-tech equipment needed to set up a DNA laboratory, where criminalists can determine through gene testing whether semen, hair or blood matches a suspect. It would be the first such laboratory on the West Coast, a much-publicized goal of Sheriff/Coroner Brad Gates.

Full Text (550 words)

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A state-of-the-art, \$27.9-million facility to house the Orange County Sheriff's Department crime labs and offices in Santa Ana moved closer to reality Tuesday when a developer for the long-awaited project was selected.

After reviewing four proposals, the County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to award the project to Santa Ana-based Hutton Development Co., which owns the 3.4-acre site at Flower Street and Santa Ana Boulevard, where the sheriff's new Forensic Science Center will be located.

The forensic unit, which analyzes and tests evidence gathered at crime scenes, now operates out of two buildings in the Civic Center.

The Hutton proposal calls for the eventual construction of twin seven-story buildings on the site with an adjacent five-story parking garage with 1,200 spaces. The county will lease one of the buildings-about 170,000 square feet, which includes a secured underground evidence storage garage-to consolidate its forensics operations, with an option to buy the structure.

Hutton Development will arrange the entire financing package for the project, with the county's lease payments based on the final design and construction cost of the building, said Linda Robinson, a senior analyst in the County Administrative Office. Those payments could be as much as \$2.7 million a year, depending on the project's final price tag.

The selection of Hutton Development was viewed as a milestone in a four-year campaign to find the forensic unit a permanent home.

"It's like a dream come true," said Larry Ragle, director of the sheriff's forensic services. "We've had too many people working in too small a space for too long. It's very exciting."

A week ago, the 1988-89 Orange County Grand Jury endorsed the Hutton Development plan as the most cost-effective way to build a new crime lab.

The final financing and leasing agreement between the county and Hutton Development should be completed within three months, county officials said. If approved by the supervisors, design and construction of the twin office buildings will take about two years, they said.

Even with a new forensic center now in sight, Ragle said, the county may have to spend up to \$100,000 to enlarge the sheriff's crime lab facilities in the 600 block of North Ross Street in Santa Ana. Much of that money is earmarked for special,

high-tech equipment needed to set up a DNA laboratory, where criminalists can determine through gene testing whether semen, hair or blood matches a suspect. It would be the first such laboratory on the West Coast, a much-publicized goal of Sheriff/Coroner Brad Gates.

The need for a roomier forensic center was first identified in a 1985 county report that concluded that sheriff's investigators and criminalists needed a 100,000-square-foot facility to adequately perform evidence reviews and tests.

Today, about 112 employees in Ragle's unit work in about 42,500 square feet. "The new building will double our space almost overnight with plenty of room to grow," Ragle said.

County officials said the promise of substantial parking was a major difference between the Hutton package and the other three proposals that were considered. Each of those plans recommended that the forensic center be built on 1.5-acre site next to the Sheriff's Department on Flower Street across from Santa Ana Stadium. The property, however, would not be large enough to allow any on-site parking, a critical need in the Civic Center area.

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