

**Request:** Federal match funding to assist with the renovation of Merced County's historic Courthouse Museum.

**Description:** The Merced County Courthouse Museum is one of the oldest buildings in California and is an icon of the County. Built in 1875, the building served as a courthouse for 100 years until 1975. During that timeframe, it also housed offices for several County departments, including the Board of Supervisors, Treasurer-Tax Collector, Auditor-Controller, Parks and Recreation, and several others.



**The County Courthouse Museum in its present state**

The building was designed by A.A. Bennett, who also worked on the California State Capitol. A nearly identical courthouse was built an hour south in Fresno County, but was later demolished. Designed to resemble an Italian palazzo, the structure features a white plaster exterior and incorporates a portico with a balcony on the south side as well as a cupola on top. The Merced County

Courthouse Museum is considered the best example of Italian Renaissance Revival remaining between Sacramento and Los Angeles. The Courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. It serves as a representation of the history of Merced County as well as California's Central Valley.

The Courthouse Museum is owned by Merced County and operated by the Merced County Historical Society. Throughout the year, the Courthouse Museum hosts several exhibits, community events and special programs.

**Necessity:** Over the years, the Courthouse Museum has been slowly deteriorating and now requires several improvements in order to maintain its structural integrity. Because of its historical nature, the County is looking at long-term sustainability planning to prevent further deterioration of the building.

The Merced County Department of Public Works recently completed a study of the Courthouse Museum. The report and design documents, prepared by McCandless & Associates Architects, Inc., call for refurbishment of metal finishes (cleaning, rust removal, paint removal, priming, painting, replication/fabrication as necessary) and repair/replication of historic wood finishes.

The professional cost estimate for this scope of work is approximately \$3.29 million in order to preserve the Courthouse Museum's shell (exterior only) and prevent further decay. The Merced County Board of Supervisors has already set aside \$1 million to be used as match funding for grants or donations. The County is also working with community groups in an attempt to identify additional funding opportunities.

**CONTACT:**

Mike North  
Merced County Public Information Officer  
(209) 726-2744  
Mike.North@countyofmerced.com