



COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 5, 2025

ITEM TITLE, PRESENTER: New Building for the Children's Justice Center (CJC)

Director: Robert Nieman

RECOMMENDATION: Approving the CJC project for building a new facility

SUMMARY:

The Children's Justice Center (CJC) has experienced significant growth in the past year, with a consistent increase in interviews and services provided. To better serve the residents of San Juan County and uphold best practices in children's advocacy, we are proposing the construction of a new facility.

Our current space presents several challenges in maintaining the confidentiality and privacy essential for the children we serve. The cinderblock construction of our building makes it difficult to mitigate sound, leading to echoes from conversations in both the interview room and waiting area. This compromises the confidentiality of sensitive discussions. Furthermore, while law enforcement are excellent partners who have supported our confidentiality efforts, sharing the building with them still means that the interview room shares a wall with their space.

A new, purpose-built facility would address these critical issues by incorporating soundproof rooms, comfortable waiting areas, and specialized spaces designed for trauma-informed care. This new building will be instrumental in beginning the healing process for children who have experienced traumatic events providing a more comforting and appropriate environment.

HISTORY/PAST ACTION:

We have been working with AJC Architects, who have developed a floor plan for the proposed CJC building. This design allows for future program expansion and supports trauma-informed care by providing a transparent and visually clear layout for children entering the building. AJC Architects has generously volunteered their services pro bono, ensuring that development costs can be reallocated towards construction.

We explored the option of converting existing housing into a CJC but determined that renovating to meet ADA compliance and trauma-informed care standards would result in a higher square footage cost compared to new construction. (i.e. \$290,000 building + ADA retrofit/renovate \$100,000 / 1250/sf = 312/sf)

FISCAL IMPACT:

The estimated fiscal impact to complete construction of the CJC Building project is approximately \$500,000 or \$297/sf. We have received two preliminary construction bids: one from Tri-Hurst construction for approximately \$547,625 or \$325/sf, and another from Colby Davis for \$425,000 or \$252/sf.

The State of Utah CJC Program has offered \$200,000 to fund this project. Please note that these funds must be utilized by June 30, 2026, which marks the end of the State of Utah's fiscal year. Therefore, timely action is crucial.

In addition to this, we are actively pursuing other funding opportunities:

- We've had encouraging discussions with the LDS Church, who have expressed interest in supporting CJC projects statewide.
- I have also spoken with the Larry H. Miller Foundation and confirmed with the State program that we can use their 501(C)-3 Foundation for submitting grant applications.
- The CJC will be submitting grant requests to the San Juan County Clean Energy Foundation as well as to North Wind Portage.
- We recently began discussions with other local businesses to explore potential donations for this important initiative.

It's also important to highlight significant contributions not yet reflected in the estimated fiscal impact:

- The proposed land for the new CJC building is owned by San Juan County and is located in Blanding City.
- We have secured pro bono architectural work with AJC Architects.
- Our County Road and Building Department has committed to providing in-kind support for the basic excavation and landscaping of the land.