



Cuyahoga County hires consultant to consider again its office space needs

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10:38 am, August 9, 2011

Cuyahoga County's new charter government is tackling a thorny issue left over from the prior county commission system by hiring Allegro Realty Advisors Ltd. to conduct a comprehensive study of the county's space needs and to develop a plan for the future.

County Executive Ed FitzGerald said he and the county council wonder if an opportunity exists to cut expenses while improving the experience of individuals who interact with the county. He said addressing issues such as how to enable people to conduct their county business at one site, and how to maximize proximity to mass transit and parking, will be part of the study.

The prior county government studied the same issue and acquired the former Ameritrust headquarters complex at Euclid Avenue and East Ninth Street for a new, centralized county office. However, after sinking millions into the purchase and asbestos abatement, the county backed off from pursuing the project.

A news release from the county said the study will influence decisions on the future of the empty Ameritrust complex and whether the current county administration building can find a higher use associated with the adjoining Medical Mart and Convention Center.

The county employs about 8,000 people and owns or leases space at about 50 different locations countywide. County offices are spread throughout downtown Cleveland.

Allegro was selected from five real estate consulting firms or brokerages that responded to the county's request for proposals. Allegro will do a study, due this fall, for \$195,050.

Competitors that vied with Allegro for the work from Cleveland offices included CB Richard Ellis, JLL Americas Inc. — better known as Jones Lang LaSalle — and Ostendorf-Morris Co., said John Kohlstrand, a county spokesman. The Alvarez and Marsall realty consultancy of Denver also sought the assignment.

Mr. Kohlstrand said a seven-member committee, which included three local executives on loan to the

county, scored proposals of the five firms based on qualifications, their approaches to the project and potential conflicts of interest. Three finalists went through interviews. After the committee recommended Allegro based on a point-scoring system, the Allegro bid was read aloud.

Mr. Kohlstrand said he did not know, and could not immediately say, if Allegro's offered price was the lowest the county received.

In 2004, the former county government hired the Cleveland office of Staubach Co. to do a similar study, initially paying \$385,000 to the Staubach firm, which was sold to Jones Lang LaSalle in 2008. A key component of that study was to find a location to replace the county administration building on Ontario Street. Staubach recommended the county buy the Ameritrust property.

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