



# VIRGINIA COURTHOUSE FACILITY GUIDELINES

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For

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**INTRODUCTION**

Virginia's stock of courthouses is enormously varied and still contains many buildings constructed in the early 20th and even during the 19th Century. While many, if not all, of Virginia's more populated cities and counties have replaced their aging courthouses (Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Arlington, Fairfax) many of the Commonwealth's rural jurisdictions still occupy aging facilities that are overcrowded and lack the essential features of a modern, efficient court building. These include features such the separation of public, private/staff, and prisoner circulation; building entry screening; and the ability to use modern information management and communications technologies.

These Guidelines were originally developed and published in 1987 and revised slightly in 1999. They sought to provide some unifying guidance to judges, public officials, and architects to the planning and design of court facilities for Virginia. Some of the comments made at the time of the original publication are still relevant today.

- As one of the original thirteen colonies, Virginia has a long judicial tradition that manifests itself in a substantial number of historic landmark courthouses that are still in use and that should be preserved when possible.
- Virginia's population is not evenly distributed and courthouses range in size from buildings with one courtroom to those such as Fairfax that have as many as 40 courtrooms. The demands on these larger facilities are much different than on the small rural courthouses, and one solution is not suitable for all. There must be some flexibility in how these guidelines are applied to both highly urbanized and small rural courts.
- Among the responsibilities of the Circuit Clerks in Virginia are the recording and maintenance of land and other records that are often performed by separate registrars in other states. These functions place the Circuit Clerks in the center of local public activity and create substantial space and security demands on the facility.
- The relationship of the Courts to the State and communities they serve create circumstances that, although not unique to Virginia, merit both consideration and understanding in any construction or renovation project. Although the Courts are state courts with judges and staff being paid by the State, the communities they serve are required by law to provide them "adequate" facilities. As a result it was not uncommon to find one or more of the Courts sharing a facility with one or more city or county offices. This is becoming less common as county and city executive agencies have moved out of the courthouses over the years in favor of their own administrative type facilities.
- As with courts in other states throughout the country, Virginia has been automating nearly all aspects of its judicial operations and making greater use of such technologies as digital records keeping, automated case management, video

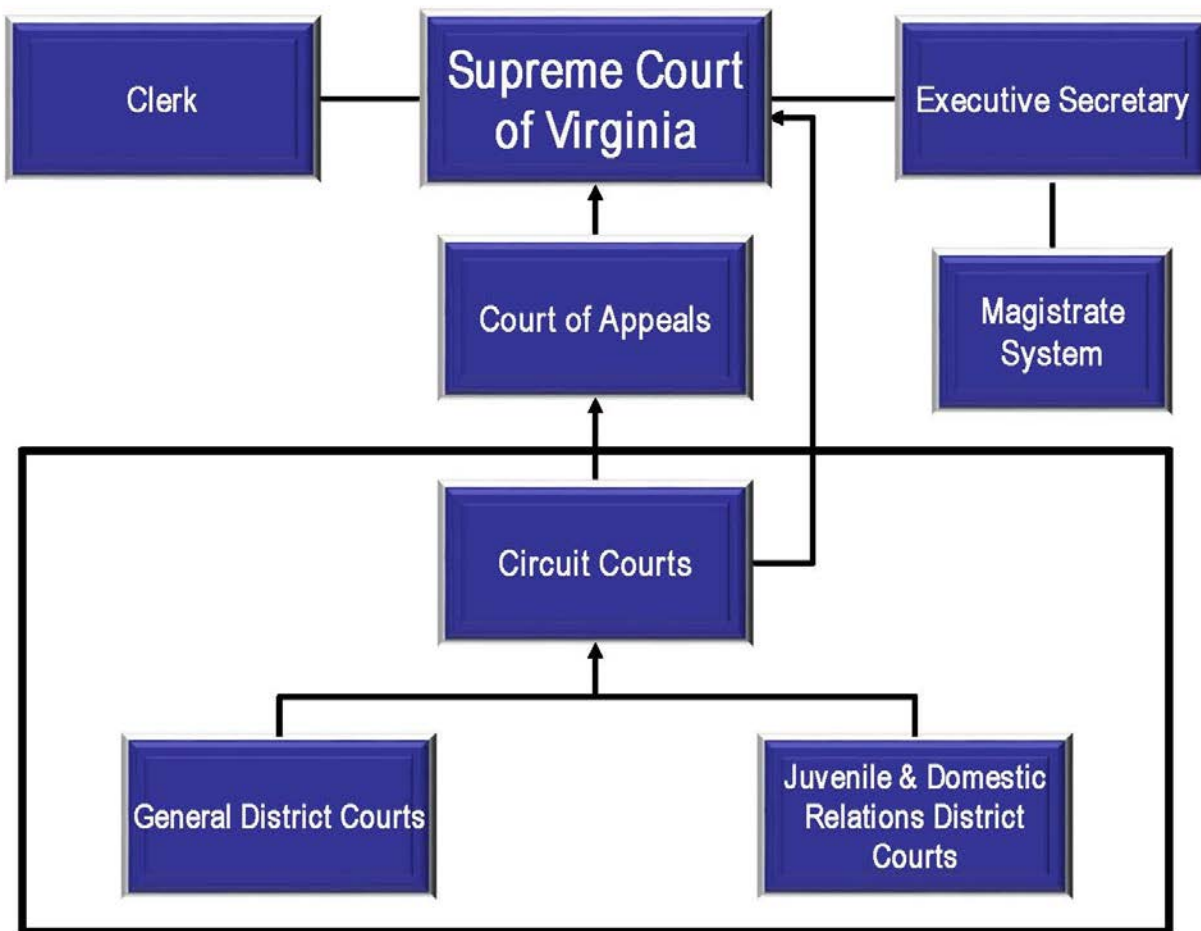
conferencing, and audio visual presentation systems in the courtroom. All new construction must provide the wiring and cabling and building infrastructure needed to accommodate not only today's technologies but also those to tomorrow.

As the name implies, these are guidelines, not minimum standards. They represent "best practices". Because the size, caseload, and location of Virginia's courts vary widely as do the financial resources local governments have at their disposal, the guidelines should not be applied the same in all situations. Their application should allow for flexibility in how they are implemented.

Finally, the guidelines are intended for a varied audience with differing levels of expertise in courts and building design. First and foremost they are design to assist judges and court officials by providing them with the necessary information they need to assess their facilities and address remedies with their local governing bodies. Next, they are meant to provide local officials and design professionals who may not be familiar with the unique facility requirements of courts with information they need to understand court operations and their space and building requirements.

**CHAPTER 1 - VIRGINIA COURT ORGANIZATION**

The historic and ongoing presence of the judicial system in the fabric of Virginia life is most readily visible through the presence of the local courthouse. And while judicial presence is a constant, the ways in which the courts are organized has changed over the years. To meet the demands of a growing and shifting population, changes in the courts' jurisdiction, procedures, supervision and management, and in the use of technology occur.



The organization of Virginia's courts today illustrates the results of these changes. Virginia has a four tiered court system composed of district courts, circuit courts, a court of appeals, and a supreme court. In addition, magistrates serve as judicial officers with authority to issue various types of processes. The courts are organized into 31 judicial circuits and 32 similar judicial districts. The counties and cities served by the circuit and district courts must provide facilities for these courts. Legislation requires that these facilities be owned and not leased.

**I. SUPREME COURT**

The Supreme Court was founded in 1779 and exercises both original and appellate jurisdiction. The Chief Justice has responsibility for the overall supervision of the Virginia

judicial system. The seven justices of the Supreme Court generally sit in Richmond in the Supreme Court Building. These facilities are provided by the state.

## **II. COURT OF APPEALS**

In 1983, the General Assembly created an intermediate court of appeals, effective January 1, 1985. It consists of 11 judges who sit in panels of at least three. The Court of Appeals provides for intermediate appellate review of all circuit court decisions in traffic infractions and criminal cases, except where a sentence of death has been imposed; circuit court decisions involving domestic relations matters; and circuit court decisions arising out of administrative agency appeals. It also hears appeals from decisions of the Workers Compensation Commission. While appeals in criminal and traffic infraction cases are presented by a petition for appeal, most other appeals to the Court of Appeals are as a matter of right. The Court of Appeals also has original jurisdiction to issue writs of mandamus, prohibition, and habeas corpus in any cases over which the court would have appellate jurisdiction, and writs of actual innocence based on non-biological evidence.

The Court of Appeals sits at such locations as the chief judge designates. The panels regularly use circuit court courtrooms within the state.

## **III. CIRCUIT COURTS**

Virginia's general jurisdiction trial court is the circuit court. In civil cases involving \$4,500 to \$25,000, circuit courts have concurrent jurisdiction with the general district courts. They have exclusive jurisdiction in matters involving over \$25,000. Equity matters, claims seeking a judgment for something other than money (such as adoptions or divorce), are also heard in the circuit courts.

In criminal cases, the circuit court has jurisdiction over the trial of all felonies and of those misdemeanors originally charged in circuit court. The circuit court also has jurisdiction over juveniles aged fourteen and older who are charged with felonies and whose cases have been certified by the judge of a juvenile and domestic relations district court for trial in a circuit court.

Appeals from district courts are heard de novo (completely new) by the circuit courts, as are appeals from certain administrative agencies.

Jury trials may be held in the circuit court. Citizens who might otherwise not have contact with the courts may find themselves called to jury duty in the circuit courts.

The clerk of the circuit court is a constitutional official and is elected to an eight-year term by the voters of the locality. The clerk handles administrative matters for the court, has authority to probate wills, grant administration of estates, appoint guardians, and serves as the custodian of the court records. Citizens may visit the clerk's office for many reasons, including recording deeds and applying for marriage licenses.

#### IV. DISTRICT COURTS

In 1973, creation of a unified district court system replaced a number of municipal and county courts throughout the state. Each city and county has both a general district and a juvenile and domestic relations district court, although many smaller cities and counties have a combined clerk's office that serves both courts.

The general district court hears all criminal cases involving misdemeanors under state law and offenses that are violations of ordinances, laws, and by-laws of the county or city where the court is located. A misdemeanor is any charge that carries a penalty of up to one year in jail or a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

The general district courts also conduct preliminary hearings for felonies. Jurisdiction in traffic matters extends to all cases in which an adult is charged with a traffic offense. General district courts have exclusive civil jurisdiction in matters involving up to \$4,500, and concurrent civil jurisdiction with the circuit courts in suits involving amounts between \$4,500 and \$25,000. A separate small claims division has jurisdiction over civil actions when the amount claimed does not exceed \$5,000. The chief judge of the district court may elect to establish divisions within the court, although few districts have exercised this option. The district courts do not conduct jury trials.

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts have exclusive original jurisdiction over matters and proceedings involving juveniles and families, except for adoption and divorce, which are handled by the circuit courts. Courtroom attendance for matters heard in these courts is generally restricted to those persons involved in the proceedings. These courts handle cases involving:

- Juvenile delinquency and status offenses
- Juveniles accused of traffic violations
- Children in need of services or supervision
- Children subjected to abuse or neglect
- Children who are abandoned or without parental guardianship
- Foster care and entrustment agreements
- Children for whom relief of custody or termination of parental rights is requested
- Adults accused of child abuse or neglect, or of offenses against family or household members
- Adults involved in disputes concerning the custody, visitation or support of a child
- Spousal support
- Minors seeking emancipation or work permits
- Court-ordered rehabilitation services
- Court consent for certain medical treatments

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts differ from other courts in their duty to protect the confidentiality and privacy of juveniles and their families who have legal matters before the court. In addition to protecting the public and holding delinquent juveniles accountable, the court considers services needed to provide for rehabilitation. Like the general district court, this court does not conduct jury trials.

## V. MAGISTRATES

Since 1974, the principal function of the magistrate in the Virginia judicial system has been to provide an independent, unbiased review of complaints brought by police officers, sheriffs, deputies, and citizens. In each city and county in Virginia, the position of the magistrate represents a key point of interface between the judicial system and the citizenry.

Magistrates perform work that is highly interactive, as well as paper and procedure-intensive. The work involves conducting judicial hearings in response to requests from law enforcement officials, privately employed security guards, and citizens. These judicial hearings may be conducted in the presence of both the complainant and the accused as well as by video conference. Magistrates conduct interviews with complaining parties, the accused, and other appropriate persons to obtain the facts necessary to establish probable cause or to determine committal/release. Magistrates preside over the judicial hearings, maintain order and proper decorum, administer oaths, define issues, interpret and explain pertinent laws, take testimony, question parties, and issue legal processes.

Among their many responsibilities Magistrates issue arrest and search warrants, admit to bail or commit to jail, issue subpoenas, administer oaths, accept prepayments for traffic and certain minor misdemeanor offenses, issue emergency custody orders, issue civil, criminal, and medical emergency temporary detention orders, and issue emergency protective orders. In addition, magistrates provide general information on judicial processes and procedures.

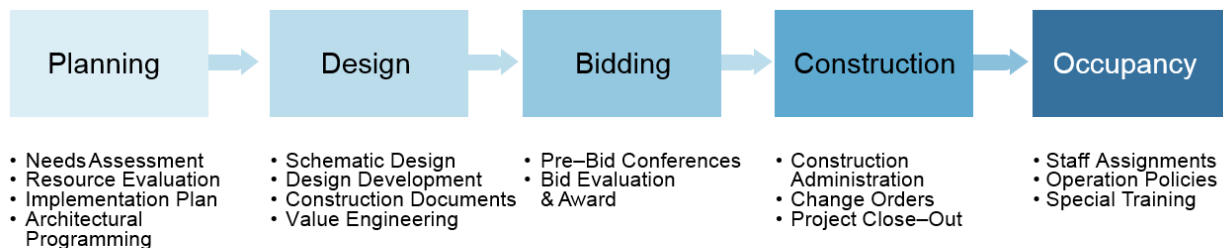
Magistrates are called upon to determine whether there is probable cause to deny persons their liberty -- taking into account such factors as the evidence brought before them, the seriousness of the accusation, and the potential danger to society or to the accused. These judicial hearings may be conducted with the arrestee on site or by video conference with the arrestee located at a remote site such as a jail or police station.

Virginia is divided into eight magisterial regions comprised of between three and five judicial districts. A chief magistrate supervises the magistrates serving within each judicial district. Each region has a regional magistrate supervisor who provides direct supervision to the chief magistrates. Each magistrate is authorized to exercise his or her powers throughout the magisterial region for which he or she is appointed. Magistrates provide services on an around-the-clock basis, seven days a week, conducting judicial hearings in person and through videoconferencing systems.

**CHAPTER 2 - COURTHOUSE PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

The success of any long term renovation or construction project depends upon several factors that include: 1) The development of a strategic planning process, 2) Good communication among the stakeholders and the public, 3) Development of consensus, and 4) Strong project management.

Most courthouse projects go through five phases beginning with the initial identification of a need for new or improved facilities through design, construction and, finally, occupancy. The following provides an overview of each of the typical project stages, beginning with preparation of a needs assessment and evaluation of current facilities through occupancy. The road is not always a straight one and there may be many starts and stops along the way. Changing conditions, growth rates, and operational environment (as well as funding problems) all may necessitate revisions to the original plan and require additional planning. It is essential, however, that the planning stages of the project not be side stepped. Changes in project scope at this point are relatively inexpensive, while changes and alterations later on during design and even construction are much more expensive.



**Project Phases and Tasks**

Prepared by HOK

**I. GETTING STARTED**

The first phase of any courthouse project should be planning. It is during this step that the project and scope are defined. The need is identified and documented and a decision made as to what type of project is needed. Is it a minor remodel or a major renovation? Is more space needed that requires an addition?

**Steps in the Typical Planning Process**



Or, are the needs so great that an entirely new building is needed? Options are defined and evaluated and finally consensus is reached on a solution. It is also during this phase that a preliminary project budget and construction costs are identified. If it is to be a new building

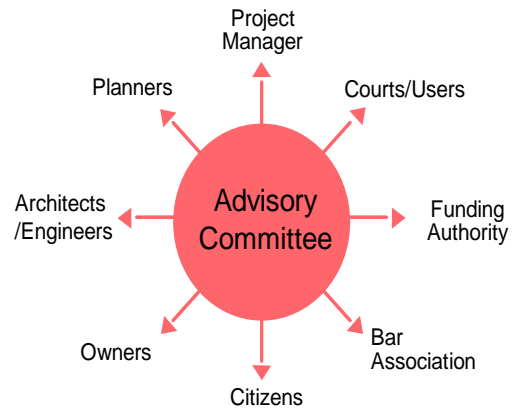
a site will be selected. If the issues are clear cut this stage may proceed quickly but often a long time is required before consensus can be reached on the proper solution and issues of financing can be resolved.

**A. Planning Oversight Committee**

It is recommended that early in the planning process a Planning Committee be formed to provide advice and input into the development of needs and planning options, and to provide guidance throughout the project. The most successful committees include representatives from the major stakeholders in the justice system as well as the local governing body.

The committee may or may not be given formal authority to make decisions; it may, for instance, act only as an advisory panel to the local governing body or funding authority. The committee would typically include some or all of the following:

- Judge of the circuit court;
- Judge of the general district court;
- Judge of the juvenile and domestic relations district court;
- Clerks of each of the above courts;
- Sheriff
- Commonwealth Attorney
- Representatives of the local public works department, the city manager or county administrator.



Advisory Committee Relationships

Others who might be included are a member of the board of supervisors or city council, the chief magistrate, representative of the local bar association, and perhaps a member of the public.

Each of the committee members should be familiar with the operations, personnel, and space requirements of the court, department, or office they represent and should be authorized to speak on their behalf. It is also essential that the committee members serve for the duration of the project in order to avoid the disruption that may result from the appointment of new members who are not familiar with the reasons for previous decisions.

The committee should prepare a description of the present facilities and document its deficiencies. This should include an inventory the number and types of spaces within the courthouse, such as courtrooms, offices, jury and public areas, etc., and their approximate area, and a detailed description of current problems, inadequacies, deficiencies, and bottlenecks. Members of the committee, or their representatives,



should be able to compile much of this information on their own. Non-committee members, such as operating personnel and local attorneys, may be interviewed for their input and ideas. The clerks of the respective courts generally have the broadest perspective of the various operations of the courthouse, and should be consulted as to the particular problems in their court.

**B. Planning Consultant and Architect**

While it is not essential that an outside planning consultant or architect be hired at this point, in larger projects it might be desirable to have an outside expert familiar with court planning, forecasting, and space planning to provide guidance and assistance.

It may be necessary for the funding agency to make an initial appropriation to cover the committee's expenses and early project planning costs, including the possible employment of the planning consultant or architect. This will ensure that the committee will have the necessary professional assistance, and that its preliminary work will provide a sound basis for determining the best alternative to pursue.

**C. Preliminary Budget**

Regardless of whether the decision is to renovate, enlarge, or construct a new building, the availability of funds for the project is critical and an understanding of all of the costs involved is essential for good decision making. The local funding authority or governing body may have the expertise to make preliminary estimates of project and construction costs. In larger projects, the committee or local governing body may want to hire a cost consultant at this point to provide estimates of total project costs. Any architect hired later on to prepare schematic and conceptual designs will need a preliminary budget figure from which to work.

**D. Factors Affecting Construction Cost**

When preparing or reviewing cost estimates it should be kept in mind that courthouse construction is more complex and costly than the construction of the typical office building. Among the factors that affect courthouse construction costs are:

- Large bay sizes needed to provide column free courtroom space
- Higher ceiling heights to create proper proportions in courtrooms

- Construction
- Site Work and Utilities
- Architect and Engineering Fees
- Construction Management
- Land Acquisition
- Furniture and Fixtures
- Telephone/Networks/Security Systems
- Quality Control
- Computers and othe IT Equipment
- Audio Visual Equipment
- Permits and Fees
- Value Engineering
- Other Costs
- Contingency

- Specialized acoustical requirements to insure audibility in litigation spaces and to isolate sensitive areas such as jury rooms, prisoner holding areas, and judicial chambers from noise
- Extensive security provisions to assure the safety of the public, public records, and judges and staff.
- Additional circulation space to provide for the separation of public, staff, and in-custody defendants well as to accommodate the large number of visitors
- Holding cells for in-custody detainees
- Specialized HVAC requirements to minimize vibration and noise, and to provide flexibility in control of courtrooms
- Specialized millwork in courtrooms, and
- Special design features and materials to support the importance of the structure and to convey the appropriate image of justice.

### **E. Public Support**

It is important to keep the public and other interested parties informed during the planning process. There are several things the committee and planners can do, such as to make information available on the various options being considered in order to invite public comment. Presentations might be given to the local bar association and civic groups, and continuing information given to the local press and other media. Providing information to the public is essential throughout the planning process and may consist of planning reports, public hearings, presentations by the planners or architects, the construction of scale models of the site and proposed building, and conceptual design sketches.

It may be advantageous to form a small special committee to handle public relations for the project and to make special presentations to interested civic groups and the bar association.

## **II. SHOULD WE RENOVATE?<sup>1</sup>**

At some point in the life of the courthouse it becomes time to decide whether to keep the old structure in use through some type of improvement project, whether it be an addition or renovation, or to replace the courthouse with a new purpose designed facility. Depending on the age of the building, its physical integrity, its functionality, its architectural or historical interest or importance, and the feelings of the community toward the courthouse the issue can quickly become controversial.

The project may involve the addition of new space, either for a new courtroom or support functions, retrofitting existing space for courtrooms, and upgrading building systems. Even when there is a planned addition to the building, renovation of the existing facility is desirable in order to have the new and the old work together. This may mean that the entire

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<sup>1</sup> Some materials are adapted from J. Mac Gregor Smith, series editor. National Clearinghouse for Criminal Justice Planning and Architecture. "Trial Court Facility," Monograph B5 in the: Guidelines for the Planning and Design of State Court Programs and Facilities (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1976.)

building (new and old) needs to be entirely reorganized in order to achieve the proper circulation flows, zoning separations, and work adjacencies.

It is important for the courts planner or architect to consider the various alternatives available, which range from demolition and new construction to preservation of the courthouse for continued judicial or other use. The first step should include a complete assessment of the existing building, its space resources, structural condition, and building systems such as heating, ventilation, lighting, electrical, and plumbing. Often if the building systems are in fine shape, it is worth reusing the facility, but if major renovation of such systems is necessary, it may be time to replace the building.

We often refer to “renovation” when talking about changes to an existing facility, in fact there are several different types of projects often covered by this term:

**A. Restoration**

“Restoration proposes, through scholarly research and on-site investigation, to return each portion of the building, including environmental systems, to some date or era — frequently that of the original construction. The National Trust realizes that this alternative is generally used only for the most outstanding architectural examples, and only if the original is reasonably intact. It is also possible that restoration can be considered for the most significant features of a courthouse, such as a bell tower or ceremonial courtroom, if not for the entire building.”<sup>2</sup>

**B. Rehabilitation**

“Rehabilitation consists of minor alterations required to bring the building up to modern planning, environmental control and public safety standards, but have little major effect on the original fabric. Included are the many long-deferred maintenance items such as roofing, water proofing, painting, and tuck-pointing. If done with care, rehabilitation can greatly increase a building's life and performance, and do little damage to the historic elements. Examples of rehabilitation include addition of modern heating, air conditioning or lighting systems, addition of stair towers or elevators, and inclusion of modern office landscaping plans in the larger spaces.”<sup>3</sup>

**C. Remodeling**

“Remodeling is defined by the National Trust as a program which makes important functional changes to a building, but tends to ignore important historic or architectural features, removing or replacing these features without evaluating the significance of their contribution to the character of the building. Examples might be installation of suspended ceilings or sheet paneling in an ornately decorated courtroom, bricking up windows or doors, or removing important original features such as staircases, bell towers, or massive doors.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**D. Conservation**

“Conservation refers to a procedure of restoring the exterior of the building to a stable condition, and incorporating contemporary court planning techniques and environmental systems such as heating, lighting and air conditioning, being careful to integrate the new with the old. Conservation can involve major changes to the interior of the structure, such as insertion of mezzanine levels in old, high-ceilinged spaces or capturing additional space from attics or basements that can be made useable by installation of lighting, ventilation, or air conditioning systems. By careful planning, even major changes such as these can be accomplished without significantly altering the original building.”<sup>5</sup>

The decision of when to “renovate” and when to build new requires consideration of many factors:

- The physical integrity of the existing facility;
- The historical or architectural values of the building;
- Use of the facility by other offices or functions;
- Adherence to local building codes;
- Life cycle costs;
- Functionality;
- Growth of the courts and the building’s continued potential for expansion;
- Ability to meet operational needs of the courts;
- Ability to comply with accepted court design standards;
- Security and safety of the public and building occupants;
- Ability to accommodate prisoner custody requirements;
- Accessibility requirements; and
- Impact on other departments and functions housed in the facility.

Of critical importance to the courts is whether the existing facility can meet court design guidelines and standards, even when renovated. While some compromises may need to be made, fundamental issues of public safety, prisoner access and control, and functionality for court operations should not be sacrificed. When considering whether courthouse design guidelines can be met it should be kept in mind that there is often more than one way in which to achieve this. The separation of public, private, and prisoner circulation is a good example. The standard is not necessarily three separate circulation systems. The standard to be achieved is the separation of the public, judges and staff, and prisoners. Usually this is best achieved through separate circulation, but in some situations this also can be achieved through operational means.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**E. Problems Usually Encountered During Renovation**

The renovation, or retrofit, of an existing facility for courts (courtrooms, chambers, and clerks' offices) typically presents a number of problems and frequently requires compromises. Among the problems that are likely to be encountered are:

- Spaces too small to accommodate properly sized courtrooms or other functions;
- Low floor to ceiling heights for courtrooms;
- Inability to achieve proper adjacencies, such as between courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms;
- No logical location for an addition that permits circulation systems to work efficiently;
- Inadequate electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems requiring extensive upgrades;
- Hidden problems such as asbestos;
- Need to make renovated spaces handicapped accessible;
- Need to provide temporary space in which to house the courts during construction; and
- Difficulty in providing proper security in the building;

Probably the most critical issues are those related to finding adequate spaces in which to build properly sized and designed courtrooms, the need for proper adjacencies, and the need to provide a minimum level of security and safety within the building. Too often renovation or retrofit projects result in courtrooms that are too narrow, too small, lack the proper floor to ceiling heights, lack safe prisoner access; lack adequate litigation space, and/or lack necessary public waiting and attorney conference areas.

Among the questions that must be asked early in any project that contemplates the reuse of existing facilities or locating courts in a facility other than one designed as a courthouse, are:

- Are there spaces large enough and suitable for courtrooms?
- Where will prisoners enter the building and can they reach the courtrooms without having to be escorted through public or private corridors and work areas?
- Can the facility accommodate three circulation systems (public, private, and prisoner) and zones?
- Can the building be made secure? and
- Are the main building systems (electrical, plumbing, HVAC) sound?

**F. Can Another Type Facility Be Used for Courts?**

While it is most common for renovation projects to involve the courthouse, it is not uncommon for consideration to be given to retrofitting other types of facilities for court use. The most common type facility are general office buildings, but schools,

hospitals, shopping centers, post offices, and department stores have been retrofitted to be used as courthouses.

As a general rule, it is nearly always easier and less expensive to renovate court spaces for general office functions than to renovate general office space for courts. The reuse of general office space, whether built for government or business, is not suitable for many court operations. Most general office buildings do not have adequate vertical circulation system (elevators) and the proper floor plates to accommodate three separate circulations systems or zones.

Secondly, the floor to ceiling heights in most general office buildings is too low to properly accommodate courtrooms that should have a minimum of about 14 feet from floor to ceiling. While general office space may not be appropriate for courtroom and chambers, it is perfectly acceptable for many court support functions, or ancillary offices, such as the Commonwealth's Attorney, public defender, or probation. These may either remain in a county or city administration building or be located in other general office spaces that have been renovated for their use, as long as it remains close to the courthouse.

It also is important to think of the image that the retrofitted building will present to the community and how it will affect attitudes of litigants. Will the building project a sense of decorum and dignity that is essential to all court facilities or will it project an image of retail or assembly line justice?

Shopping centers have an advantage in that there is generally plenty of parking, a commodity that is all too often lacking in many downtown courthouses. Further, many shopping centers are built with high ceilings and fairly large spaces between support columns, permitting great flexibility in locating courtrooms. While it may not be considered appropriate for general jurisdiction trial courts, shopping center locations may be very functional for limited jurisdiction courts that handle high volume functions such as traffic and misdemeanor cases. The disadvantage of a shopping center is that they are almost always one story structures which make it difficult to achieve prisoner access to all courts without penetrating either the public or private circulation.

#### **G. Project Phasing**

A major problem with nearly any renovation projects is the need to phase the work so that the courts may continue to operate during construction. It is often necessary to find temporary quarters for the courts to occupy while the existing space is being worked on. This can add extra costs and time to the project if it is necessary to lease temporary space that first must be retrofitted to provide minimum functionality for courts. Where there is also a new addition being built along with renovation of existing facilities, the new facilities may serve as the temporary swing space for courts while space in the existing facility is being renovated.

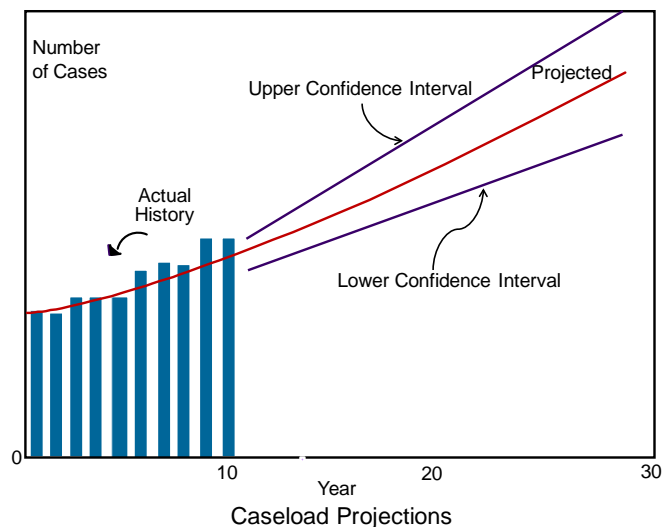
Generally speaking any project that involves renovation and reuse of an existing facility for courts will require a project that is completed in phases and may require courts and their offices to move several times during the project.

### **III. PRE-DESIGN PLANNING**

Most projects are initiated with an assessment of the current facilities. Someone determines that the facilities are inadequate: too small; in poor physical condition; lack security and safety; and/or is inefficient or overcrowded. It is important at this stage to conduct a systematic evaluation of the facilities and document their deficiencies. This is one of the ways in which these guidelines can be used, and have been used in the past. Many projects are initiated with a judicial court order requiring the local government to provide adequate facilities. One of the prime resources judges and others use when making this determination is the Virginia Courthouse Facility Guidelines. These guidelines provide a benchmark against which existing facilities may be evaluated.

#### **A. Needs Assessment**

A typical needs assessment examines the facilities in terms of their physical integrity, the condition of the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems, the amount and types of spaces provided, the circulation systems (particularly the secure prisoner circulation), the safety and security of the buildings, their ability to adapt to future growth and changes, and ability to incorporate and make use of new technologies. The needs assessment also may look at future growth and make some projections of both future judge and staffing requirements as well as future space requirements. A typical forecast horizon is 20 years. It is important to look ahead at least 20 years because most building projects take from five to ten years to complete and if the plan only accommodates the current need in many cases the courts will have outgrown the new facilities by the time they are occupied.



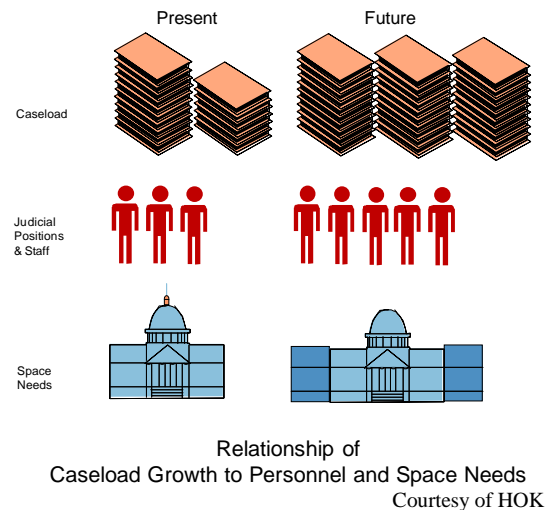
The needs assessment may be performed as a separate step or may be done as part of a larger master planning effort that also examines possible solutions such as renovation, new addition, or new building.

**B. Master Planning and Determination of Alternative Solutions**

The next phase of the project is the development of a facility master plan that identifies various options, discusses their pros and cons, and provides preliminary costs estimates that can be used by the funding authority and users to make decisions on the best course of action. At this stage it may not be clear whether the best approach is to renovate the existing facility with perhaps the construction of an addition or to build an entirely new facility.

If an evaluation and assessment of the condition of the existing facilities was not done as part of a needs assessment one should be done now as part of the master planning process. This information is critical to the decision of whether to renovate all or some portion of the courthouse.

With the help of the architect, planning consultant, or a qualified person from the local government’s public works department, the committee should determine the approximate construction costs of different alternative solutions, including (1) renovation of the existing facility, (2) its enlargement, (3) renting additional space for offices not directly related to court operations, combined with renovation or enlargement, or (4) construction of a new facility. Consideration of construction costs of a new facility must address whether construction should be on the present site or on a newly acquired site and include either the costs of demolition of the present facility and the temporary relocation of operations, or the cost of acquiring a new site.



After such preliminary determination of the costs of the alternative solutions, the committee should determine whether the space requirements can best be met by renovation, enlargement, renting additional space, or construction of a new facility and destruction or other use of the present facility. One method of comparison of the various alternatives is to annualize the cost of each alternative by dividing the total cost by the estimated years of use. Selecting a workable solution will require balancing conflicting needs, costs, and time priorities.

**C. Preparation of the Architectural Program**

The next step in the planning process is the preparation of the detailed facility space program. This is more detailed than the estimate of overall space needs made during the needs assessment. The “program” on the other hand documents the present



organization and operation of the courts and their related functions, details both their current and future space needs, and the necessary components of the courthouse and their spatial and functional relationships.

It is more detailed than, and goes beyond, what is required during the needs assessment and master planning phases. It serves to inform the architect of the problems to be solved in the design of the facility. The preparation of the program will most likely be beyond the capabilities of the committee, and it is here that the use of an outside planning consultant, familiar with court operations and the design of court facilities, is essential.

The information obtained during the needs assessment and master planning phases will be pertinent to the development of the program. Program development requires additional research, greater detail, and further analysis in order to prepare a written description on which the design can be predicated. For this purpose the program should describe the organization and operations of each of the courts. Current deficiencies, bottlenecks, and other problems should be described along with suggested changes and improvements. The information should include historical, current, and projected caseload data, demographic trends, and space and personnel requirements, as well as forecasts of future trends in court operations and management. This requires forecasting future judge and staffing levels, and the number and type of courtrooms that will be needed. It should be noted that an increase in the number or size of the required spaces will also require a corresponding increase in the public circulation and waiting areas. The program should include descriptions of all the offices to be included in the building, including adult probation or court services.

#### 1. Determining Future Needs

Determination of future court facility needs is part science and part guess work. One approach is to ask each stakeholder for (1) their estimate of the amount of space and number of staff required in the future, (2) the additional space needed to properly accommodate the current staff and operations, (3) the anticipated growth in workload and staff for the next 15 to 20 years, and (4) the types of spaces that will be required to accommodate the anticipated growth. This approach, however, requires stakeholder to provide a fair assessment of their current needs and to make reasonable assumptions about their future needs.

Different courts, departments, and offices are likely to experience different rates of growth or decreases in workload. Short-range forecasts, based on projections of current workloads may be sufficiently accurate if based on adequate information and not projected too far into the future, but because public buildings are generally used for extended periods of years, more sophisticated techniques are required to achieve long-term forecasts of 20 plus years. Forecasting is a complex science and should be undertaken by those with sufficient technical expertise to

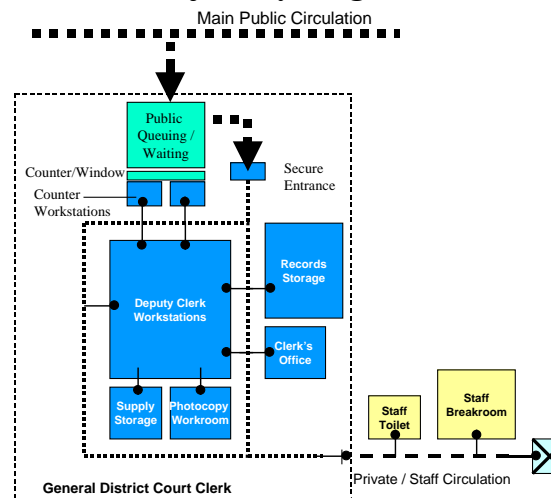
know how to select an appropriate forecasting model and interpret the results. This is another area in which the use of a planning consultant is advisable.

2. Contents of the Architectural Program

The degree of detail in the program may vary depending on whether the plan is for the renovation of the existing facility, its enlargement, or the construction of a new building. Typically the program will contain the following elements.

- a. A description of the organizational structure and operational procedures carried on by the courts, court related offices, and other governmental entities in the building. The description should differentiate between the type of court (Circuit, General District, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District) and court procedures in criminal, civil, juvenile, and domestic relations proceedings, and identify the relationship of these proceedings with the other occupants of the building. Flow charts reflecting the sequence of operations and the workflow may be helpful as are the use of adjacency diagrams.

**Example of a Circulation and Adjacency Diagram**



- b. A detailed description of the condition of present facilities, including not only courtrooms and offices, but other building support spaces such as electrical rooms and closets, toilets, storage areas, etc., and the number and size of each. This description can be accomplished most easily by obtaining an up-to-date space plan or as-built drawings of the present facility. If one is not available it may be necessary for the consultant or architect to prepare one.

- c. A description of the problems with, and inadequacies of, the present facilities. The extent to which current problems and inadequacies have affected the organizational structure and operational procedures should be noted so that these can be eliminated in the new design.

- d. A detailed accommodation schedule listing the type and size of all spaces/rooms that will be required in the new design. The program should remind the architect that the design of the new facility should permit future expansion to meet unanticipated needs. To the extent feasible, the square foot area of these spaces should be in accordance with the guidelines hereinafter

set forth. The trend toward smaller courtrooms should be recognized, as should the use of multipurpose rooms for hearings, jury assembly, etc. in smaller courthouses.

- e. A description of the optimum location of the major spaces and their relationship to each other, using adjacency diagrams. While this description will not work out the actual location of spaces it should outline their basic functional relationships. High-volume functions and activities, such as clerks' offices and fine payment windows, should be located near the main public entrance, on the first floor, whenever possible. This will reduce visitor traffic on other floors where courtrooms are located, thus enhancing security. Court functions that have similar operational and spatial requirements should be located as conveniently as possible to each other. Similarly, offices that need the same type of security may be located together.
- f. A description of the optimum size and the physical features of each space in accordance with the following recommended guidelines. Such description should include its size, environmental needs, security requirements, handicapped accessibility requirements, circulation and adjacency needs, and level of furnishings and finishes. It is important to note the acoustical requirements for spaces in which privacy is essential such as courtrooms, judges' chambers, jury deliberation rooms, attorney and client conference rooms, and the offices of the Commonwealth's Attorney staff.
- g. The program should contain an estimate of the costs involved in the implementation of the program through the completion of the working drawings. In addition, the program should contain an estimate of the total net square feet required based on the number of spaces and their sizes. To this must be added the approximate areas of corridors, elevators, stairways, walls, ducts, and service areas to determine the approximate total building gross square feet to be used in determining the approximate costs of the project. The involvement of an architect and the planning consultant, as well as a cost consultant, will be necessary. If a new site is to be acquired, its estimated costs should also be determined and included.
- h. A timetable from the date of completion of the program, through the design phase, to completion of construction. The timetable should describe any phased implementation of the project, taking into account the disruptions inherent in the construction process, any temporary relocations during construction, and a plan for handling such disruptions. As early as possible in the planning process the funding agency should be working on the method for financing the project.

#### **IV. DESIGN**

When the written program has been completed, a request for proposal (RFP) based on the program should be advertised and sent to prospective architects. The committee and the funding agency will review the responses and select an architect and enter into negotiations. Selection criteria should include prior courthouse design experience; organizational capacity to handle the project, availability of proposed project staff, ability to manage and complete comparable projects within budget; and presence and qualifications of necessary experts such as security, acoustics, and technology planning. Typically on larger projects, a local architect will team with a larger national firm that has expertise in courthouse design.

### Courthouse Design Stages



#### **A. Schematic Design**

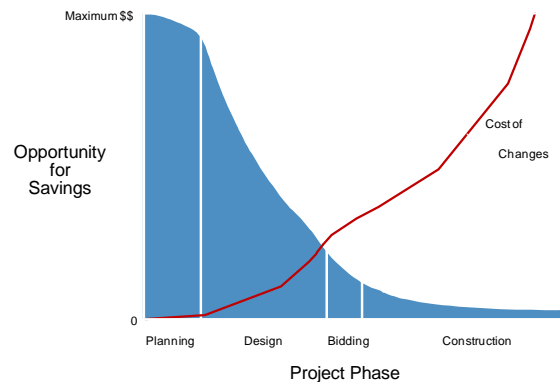
Schematic design begins upon approval of the architectural program and the project budget. The objective of this step is to conceptually organize the functional components that were defined in the Program Statement. The architect will prepare and submit preliminary sketches showing the location and size of the various courthouse components such as courtrooms, chambers, clerks' offices, and other offices. The sketches will show the three major circulation systems (public, the staff, and prisoners), and studies of the exterior appearance of the building. The schematic plans should identify alternative features that can be added or eliminated and the architect should furnish preliminary cost estimates of the schematic plans, including the alternatives.

These alternative sketches should be reviewed by the committee in consultation with the architect, keeping in mind the program requirements, the budget, and these guidelines. Changes at this point in the project can easily be made without incurring much additional cost. Subsequent steps will add detail to these decisions with the primary objective of producing documents from which construction can be initiated.

#### **B. Design Development**

The next step is design development, during which the Architect will refine the overall design providing more detail with each subsequent iteration. The architect prepares preliminary plans showing the layout and size of all of the components of the facility including all rooms, closets, toilets, storage and service areas, stairways, elevators and corridors. Indications of surface treatments, decorations and the

locations of equipment also should be shown. Deliverables during this phase include: floor plans, key area plans, building elevations, typical wall sections, key interior elevations, preliminary finish schedule, preliminary door and frame schedule, preliminary window schedule, and preliminary specialty hardware schedule. There are additional engineering, mechanical, landscaping, security, acoustical, and technology diagrams and schedules that are part of the design development stage. At each stage of the design new costs estimates should be provided.

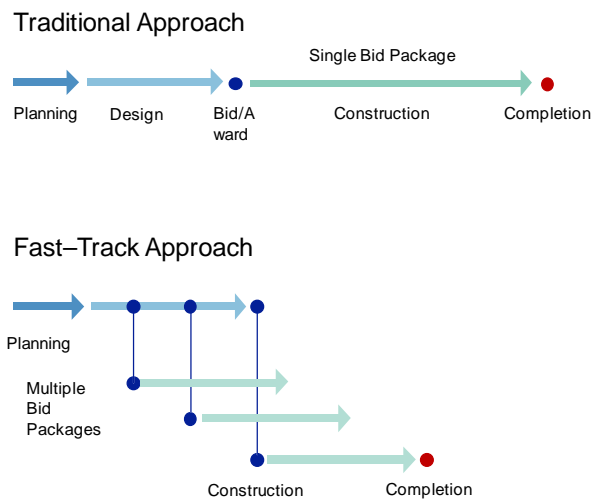


Cost Control Opportunities  
 Courtesy of HOK

These preliminary plans should be reviewed and any changes agreed upon before proceeding further. This is the last good opportunity for changes, since changes in the next step, working drawings, are very costly and time consuming. The final preliminary plans should be approved in writing by the committee, the architect, and the funding agency.

**C. Construction Documents**

The final stage prior to proceeding with the ground breaking and construction of the building is the preparation of the construction documents upon which final cost estimates can be made and which will be the basis for construction bids. The working drawings should be reviewed to make sure that they are in accordance with the final preliminary plans and the building code, and should be approved in writing. Final cost estimates should then be made and, if within budget, the plans should be submitted for construction bids. If necessary, changes can be made prior to approval, but such changes will add substantially to the cost and delay of the project. Changes made at this stage must be carefully considered and made only if critical to the basic serviceability of the facility.



**Project Schedule Comparison**

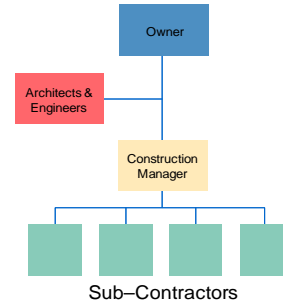
**V. CONSTRUCTION BIDS AND CONSTRUCTION**

The Architect prepares the bid package containing all the information contractors will need in order to prepare bids on the project. After advertising the project a pre-bid conference should be held where contractors and subcontractors can receive information on the project and ask questions. Once bids have been received and opened, the planning consultant/architect will assist the committee and the funding body in reviewing the construction bids for approval. If the bids do not fit within the proposed budget, it may be necessary to review and modify the working drawings to eliminate some aspects of the project so that supplemental construction bids can be obtained that will more closely coincide with the budget. Often, however, by working with the winning contractor to review the bid in detail it is possible to trim construction costs.

The actual construction should be observed and inspected by the architect and the committee, as well as by the public works department to ensure that the construction complies with the working drawings and the building codes. Supervision must include installation of equipment. If such observation and inspection is systematically carried out and noted errors are corrected, final inspection and approval should be accomplished without difficulty. In larger more complicated projects, local jurisdictions often elect to engage a program or construction manager that is responsible for quality control, schedule, and progress payment requests.

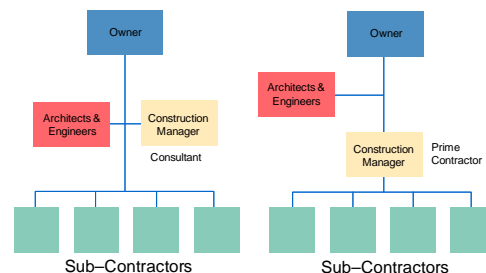
**VI. PROJECT DELIVERY METHODS**

The traditional method of delivering a finished courthouse is through what is referred to as the design-bid-build method where an architect is hired by the local government to prepare a design and construction documents. Then the project is announced for bids to be received from contractors. The bids are reviewed and a contractor selected to build the courthouse.



Traditional Management Approach

The advantage of the design-bid-build approach is that the full details of the construction are known prior to soliciting the bids. The awarding jurisdiction knows the final price at bid opening, unless change orders are permitted during the construction process. Also the architect remains the owner’s representative and can cite the contractor if faulty work is observed.



Construction Management Approach

Courtesy of HOK

A potential disadvantage of this traditional approach is that the design and construction steps are completed sequentially A frequently

used alternative is the use of design-build. In this process the design and construction process is integrated and the Architect is an employee or subcontractor of the contractor. Advantages of this approach is that the contracting entity (local government) has a single point of contact (the contractor) for the entire project and the project can usually be delivered in less time because of the overlap in the design and construction phases. It also eliminates the need for a second bid process to select the building contractor.

Sometimes the design-build team is selected upon completion to the master planning step and will prepare the conceptual design, preliminary design, construction documents and then build the facility. A slightly different approach is for the city/county to hire an architect to complete the conceptual design (usually in conjunction with the master planning step) and then seeks bids from a design-build team that will complete the construction documents and construct the building.

The disadvantage to this process can be the relative inaccessibility of the design expertise since the architect is a subcontractor and can be insulated by the contractor. In the design-build approach, the architect's allegiance is to the contractor and not the owner. Of course, the architect is bound by professional ethics to report any faulty construction methods and is liable to the owner and contractor for design errors, but the direct relationship with the owner can be lost in the design-build method.

**CHAPTER 3 - RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING FACILITIES AND FINANCING COURTHOUSE CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**I. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING COURTHOUSE**

Localities in Virginia are required by [Va. Code § 15.2-1638](#) to provide courthouses and suitable facilities for the judges and staff of district and circuit courts, including Circuit Court Clerks, and upon request space for the Commonwealth Attorney. The costs of doing so are to be paid by the locality and facilities are to be provided in government owned property and not leased. This has traditionally been a responsibility of local government in Virginia.

If the court facilities are deemed to be insufficient or inadequate, the Code of Virginia sets out a process that can be used to compel improvements to a court facility by local Circuit Courts ([§ 15.2-1643](#)). Dating at least to the early 1900s, this process has been used by Circuit Court judges to force jurisdictions to update and upgrade their court facilities. Over the past 15 years this process has been used in a number of communities, including Williamsburg/James City County, Rockbridge County, Dickenson County, and the City of Portsmouth.

If a county plans to construct a courthouse at a new location which is not adjacent to the existing courthouse, [Va. Code §§ 15.2-1644](#) and [15.2-1646](#) requires citizen approval through a referendum.

**II. FINANCING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

There are two court fees that may be collected for the purpose of funding courthouse maintenance and construction. Under a statute first adopted in 1990, [Va. Code§ 17.1-281](#), localities may assess up to a \$2 fee on all civil, criminal, traffic and local ordinance cases for the purposes of construction, renovation, or maintenance of the courthouse or jail and court-related facilities and to defray increases in the cost of heating, cooling, electricity, and ordinary maintenance. The money raised by this fee, however, is generally insufficient to fund most courthouse construction projects and according to JLARC the money has generally been placed in the locality's general fund to offset facility building maintenance (JLARC, *Operational and Capital Funding for District and Circuit Courts*, 2009).

Since 2009, localities may assess an additional \$3 fee per case, specifically for courthouse construction as long as the Department of General Services (DGS) certifies the courthouse as noncompliant with the *Virginia Courthouse Facility Guidelines*. The circuit court clerk is responsible for collecting courthouse fees and transferring them to the local treasurer. This money is "solely for the construction, reconstruction, renovation of, or adaptive re-use of a structure for a courthouse." [Va. Code § 17.1-281 \(D\)](#).

According to DGS, during the first five years of the act 29 jurisdictions requested such certification by DGS.



Localities wishing to impose this \$3 filing fee must submit a self-evaluation of their court facility to DGS, indicating how their facility is non-compliant with the Virginia Courthouse Facility Guidelines. A DGS building inspector then conducts an on-site inspection of the facility to confirm that it is out of compliance. DGS reviews the case and issues a certification of noncompliance, which then authorizes the locality to adopt an ordinance imposing the fee. The locality must reimburse DGS for the site visit and other related costs, which according to DGS have generally been in the range of \$1,100 to \$1,400 in localities that have been certified.

The most common financing arrangement is the general obligation bond. There are basically three options when it comes to financing a capital project such as a courthouse: 1) financing without debt, 2) financing with short-term debt, and 3) financing with long-term debt.

It is usually not possible to finance a capital improvement project out of operating funds. In Virginia, as noted earlier, local governments may charge a filing fee to cover improvements to the courthouse. The amount of funds that can be generated through this method however are generally not enough to fund anything but small renovation or improvement projects. When the indebtedness is not large and the time needed to retire the debt is short, the use of short-term debt, such as grant anticipation notes, tax anticipation notes, and lines of credits, or bonds that can be retired in less than five years may be possible. Such funding mechanisms however may best be reserved for initiating a project when there is a need to get a project started quickly or for minor renovations.

As noted earlier most courthouse projects are financed with long-term debt, such as general obligation bonds. There are however some alternatives that may be used. Long term financing can be broken down into public financing options and private financing options.

#### **A. Public Financing**

Early in the planning process it will usually be necessary to provide some funding for expenses and to hire an architect or courts planner to conduct a review of the current facilities and a needs assessment. This may be funded out of general revenues, as is usually the master plan if one is to be done. Once a decision has been made to go forward with the project it is necessary to secure more substantial funding to cover not only the design architect fees but the site acquisition and construction costs. With very few exceptions this will require some form of loan. Two of the most prevalent public funding options are general obligation bonds and revenue bonds. The choice of which method to use may depend on the length of the project, the political viability of public funding that normally requires a referendum, and the expected life of the building.

##### **1. General Obligation Bonds (GOB)**

General obligation bonds are the most commonly used means of financing long-term large public capital improvement projects. They are relatively inexpensive

and easy to sell, assuming a good bond rating. The use of GOBs, however, requires voter approval, which is sometimes difficult to receive. The public's appetite for expensive public works projects is limited and courts have to compete with other needs such as schools and roads. If obtained, however, voter approval can insulate public officials from later criticisms. Besides anticipated voter rejection, other disadvantages include 1) tax and debt limitations; 2) need to proceed quickly 3) poor bond ratings, and 4) the desire to avoid restrictive laws in the construction of public buildings.

2. Revenue Bonds

Revenue bonds financing is available through a variety of public agencies such as a local industrial development authority. The advantage of revenue bonds is that they circumvent the lengthy and unpredictable political process required with GOBs and there may be some latitude in applying laws governing the construction of public buildings.

**B. Private Financing**

Private financing is becoming more popular as communities seek ways to leverage their tax revenues to greater advantage to finance long needed capital improvements. In general private financing works much like a home mortgage. A private entity provides the funds to construct the facility and the local government body then buys back the facility through a lease purchase agreement that may last 30 years. The loans are paid back through possible revenue that may be generated by the property or through general tax revenue.

1. Certificates of Participation (COPS)

One private financing method is the use of certificates of participation (COPs) which can be used as an alternative to GOBs. The COP is based on sale of interests in lease revenue from a capital project; for instance, the revenue from a parking garage that is constructed as part of the project or a bridge for which tolls are levied.

2. Private Educational Facilities Infrastructure Act

In Virginia, as well as a number of other states, the use of lease/purchase arrangements through a private builder/developer is becoming a more common method of financing public facilities.

In Virginia, the Public-Private Education and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (PPEA) was intended to bring private sector expertise to bear on public capital improvement projects, thus saving time and money. It allows private entities, to "acquire, design, construct, improve, renovate, expand, equip, maintain or operate

qualifying projects.” Its purpose is to encourage innovative approaches to financing construction and renovation of public facilities.

Qualifying facilities must be devoted primarily to public use, typically involving public health, safety, and welfare. The Act grants responsible public entities the authority to create public-private partnerships if it is determined that private involvement may be able to deliver the project in a more timely or cost-effective fashion or lead to improvements in the public entities’ processes or delivery of services.

The private partner provides cost or completion guarantees for which it is given an equity investment in the project. The project requires a dedicated revenue stream with which to pay back the investors. Financing options might include the use of special purpose entities, sale and lease-back transactions, enhanced use leasing, property exchanges, development agreements, conduit financing and other methods allowed by law. Inherent in this type of financing arrangement is the need for the local governing body to identify the source of revenue that will support the lease payments for the term of the agreement.

This method eases many of the front-end political problems of GOBs and other methods requiring public approval. The retirement of the debt shows up in the operating budget in the form of rental or lease costs. It provides good cost controls because there is a single entity which is accountable and there is less likelihood of cost-related changes in the project, the project can be completed faster and there is less likelihood of delays, and it defers the need for public funds because the builder picks up a lot of the early costs. Other benefits include:

- A private enterprise can bring expertise and efficiencies to the project that would not otherwise be available to a public construction project;
- The private enterprise, not the government entity, incurs the long term debt. Therefore, voter approval is not required and the governmental entity’s debt load is not affected;
- The cost of the project can be distributed to the government over a longer period of time;
- The overall cost of the project may be less, based on the assumption that the project will be completed in a shorter time frame and construction costs are expected to increase over time;
- The loan does not affect the debt load of the governmental entity;
- The private enterprise carries the risks associated with the project, including cost overruns and delays; and
- Ongoing maintenance of the facility can be a component of the agreement with performance.

Some of the drawbacks of this method are that the project scope and cost may not be defined until late in the process giving the local governing body and court less control over design issues, the learning curve for public officials and the public

means they may be apprehensive of the process, questions of whether the best possible price was obtained, and the lengthy and complicated negotiations. Also, the public entity may lose some control over the design process because cost control becomes a critical factor in order to maintain the viability of the project.

Other disadvantages are:

- A P3 project bypasses public approval and subjects the project, the funding body, and the governing entity to resistance from the voters/general public.
- Experience to date with P3 projects demonstrates that these projects receive a limited number of bidders; typically one to three entities submit bids. This reduced competition could be detrimental; in contrast, competition among a larger number of bidders generally reduces the overall cost and increases the quality of a project.
- The overall payment for the P3 financing may be higher than a traditional financing method, given that a private entity pays higher interest rates than government entities to borrow money. A P3 project also includes a profit margin for the private entity.
- The financing for a P3 project typically extends out over a longer period of time than in a traditional building model, with the court leasing the facility over a period of up to thirty years.

To date, PPEA has been adopted in Virginia and several other states including Florida, Texas, Utah, Maryland, Arizona, California, and Michigan.

**CHAPTER 4 - COURTHOUSE DESIGN CONCEPTS**

**I. GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

The courthouse should be designed to make maximum use of energy saving features. This involves proper selection of building materials, placement, size and types of windows, potential use of solar devices and appropriate internal zoning of heating and air conditioning. Energy systems are important for court facilities being planned now to last for fifty or more years.

Opportunities for dual uses of some interior spaces should be considered when possible. The jury assembly room, for example, may be used in the evenings as a civic meeting room or for training programs when not needed for jurors. Unfinished, shelled-in courtrooms can be used for records storage or other purposes until full expansion is needed.

**A. Building Image**

The architectural design for a new court facility should present a bold but dignified and appropriate judicial appearance that reflects the community's traditions and culture.

In general the design should present an image that:

- Engenders public trust and confidence through an image of transparency, openness, fairness and dignity;
- Reinforces the independence of the judicial system with a design that is distinctive and emblematic of the courts;
- Reflects the importance, authority and stability of the justice system without being extravagant or ostentatious;
- Conveys a sense of efficiency and decorum;
- Is readily comprehensible and accessible to visitors; and
- Recognizes the historical nature of the community and its traditions and culture.



Historic Williamsburg Courthouse

## **B. Green Building Design**

Over the past decade there has been a growing emphasis on green building construction, including courthouses. This is evident in the greater use of day-lighting in recently built courthouses throughout the country, even in courtrooms, use of local materials, and greater energy efficiency. Many localities have sought to have their courthouses LEED certified. LEED is a proprietary certification process and can be expensive. Many localities, instead of seeking the final certification, specify that the courthouse be designed and built to a certain LEED level, such as silver, without getting the final certification.

In lieu of seeking LEED certification, an alternative is the new International Green Construction Code (IGCC). Begun in 2009 as a cooperative effort of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and ASTM International, the International Green Construction Code regulates construction of new and existing commercial buildings.

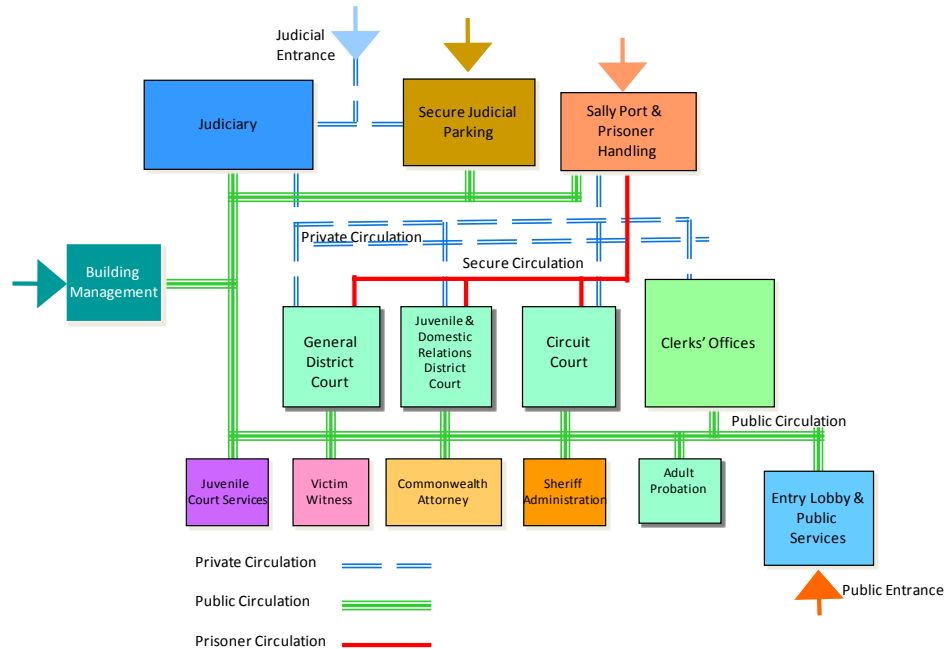
- The code addresses site development and land use, including the preservation of natural and material resources as part of the process.
- The code seeks to improve indoor air quality and support the use of energy-efficient appliances, [renewable energy](#) systems, water resource conservation, [rainwater collection](#) and distribution systems, and the recovery of used water, also known as [greywater](#).
- The IGCC emphasizes building performance, including a requirement for building system performance verification along with building owner education, to ensure the best energy-efficient practices are being carried out.
- A key feature is a section devoted to "jurisdictional electives", which will allow customization of the code beyond its baseline provisions to address local priorities and conditions.

## **C. Controlled Circulation**

The courthouse is a busy center of local government and should operate safely and efficiently in order to serve citizens who come to conduct their legal business. Circulation should be simple and direct, and users and visitors should be able to find their way easily throughout the courthouse.

The hallmark of good courthouse planning is the development of a building-wide circulation system that provides three separate and distinct paths of movement for the public, court professionals –judiciary and staff, and in-custody accused persons. There must be no unwanted cross traffic between the paths and no awkward blockages to the movement within each circulation. This controlled circulation should be clear and direct, efficient and effective; it is essential for both security and safety reasons as well as for the operational efficiency of the court.

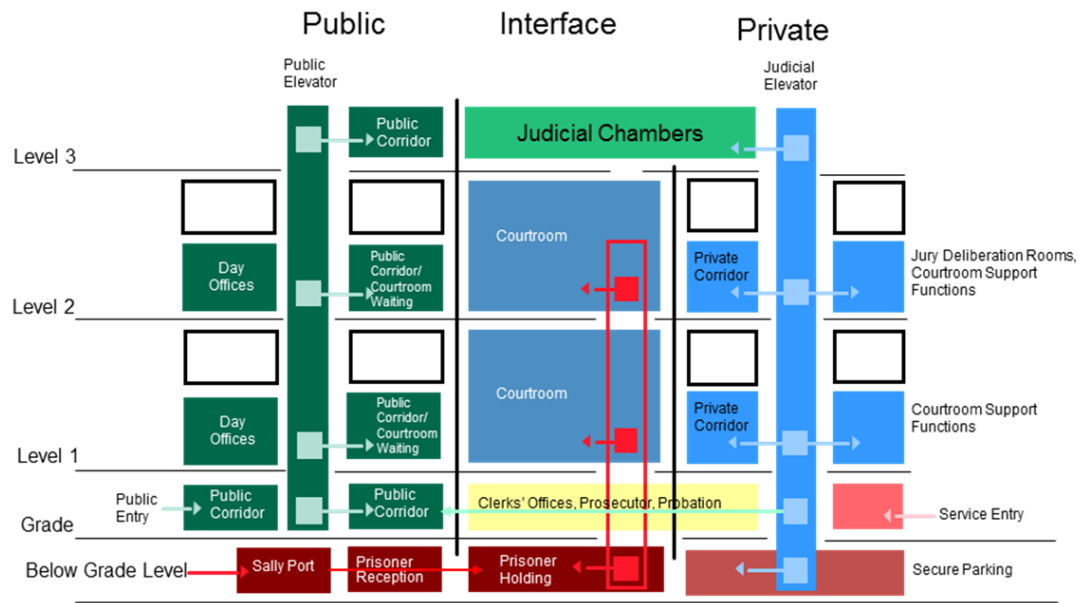
**Typical Building Component Organization and Circulation**



The following discussions apply to new courthouse construction. When renovating older buildings it is permissible to make some minor compromises in the recommended circulation patterns although it is never acceptable to have in-custody detainees escorted through public spaces. In older and smaller rural courthouses it may be necessary for staff to walk through public spaces, although every effort should be made to limit the extent to which judges need to walk through public areas. It also is permissible for prisoners to be escorted through private circulation corridors if staff can be excluded from the corridors during the time prisoners are in the space. This may be done by use of doors that can be temporarily closed to block off sections of the private corridor in order to make it secure while prisoners are being taken to or from a courtroom. Another option may be to limit the times during which prisoners are escorted to and from the courtrooms and have security personnel ensure that all staff are securely sequestered in their offices. Both of these options are only suitable in smaller courthouses with minimal staff and infrequent prisoner movement.

**D. Public Circulation**

The public circulation system provides unrestricted public access from the main building entrance to the various public and functional components of the building. This includes the main lobby, corridors, public elevators and escalators, public washrooms, waiting areas, court clerk counters and reception areas. It also includes access to the many court and ancillary offices, such as the Commonwealth Attorney, and other offices such as Juvenile Court Services, or Community Corrections if located in the courthouse.



Vertical Courthouse Circulation

Users of the public circulation include courthouse staff, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, witnesses, reporters, accused persons not in custody, members of the public present for family or civil cases, persons with business at the clerks’ offices, and courtroom spectators. Public access should be clearly articulated and direct from the main building entrance to all public destinations within the building. Public and staff access into the building should be through the main entrance monitored by security screening staff when the courts are operating.

The building should have a single main entrance for both public and staff. It is acceptable for the entrance area to include more than one entry point into the queuing zone in front of the security screening; however, all staff and visitors should pass through a single security screening point. This should be the only point of access into the courthouse other than the sally port, a secure judicial entrance if provided, the controlled loading dock (larger courthouse), and the secure controlled entries provided through judicial parking.

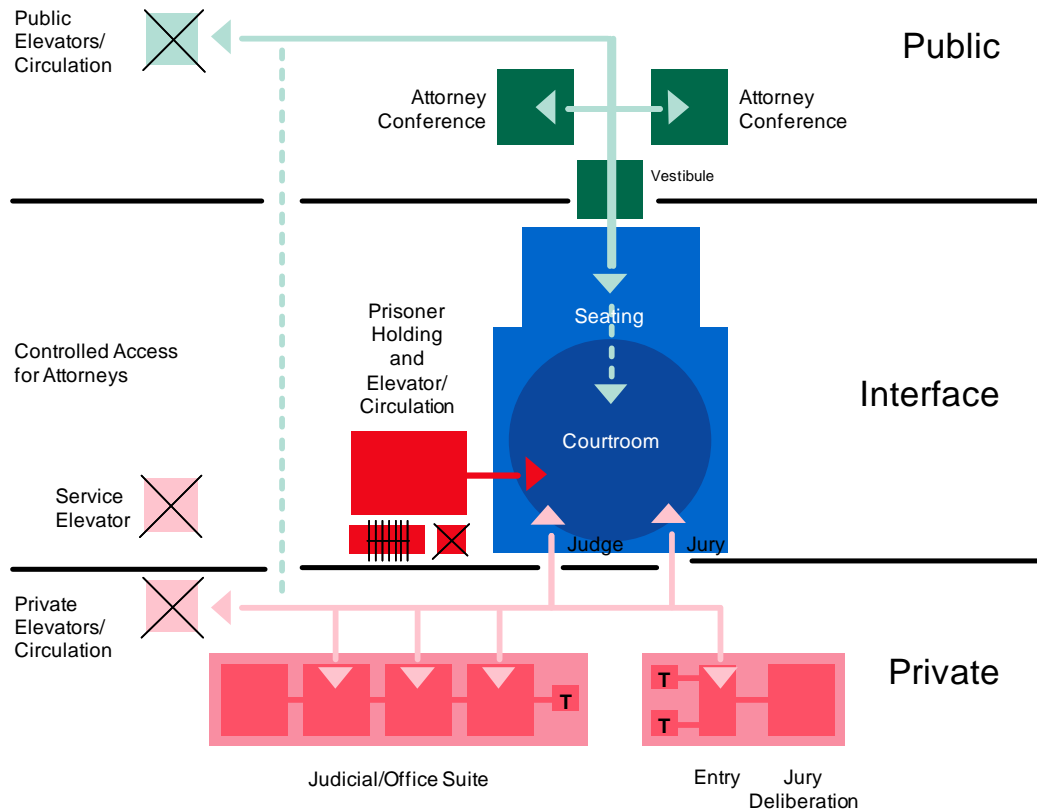
It is permissible for there to be a by-pass for court staff at the security screening point at the main building entrance that requires an access card and that is reserved for the quick processing of staff. In cases where specific proceedings require extra measures of security, public visitors may be screened again before being admitted into the courtroom.

**E. Private Circulation**

The private circulation system provides controlled access to authorized court staff and is not used by the general public unless they are escorted. Both the judiciary and authorized court staff will use the private circulation system. The judiciary will use



the private circulation system for access between judicial offices and courtrooms, and secure judicial parking. Similarly, authorized court staff will use private circulation for access to the courtrooms and judicial offices. All other users must receive specific permission to enter private circulation and must be escorted. It may on occasion be justified to escort vulnerable witnesses through private circulation and jurors also may be escorted through the private circulation to reach jury deliberation rooms.



## Typical Courthouse Model

The need to separate the judiciary from other courthouse users has both a security and a privacy component. For security reasons, private circulation must include judicial access from secure judicial parking facilities to private elevators and offices.

There must be direct access to private circulation from the Judiciary Component as well as the appropriate parts of the Clerks' offices.

All access points to the private circulation system must be controlled.

### F. Secure Circulation

The entire Prisoner Handling Component, including the vehicle sallyport, holding cells, control room, staff offices and ancillary spaces must be treated as a secure

entity, along with the secure prisoner circulation system and courtroom holding cells. It must be physically separate from all non-secure spaces and circulation systems in the courthouse.

Security officers escorting in-custody defendants between the courtrooms and the prisoner handling area will use the secure circulation system. In-custody defendants are not allowed into public or private circulation.

In-custody defendants will enter the courthouse through a secure vehicular sally port, be taken through a prisoner receiving area to a secure admitting and staging area, and then will normally be placed in a holding cell in the central prisoner holding area prior to being escorted to the courtroom for their hearing or trial. Where the courthouse is adjacent to a jail or detention facility, it is permissible for in-custody detainees to be brought to the courthouse through a secure walkway. In such situations the size of the central holding area may be reduced or even eliminated and prisoners escorted directly to the holding areas adjacent to the courtrooms.

The location of temporary prisoner holding cells immediately adjacent to courtrooms reduces the time needed to produce prisoners in court by allowing prisoners to be staged close to courtrooms. It also allows unruly prisoners to be quickly removed from the courtroom and isolated. Located with the courtroom holding cells should be a lawyer/prisoner interview cubicle that allows lawyers quick access to their clients during hearings and trials. Additional lawyer/prisoner interview cubicles should be located with the central holding areas in larger courthouses to permit attorneys an opportunity to meet with their clients prior to court.

A secure prisoner elevator that serves holding cells between pairs of courtrooms is the easiest and most efficient method of obtaining direct prisoner access to courtrooms without crossing private judicial/staff corridors and is essential in large multi-storied buildings.

A connection is required from the Prisoner Handling Component to public circulation, via a double-door pedestrian sally port to permit security officers to move about the building.

#### **G. Secondary Circulation**

There is generally a secondary circulation zone for staff and building services in larger courthouses. This zone is largely contained within the space envelope of the staff areas of the building. The integrity of this zone relies on controlled access between public and private circulation.

Included in the service zone are all those spaces that serve as building support areas for the courthouse, such as the receiving dock, program and building storage areas, building maintenance areas, and the mechanical spaces that are accessed in a secondary circulation zone. The entrances to the building through the receiving dock

must be secure and access must be controlled. Entry from public circulation into these areas should be via a door with controlled access.

**H. Horizontal and Vertical Circulation**

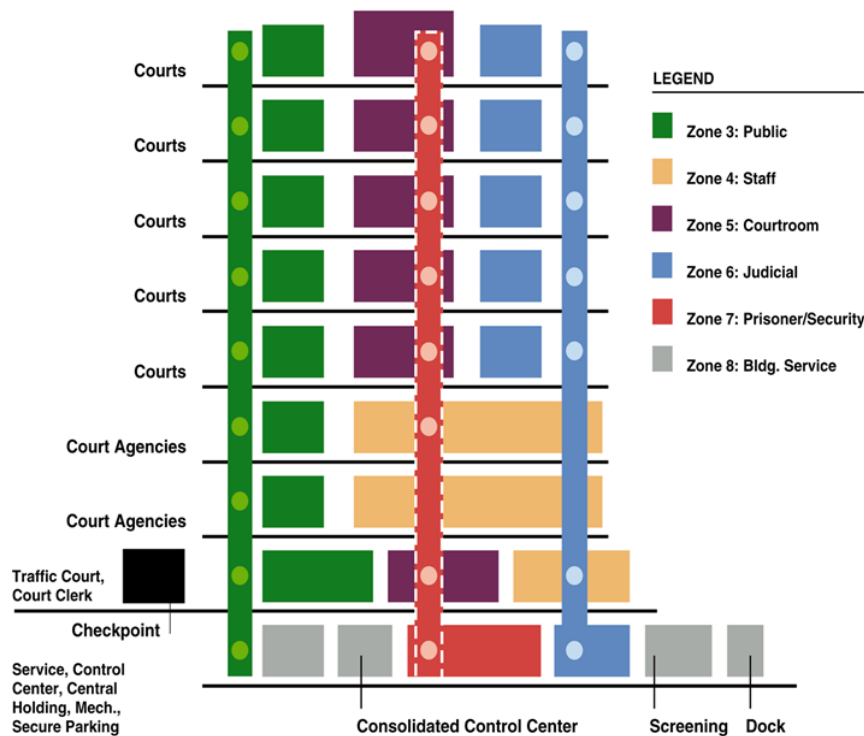
Horizontal travel distances for public, private and prisoner circulation should be minimized through efficient floor layouts that provide easy navigation, unobstructed sightlines and adequate space for people passing abreast of each other.

The location of court functions with high traffic volumes such as clerks and high volume courtroom such as General District Court will have an impact on the vertical transportation requirements. Efficient and rapid public access to these areas is essential. Peak loads must be accommodated.

Depending on the size of the building, one or two elevators will be required as part of private circulation for use by the judiciary, court staff and escorted jurors. The private elevators must serve all floors with courtrooms, the clerks’ offices, the judiciary, and the secure judicial parking.

In large buildings a separate dedicated service elevator is desirable for the movement of materials and furniture through the building. The service elevator should be close to the receiving area and should serve all floors of the building.

**Typical Courthouse Zones**



In large courthouses with high foot traffic consideration should be given to installing escalators between the lower floors with high volume functions such as clerk's offices and high volume courtrooms such as traffic court.

## **II. LOCATION AND ORGANIZATION OF COURTHOUSE COMPONENTS**

The location of offices and functions within the courthouse has a lot to do with how well the building promotes the efficient and safe operation of the courts, and how it is perceived by courthouse occupants and members of the community. High volume functions and activities that attract heavy foot traffic or outside visitors should be located on lower floors, or near the main public entrance. These include clerks' offices, public service counters, and high volume courtrooms such as General District Court or a traffic courtroom.

While trial courtrooms typically draw many participants, they may be located away from the lobby and entrance because of the need for quiet and few distractions. Chambers also must be located away from high volume public areas with their noise and distractions.

The secure circulation can be handled much more efficiently if courtrooms are stacked. In this way, one prisoner elevator can service several courtrooms on different floors.

Other benefits of separating high and lower volume activities include the reduction in stair or elevator traffic, noise reduction near the courtrooms, security enhancement and ease of future expansion of individual functions.

Functions that should be adjacent or close to courtrooms include courtroom-holding facilities, public waiting, attorney interview rooms, and prisoner holding cells.

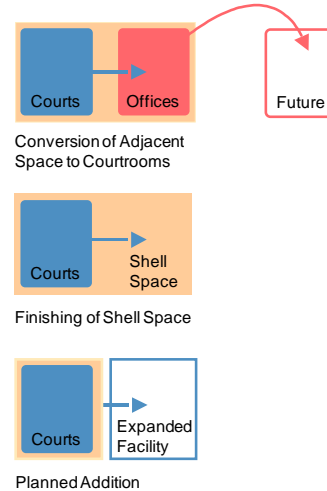
Judicial offices may be located on a separate floor where judges can have quick and easy access to courtrooms via private elevator, or behind the courtrooms separated by a private staff corridor. This also provides judges with a quiet and dignified space in which to conduct their legal research and prepare for court, and it allows for the sharing of appropriate administrative support functions and spaces.

**III. EXPANSION, ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY**

All courthouses should be built to accommodate future changes and growth in the courts. This requires buildings that can be expanded easily, spaces that can be used for more than one purpose, and spaces that can adapt over time to new uses and needs.

**A. Physical Expansion**

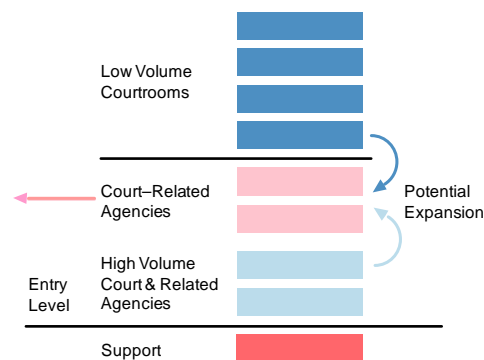
Changes to the facility may become necessary at some time in the future. Planning should consider expansion options in the event of unforeseen future growth. Such planning should consider how the building might be expanded through the addition of courtroom modules or other operations within the building. Consideration also should be given to how the horizontal and vertical portions of the three circulation systems would be extended to service the expanded operations.



Future Horizontal Expansion  
 Courtesy of HOK

**B. Adaptability and Flexibility**

Adaptability refers to the capacity of space to be converted for use by other functions. The level of adaptability can be increased by creating a design that is based on modules and structured around well-defined primary circulation routes. One means of



Provisions For Future Vertical Expansion

expansion is to move a component into a new building or addition and to use the vacated space for expansion of courtrooms or other core court functions. This kind of adaptability that makes it possible to convert space into additional courtrooms requires a structural system design with appropriate column spacing and floor-to-floor heights to accommodate future courtroom modules.

Flexibility refers to the capacity of individual spaces to be used for a variety of functions over the lifetime of the building. One way of maximizing flexibility is to have a limited range of enclosed office spaces and a majority of the work processing space in open office areas where the screens and furniture can be readily reconfigured to meet evolving needs without reconfiguring walls.

Other ideas include the use of building structural systems and core designs that are flexible and adaptable to multiple future uses and needs. Space should be designed with an alternative future use in mind. For example, conference rooms should be sized to permit their easy conversion to standard sized offices. Another strategy might be to make all enclosed spaces (supply closets or storage rooms) large enough that they also can be converted to office space in the future as staff is added. It also means making sure that all spaces are equipped with sufficient electrical, data, and voice lines.

**CHAPTER 5 - SIZE DETERMINANTS OF THE COURTHOUSE**

The following key factors determine the required floor area of a courthouse. Understanding these determinants and how they determine overall size will help in developing a functional plan and design.

**I. COURTROOMS**

The number of courtrooms is the main determinant of the scale of a courthouse. Courtrooms are used for different types of hearings in addition to regular trials, including first appearances, preliminary hearings, motions hearings, pretrial hearings, and guilty pleas and sentencing.

The number of courtrooms is a primary indicator of size for courthouses. Courtrooms are large spaces, and each has associated with it a constellation of support spaces, such as attorney client conference rooms, public waiting, and prisoner holding. Additionally, the courtrooms are the major factor determining the number and size of the judicial, clerk, public, technical and other spaces throughout the building.

The courtroom is an area where the public, private and secure circulation systems converge. Courtrooms must be easily accessible to the public. Staff and judges must be able to enter the courtroom by means of a private corridor, while in-custody defendants must enter directly from secure circulation and a holding area adjacent to the courtroom. It is generally recommended that each courtroom have

- At least two attorney client interview rooms
- An entry vestibule to keep the noise in the corridors out of the courtroom
- Access to secure circulation
- Access to associated in-custody holding cells
- Access to judges' chambers by means of private circulation
- Access to jury deliberation rooms (Circuit Court) by means of private circulation
- Associated public waiting area

Courtrooms also generally require associated storage rooms and an audio-visual equipment room.

**II. COURTHOUSE OCCUPANTS**

Determining the occupants of the courthouse is up to the local city or county. The courtrooms, the judiciary and court clerks are central to the functioning of the courts. In

addition, certain functions, such as prisoner handling and basic public services are considered part of the essential court functions that are included in all courthouses.

Other functions may be included in courthouses to enhance efficiency of the overall system.

- Commonwealth Attorney
- Victim Witness Program
- Day offices for outside social agencies (CASA, etc.)
- Mediation
- Juvenile Court Services
- Community Corrections/Adult Probation
- Public Defender

### **III. PERSONNEL**

Staff occupies much of the space provided in a courthouse and, as with all office space, is an important factor in determining required space.

### **IV. BARRIER FREE ACCESS**

The need to provide access for persons with disabilities often requires additional space to provide wheelchair access. The addition of ramps and space for turning has necessitated some additional space in courtrooms and other spaces such as restrooms and offices. The Americans with Disabilities Act govern requirements for barrier-free access in the courthouse.

### **V. SPACE STANDARDS AND GROSSING FACTORS**

A major determinant of overall courthouse space is the space allocation standards used when designing a courthouse. Space allocation standards recommended in this document are based on best/current practice for court facilities using examples from recent courthouse construction in Virginia as well as from around the country. Many local jurisdictions also have their own space standards for general office design and construction which may be used for many of the general office spaces in the courthouse such as occur in the Commonwealth Attorney's Office and clerks' offices.

The following table lists the most common workspaces incorporated in most court facilities. Workspaces 1 to 3 are open or landscaped, while the remaining workspaces are enclosed offices or rooms. The areas noted for the majority of rooms are measured to the center point of the enclosing partitions. Net areas for landscaped workstations are measured to the outside face of enclosing screens.



<h2>Summary of Space Standards</h2>			
<b>Workspace</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Enclosure</b>	<b>Typical Applications</b>
Home Base	36 ft <sup>2</sup>	Open	'Home base' for staff who normally work away from their workstation. This includes volunteers and staff who might spend most of their workday in the courtroom or out of the building.
Workstation	48 ft <sup>2</sup>	Open	Staff without regular need to consult others at their workstation and without special equipment needs.
Workstation	70 ft <sup>2</sup>	Open	Staff at all levels, with regular need to consult one other person in workstation, and with additional work surface, reference storage and special equipment needs; or staff at all levels, with need to consult with two other persons in workstation, and additional storage/reference needs, but without special equipment needs.
Small Meeting/ Interview Room	90 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Space for up to four persons to have a short meeting with acoustical privacy but no storage needs. Also used as interview room or attorney client interview room.
Standard Office	100-120 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Personnel with role requiring space for regular meetings with up to two other persons, acoustical privacy, reference and file storage. Also can be used for day offices for visiting social service agencies such as CASA, Judicial Secretary, Investigator, law clerk.
Professional/Attorney Office	120-140 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Professionals such as assistant commonwealth attorney, public defender attorney, or probaiton officer. Requires acoustical privacy, reference and file storage.
Supervisor's Office	130-150 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Professional and management workspace with room for three visitors, acoustical privacy, reference and file storage.
Department Head Office	180-240 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Chief probation officer, District Court Clerk, J&DR Court Clerk
Judge's /Constitutional Officer's Office	300-380 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Judge workspace with room for five visitors and a washroom. Also used for Circuit Clerk and Commonwealth Attorney offices.
Jury Assembly	10-15 sq. ft per juror	Enclosed	Jury Assemble should hold 50 - 120 jurors. Courtroom may be used for jury assembly in small courthouses.
Jury Deliberation	265-400 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	15-20 sq. ft. per juror plus space for toilets, coat room, and kitchenette, and vestibule. Should hold a minimum of 14 persons.
Grand Jury Room	265-400 ft <sup>2</sup>	Enclosed	Accommodates witness, court reporter, prosecutor, and jurors. Jury deliberation room may be used.
Law Library	Variable	Enclosed	Depends upon size of collection. May be used as conference room.
Large Circuit Courtroom	2,000-2,200	Enclosed	If thre is only one Circuit Courtroom in the Courthouse it should be a large courtroom to accommodate a variety of proceedings.
Regular Circuit Coourtroom	1,400-1,600	Enclosed	Standard jury trial courtroom.
Large General District Courtroom	2,000-2,200	Enclosed	Used for traffic or other high volume functions. If there is only one General District Courtroom in the Courthouse it should be approx. 2,000 in order to handle all types of proceedings.
Standard General District Courtroom	1,200-1,400	Enclosed	Standard non-jury courtroom.
Large J&DR Courtroom	1,200-1,400	Enclosed	Limited spectator seating. Litigation area should accommodate several counsel tables.
Standard J&DR Courtroom	1,000-1,200	Enclosed	Limited spectator seating. Litigation area should accommodate several counsel tables.

**A. Net Square Feet (NSF)**

For the purposes of these guidelines, net square feet (NSF) is the amount of space required for a particular function, such as a single workstation or private office, exclusive of interior walls or circulation space around the functional area. The NSF is the assignable, or functional, space in the building. These facility guidelines include space standards that are described in net square feet (NSF).

Net areas for open office shelving and file cabinets, including high-density filing and mechanical filing units include the required working area in front of the unit to allow the files and shelves to be accessed.

Net areas for reception counters and service counters include space to allow the staff to sit or stand behind the counter and for the public to stand in front of the counter.

**B. Component Gross Square Feet (CGDF)**

To make individual functional spaces work in conjunction with each other, such as a cluster of offices or workstations, a circulation/grossing factor is added to the NSF. The circulation factor adds space for interior walls and partitions, internal corridors, and circulation among functional components. This is the amount of area that is required for a department or component such as the clerk's office or Commonwealth Attorney's Office to function within the building. This is the Component Gross Square Feet and is calculated by multiplying the total NSF in a component by a factor that estimates the additional space needed for partitions, interior circulation, and structural members and columns. Depending upon the type of space the appropriate factors may vary from 1.2 to 1.5.

The CGSF needed in a courthouse is reasonably consistent with similar requirements in commercial office or government administration buildings except in highly specialized areas, such as courtrooms and prisoner holding facilities that require considerably more internal circulation.

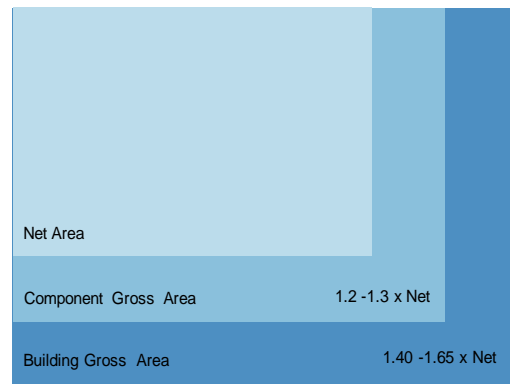


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

City of Portsmouth Courthouse, Component Spaces

**C. Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF)**

To link various functional departments within a courthouse and to transport people among floors additional space has to be added to the CGSF. Basic core functions, beyond net assignable square feet, and beyond CGSF, are required in any building. For a courthouse, this includes major public corridors linking departments; private corridors linking courtrooms, judges' chambers, jury deliberation rooms, and other dedicated courtroom-support spaces; secure corridors linking courtrooms with prisoner detention facilities; public elevators and elevator lobbies; private and secure elevators; stairs; mechanical, electrical, and plumbing chases; public toilet facilities; and the exterior walls of the building. It is suggested that main lobby areas, bulk storage areas, and major mechanical systems are best treated as net assignable spaces in order to assure sufficient space.



Typical Courthouse Efficiency and Grossing Factors

Because courthouses have unique security and circulation requirements, more total space is needed to make individual departmental areas work than in an office building or other government buildings. Courthouses require additional private corridors and private and secure elevator cores. Because judicial facilities must handle large numbers of people with efficiency and a sense of decorum, main lobbies, elevator cores and elevator lobbies, and public corridors must be larger than in a typical office building. This additional space is referred to as building gross square feet (BGSF).

**D. Net to Gross Ratios/Efficiency Factors**

During the planning process it is necessary to estimate both the CGSF and the BGSF. Both can be estimated by multiplying the net area by a grossing factor. To arrive at an estimate of CGSF the net area is multiplied by a factor of 1.2 to 1.3. To arrive at a BGSF estimate the typical courthouse should have a net to gross ratio of 1.35 to 1.65. The NSF should be multiplied by a factor of 1.35 to 1.65 to estimate total BGSF. The average ratio among recent projects nationwide is about 1.50.

**E. Ratio of Total Building Area to Total Number of Courtrooms**

Another way to estimate total BGSF is to make use of the ratio of BGSF to the number of courtrooms. This might be done in order to obtain a rough order of magnitude estimate during the early planning discussions prior to the hiring of a cost consultant. An examination of recent court project nationally provided a range of 12,000 to 17,000 BGSF per courtroom. A critical factor in determining this ratio is

what is to be included in the courthouse. In Virginia, a courthouse that includes Juvenile Court Services and Community Corrections within the building will have a slightly higher BGSF/courtroom ratio than one that does not. Also, Virginia's courts on average operate with fewer staff, such as judicial secretaries/ assistants, law clerks, and other judicial support staff, than do many courts around the country, thus Virginia's courthouses are likely to have a lower BGSF to courtroom ratio on average than do courthouses in other areas of the country. For the purposes of early planning a good ratio for courts in Virginia is be between 13,000 and 16,000 BGSF per courtroom.

**CHAPTER 6 - GENERAL BUILDING CONCEPTS**

While many elements of a courthouse can be described as discrete units that combine to create individual areas of the building, other elements are pervasive and affect the ultimate utility of the facility. These guidelines address the pervasive elements first to emphasize their importance. The effects of elements such as location, circulation, and security are hard to quantify. Yet the successful integration of these elements into the building will be apparent to, and appreciated by, all users of the facility, while failure to do so will quickly be apparent.

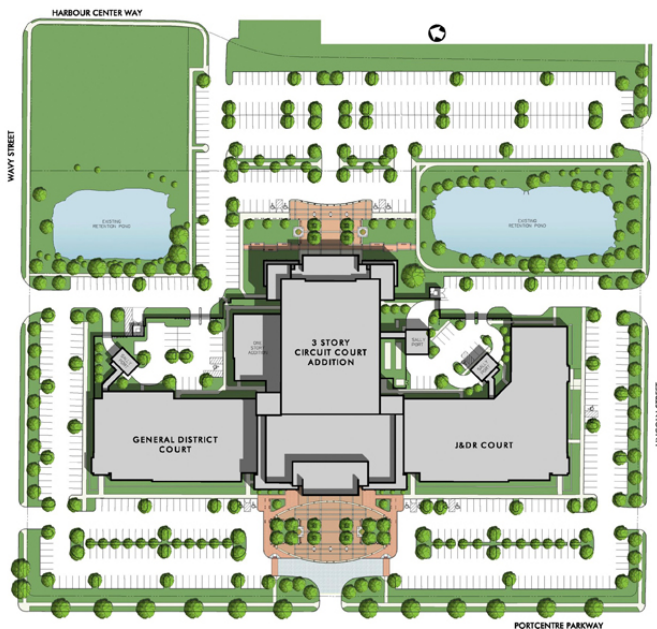
**I. SITE PLANNING AND ACQUISITION**

If new construction is the option chosen, information about the availability, suitability, and cost of alternative sites is necessary. A major consideration should be the impact that a move will have on the public and client populations. How accessible is the new location? Is public transportation available? Is there sufficient parking?

Another factor to be considered is the affect that a move will have on the movement of in-custody defendants and how transportation costs will be affected.

Among the criteria that usually need to be considered are,

- Ease of public access.
- Availability of public transportation and parking.
- Proximity to other government buildings and programs.
- Relationship to other services such as restaurants, office supplies, libraries, copy centers and attorney offices.
- Relationship to civic center.
- Impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Prominence of site.
- Availability and cost of site.



City of Portsmouth Courthouse, Site Plan

- Expansion potential.
- Site amenities.
- Physical constraints of the site.
- Site use restrictions.
- Prisoner accessibility.

Initial consideration of site acquisition should be kept “in house” to prevent land cost escalation. Public hearings on site selection, with publication of advance notice of the hearings, is advisable in order to obtain the views of various interest groups and to obviate subsequent opposition on the ground that conflicting interests were not taken into consideration in the site selection process.

**A. Location**

When planning a new courthouse, the site should be one that is easily reached by the general public, either by car or public transportation. It is desirable that it be in proximity to the main business district and any cluster of professional offices, particularly attorneys, and near other government offices with which the court interacts. While it is not essential that the courts be located near the jail, it is often desirable. Those courts that have direct access from the jail to the court experience fewer problems and reduced expense for transportation of prisoners. Where this is not possible, a special entry, or vehicular sally port, for prisoner transport vehicles is required.

Today many new courthouses are built on the perimeter of the community in which they were once located because of congested downtown locations and the scarcity of suitable building sites large enough to accommodate the new building’s requirements.

It is rare to have everyone agree on an ideal location for the new court facility but deliberations should involve considerations for the public, business and professional communities and other government activities. Careful study of the past and projected growth of the locality and its demographics could prove useful in designating the best available site.

Whenever possible, all three courts (Circuit Court, General District Court, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court) should be located in the same facility, or in facilities in close proximity to one another, as in a judicial or government complex or campus. The public perceives the courts as a whole, and looks to the courthouse as the logical place to go for matters relating to “court.” When the Circuit, General District, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts are located in different parts of the community, it can be confusing to members of the public. It can also detract from the notion of a unified court system, particularly when there is a noticeable difference in the quality of the facilities housing the three courts.

**B. Public and Pedestrian Access**

Access to the courthouse should be both safe and convenient for everyone. Ideally it would be located where individuals have easy, inexpensive access to the building, where it is located on public transportation routes, within easy walking distance of major government and commercial buildings, and close to major public roads with plenty of parking. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Small rural communities often do not have public transportation and in many of our larger urban centers walking to the courthouse is not possible unless you are in the immediate vicinity. Most people will arrive at the courthouse by car, so it is critical that the courthouse be located on a main thoroughfare and that there be plenty of accessible parking.

**C. Parking**

Adequate parking should be available near all court facilities, with special provisions made for judges, Constitutional Officers, and if possible jurors.

In addition to judges and staff, attorneys, litigants, family, friends, jurors, media personnel, and witnesses all come to the courthouse daily for trials, other court hearings, and to conduct business with the courts. In Virginia, land records bring title searchers, attorneys, and members of the public to the courthouse. Lack of adequate parking not only creates traffic problems, as people drive around looking for places to park, it can cause court delays when trial participants are late to court because they cannot find a place to park.

Judges and Constitutional Officers should be provided secure parking, preferably in an enclosed garage with direct access to the court's private circulation system. Judges should never be provided unsecured parking in the public parking area and judges' parking spaces should never be identified.

Determining the proper number of parking spaces is contingent on a number of factors, including:

- The number and type of courtrooms.
- The availability of and the expected use of public transit.
- The availability of carpooling and public transportation programs to reduce staff parking requirements.
- The number of employees.
- The average number of attorneys, visitors, witnesses, litigant, and jurors expected daily and their expected length of stay.
- Availability of existing parking within a three- to five-minute walk from the courthouse.

- The average number of official vehicles expected daily at the site.

Demand for parking spaces at court facilities is not well documented. Limited data from several recent court projects indicate a parking demand for all courthouse users, excluding judicial officers who are given secured parking, ranges from about 2 to 4 spaces per 1,000 gross building square feet. No single standard for courthouse parking exists: geographic location; number of and type of courtrooms; number of employees; proximity to downtown and public transit systems; availability of shared parking with other offices; and land uses all affect parking demand.

Handicapped-accessible parking spaces in the quantities required by code relative to the overall size of the parking lot must be provided. Accessible spaces should be located adjacent (or as close as possible) to the building's main entry.

A drop-off zone may be provided near the building's main entry. If provided it should be outside any defined security zone protected by bollards, berms, or other type of barrier.

Provide a loading/delivery zone for delivery vehicles that do not need to use the loading dock, or where a loading dock is not provided.

## **II. ACCOMMODATING THE PUBLIC**

Court facilities must include public waiting areas with access to pay telephones, drinking fountains, and restrooms, in or near courtrooms and offices where the public comes to conduct business.

### **A. Waiting Areas**

Public waiting areas should be easily accessible from the public entrances. Seating areas should be provided, but should not obstruct traffic patterns. In addition to a lobby area near the main entrance, large hallways or special waiting rooms, with comfortable seating, in which visitors may wait and attorneys can meet with their clients, should be planned near courtrooms. In planning and furnishing these spaces consideration should be given to minimizing noise transmission from the waiting area to the courtroom. Because the aesthetics of the waiting area may have an effect on litigants and witnesses coming to court, care should be taken in selecting



Fairfax County Courthouse, Public Waiting Area



the colors and textures of wall coverings and furnishings. Public restrooms, pay telephones, and water fountains should be conveniently located in or near these areas. Basic first-aid services may be provided.

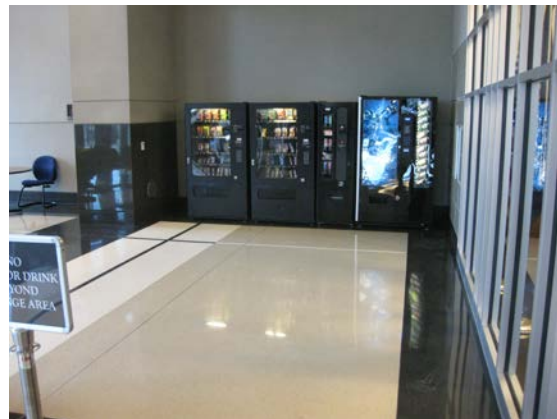
Waiting space needs vary with the type of court being served. General district courts with their large misdemeanor and traffic calendars will generally require more public waiting space than circuit courts. A public address system facilitates moving people from the waiting area to the courtrooms at the appropriate times. Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts also require larger waiting areas to accommodate persons waiting for their hearing. Unlike General District Court and Circuit Courts where persons generally wait for their hearing in the courtroom, J&DR Courts generally restrict seating in the courtroom to persons participating in the hearing while everyone else waits outside.

Circuit courts generally require less waiting area. Smaller hallways with seating areas may be appropriate. To be effective, waiting areas must be planned to accommodate the court's busiest days. Large numbers of people with no place to wait can create confusion in the courthouse and present a security and safety problem.

Offices such as the clerk's office should include open space to accommodate waiting lines and limited seating on the public side of the counter.

**B. Food Service**

Where food service is not available near the courthouse consideration should be given to providing some type of food service in the courthouse. Depending on the court's size and level of activity, this need may be addressed by vending machines, a snack bar, or a cafeteria. For courts situated in a government complex, a central cafeteria may be available which would serve the courts' needs.



City of Portsmouth Courthouse, Vending Area

**C. Public Information and Signage**

In large busy courthouses, a staffed information desk may be considered. If included, it should be located in a highly visible area near the main entrance just inside the security perimeter and clearly identified. Interactive touch screen displays that can provide directional as well as other building or case information can be located in the lobby or elsewhere in the building.

Good signage answers questions before they are asked and promotes good will with the public. It also eliminates the need to ask for directions or instructions from court staff that are busy working. There are many signage styles available, and several should be considered prior to selection.

Facility planners should try to insure continuity of the signage supplier since internal changes are inevitable – and using the same type for new signs is desirable. Hand lettered signs should be avoided except as a very temporary measure.

**1. Case Information and Dockets**

In the main lobby and outside each courtroom should be an area where daily dockets can be displayed. In the past this was in the form of typed or printed sheets providing the defendant name, case number, time, and courtroom. Most new court facilities are making use of automated



Colonial Heights Courthouse, Video Docket in Lobby

video docket display systems. These require power and data jacks positioned on the wall usually at a height of about seven to eight feet from the floor. Also required are mounting brackets to hold the video panels.

**2. Building Directions and Directory**

Prominent directional and informational signs should be used in the courthouse. Signs directing the public within a court facility should complement the interior decor of the facility and should be designed to be uniform and professional in appearance. Such signs should be located in the lobby and on each floor of the courthouse.

There should be a building directory and a building schematic diagram located at the main public entrance that lists all offices in the building. Among the other types of signs that should be installed are: office names; room numbers; officials' names and titles; counter signs such as criminal or civil; restricted access; warnings; directional signs with arrows; special handicap facilities; quiet zones; and brief procedural guidelines (i.e. "order and pay for photocopies here").

**3. Limited English Proficiency**

There should be clearly displayed signage as soon as one enters a courthouse to indicate the availability of free language access services. It is desirable for this message to appear in English and also in any language for which there are at least

1000 individuals served by the courthouse within a one year period (to the degree that each language possesses a written component).

Additional signage is useful for those with limited English proficiency (LEP). In particular, this material may be functional rather than tied to specific court terminology. So, rather than identifying a “Docket,” a sign may be more useful for someone with LEP if it were to send the message, “Verify case information here.” All signs should be reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis as offices and functions may shift locations within a courthouse, and the signs should contain the English equivalent in addition to its translation. In no event should signs be updated in English, without its translated equivalent being updated as well. Courts should especially consider multilingual signs to identify important locations for post-court obligations (i.e. fine paying station). Signs can and should rely on images whenever possible, given the fact that any individual without visual impairment can understand them, regardless of language proficiency. Many courts currently use such image signs to specify items that are forbidden within a court building, to advertise the existence of a non-smoking policy, and to identify the locations of male and female restrooms.

### III. PLANNING FOR EXTENDED HOURS ACCESS

There is often a need for after-hours access to some parts of the building. The Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office often needs to work after-hours and on weekends. If Juvenile Court Services and Community Corrections are in the courthouse, they too may desire after-hours access to meet with clients and provide special programs. The Magistrates, if in the courthouse, require 24-hour access seven days a week.

The layout of the courthouse should facilitate public and staff after-hours access to these areas while still maintaining overall building security. After hours use by one component must not jeopardize the security of other components in the building.

### IV. PLANNING FOR ACOUSTICS

Careful consideration must be given to the choice of textures and materials used for carpets, screens, and wall coverings. Normal privacy between open-office workstations can be provided through use of high sound absorptive ceilings, moderately high screens, and sufficient ambient sound (either through general sounds in the office, or through use of an electronic sound masking system).

Areas of the courthouse that require special acoustic consideration include jury deliberation rooms, judicial chambers, attorney / client interview rooms, probation offices, and attorney offices, as well as the prisoner holding areas and cells. Courtrooms have slightly different acoustic requirements to assist all the participants to hear clearly. For this reason it is important to eliminate outside noises from being heard in the courtroom. This includes outside street noises, conversations and noise from the corridors, and especially noise generated from within the court floor holding cells.

## **V. PLANNING FOR LIGHTING**

Special mention is made of lighting requirements in areas where video display terminals (VDTs) are in use. Where VDTs are being used, light intensity and contrast between room surfaces must be reduced. This becomes more difficult in courtrooms where there is a need for clear observation and recognition of facial features and expressions and court exhibits. As a general rule, where VDTs are in use, illumination levels must be generally lower to ensure user comfort; display screens should be capable of being tilted and rotated; the top of the screen should be lower than the eyes of the user; and illumination levels ranging from 20-50 foot candles should be provided on horizontal work surfaces. In general, a moderate level of general illumination combined with high performance task lighting should be used throughout the buildings.

Courtroom lighting has traditionally been designed to provide general illumination (30 FC) throughout the room and higher illumination levels (70 FC) in the litigation well. With the use of VDTs at the judge's bench, clerk's workstation, jury box, witness stand, and attorney tables, workstations should be provided specific lighting and individual lighting controls.

### **Workstation Lighting**

At the workstations, individual lighting requirements should be met through the use of individual control of the light sources illuminating the respective work areas, and through the use of localized task lighting.

Screen clarity and office lighting affect worker well-being when using a VDT.

- Glare from outside light sources creates eye strain.
- The VDT should be positioned at a 90 degree angle to strong light sources such as windows or bright lights.
- The screen angle should be adjusted to reduce glare if needed.
- Screen filters may be needed to reduce glare if other methods fail.
- The screen should have adequate character resolution and luminance.
- Displays that have a perceptible "flitter" should be avoided.
- Avoid intense light sources in the peripheral field of vision if possible.

## **VI. BUILDING CODES**

All applicable state and local building and health and safety codes must be followed in the construction or renovation of court facilities. Building codes address quality of construction and safety of people. In the safety area, fire protection is the most critical because of the

swift and devastating effect of the by-products of combustion. Fire protection starts with prevention and then addresses early detection for evacuation or quick suppression and finally fast response by fire fighters.

## VII. PLANNING FOR ERGONOMIC DESIGN

People whose occupations involve spending prolonged periods of time at a computer workstation are subjected to stresses that may lead to painful, debilitating conditions. Ergonomic standards in the workplace promote worker productivity, safety and health. For this reason, all workstations whether located in offices, courtrooms, or other areas of the courthouse should be designed to meet basic ergonomic design requirements, such as those specified in ANSI/HFES 100-2007, Human Factors Engineering of Computer Workstations.

Office and furniture design should consider a wide range of ergonomic issues, including the type of seating, the location and placement of the keyboard, mouse or other input devices, the location and placement of the video display terminal (VDT), and lighting. Adjustable chairs and desks, well-designed keyboards, and proper lighting all contribute to the reduction of physical stresses.

- Workstations (including built-in counter workstations) should provide appropriate clearances for knees; clearances to undersides of fixed work surfaces; clearances for adjustable height work surfaces; and ADA accessibility.
- Hand controls, drawer pulls, handles, knobs, etc. should provide adequate space for hands and fingers.
- Frequently used hand controls should be within easy reach and be in the operator's primary reach zone.
- Storage units should be designed with closures that minimally intrude into work activity and circulation zones.

### A. Workstation Seating

- Seating should be designed to meet ANSI/HFS 100-2007.
- The chair should accommodate a variety of seated postures.
- The angle between the seat pan and backrest should be adjustable:
- Chairs should provide a five blade base with swivel caster.
- Chairs should have an adjustable seat height so that thighs are nearly horizontal and feet can rest flat and comfortably on the floor.
- There should be a footrest if feet are unable to rest comfortably on the floor.

- There should be an angle of 60 to 100 degrees between the upper and lower legs, when feet are flat on the floor or on a foot support.
- The chair should permit an angle of not less than 90 degrees, with 100 degrees as preferable, between the seat pan and seat back.
- An adjustable backrest should provide support for the curvature in the lower back.

#### **B. Posture and Location of VDT**

- Elbows should be kept close to the sides of the body to reduce upper back and shoulder muscle tension.
- A 90 degree angle should be maintained between the upper and lower arm. This is considered “neutral,” although any position between 70 and 135 degrees is acceptable.
- The wrist and forearm should be held in a straight line with the forearm should be roughly parallel to the floor to reduce tendon and nerve stress.
- Wrists should be supported near the keyboard by a wrist support to help provide a neutral (straight) arm/wrist position.
- The keyboard should slope between 0 and 25 degrees.
- The head should be up, with the VDT about 48 to 25 inches from the eyes. The minimum acceptable eye-to-screen distance is 12 inches.
- The VDT display should be located at a comfortable viewing angle and distance. Current research suggests that the entire display should be slightly below (about 20 degrees below the horizon) the horizontal line of sight.

## **CHAPTER 7 - PLANNING FOR TECHNOLOGY**

### **I. RESPONDING TO CHANGING TECHNOLOGY**

The past decade has seen dramatic changes in the work and organization of courts, and in the technology and equipment needed to support that work. The use of technologies such as video conferencing and the internet is changing how courts conduct business. Changes in video and telecommunications technology make it possible to conduct trials without having to bring the witnesses, jurors, and judge together in one room. The day may come when video testimony replaces the appearance of witnesses at the courthouse. Even jurors could participate from their homes and offices, perhaps by viewing an edited video record rather than the live proceedings. A video trial could be cheaper, safer, less time-consuming, and easier to schedule; make more efficient use of judges' and attorneys' time; reduce pressures on courtroom facilities and be more considerate of and more convenient for victims and witnesses<sup>1</sup>. While this vision of the future may not be realized, even today recorded depositions may be entered as evidence in some cases, children may offer testimony via remote closed-circuit television in certain stressful situations, and judges conduct arraignments and hold preliminary hearings by remote video hookups.

In order to make the most use of these technologies, court facilities will need to be designed to support:

- Communication and data networks (LANS, WANS, and wireless networks) that permit independence and data exchange. This means that the infrastructure should be designed to serve multiple computer platforms in the building's backbone<sup>2</sup>.
- Distributed computing among courts and court-related agencies; including desk-based legal research, videoconferencing, E-mail, automated case management systems, document imaging, and records and document storage systems.
- Multimedia systems including interactive video technology for arraignments and other non-dispositive hearings, evidence presentation and display, court interpreting, intake interviews, initial appearances and probable cause hearings, and staff training.
- Remote electronic access to court systems, for case/document filing, fine payment, and public information from remote sites (including law offices, motor vehicles offices, or satellite court facilities, other public offices).
- Assistive Listening devices, TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) service to public, and other assistive devices in courtrooms, offices and court-support areas (jury assembly, hearing rooms, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> *Virginia Futures Report*

<sup>2</sup> The backbone is that part of the building that supports the main building systems, such as electrical and power, HVAC, plumbing, etc.

The interface of the following systems through the use of communication protocols over connected wiring and cabling systems:

- Generator or standby power systems
- Un-interruptible power supply
- Emergency lighting
- Lighting control systems
- PBX or telecommunication systems
- Office automation
- Management Information Systems
- Energy Management Systems (EMS)
- Temperature Monitoring Systems (TMS)
- Control systems on packaged equipment, including chillers, boilers, computer room HVAC, kitchen equipment, laboratory equipment, etc.
- Fire Management (Life Safety) Systems, including detection and smoke control devices
- Security Management Systems and Access Control Systems
- Maintenance Management Systems
- Miscellaneous Building Systems
- Elevator Control Systems

Continued improvements in office and office-related technologies can be expected to improve individual worker productivity, improve communications, reduce movement between and within offices, reduce physical use of paper and physical storage needs, and create a host of other changes in court operations, and public and individual work spaces.

Less quantifiable, but equally important, changes can be expected as the severing of physical ties allows managers to consider new operational methods and “teaming” arrangements, and allows workers more freedom of movement. This translates to a need for flexibility in office areas to accommodate potential changes in court operations and staffing needs.

#### **A. Automated Case Management**

The future of case management systems will include the integration of the electronic case file with imaged information, word processing and other functions performed by computers. Attorneys may file pleadings from their offices; signed documents may be disseminated electronically without physically routing the documents to the judge and other participants; fines, fees, and other payments can be made using electronic commerce and appeals may be made with electronic transfer of trial court records.

One of the most important physical limitations on court facility planning has been the need to maintain a close spatial relationship between the physical case file and those who need to use it (judges, clerks, or the public/attorneys). With automated case management systems, physical adjacencies is less important permitting courtrooms



and chambers to be located in different buildings from the clerk's office, while providing remote access to all case records.

Future clerks may function more like a data processing center or reference library. Many, perhaps most, inquiries may be handled over the Internet with fewer attorneys coming to the office. Only litigants and pro se individuals may need to come into the clerk's office to make inquiries. Other offices, such as probation or the Commonwealth Attorney, will be able to do so much quicker and easier from their offices, or from their laptop, tablet, or smart device.

The long-term future will see the elimination of large record rooms and record storage vaults as more information is automated, imaged, stored and made available electronically. The need for imaging equipment workstations, public access stations, or work carrels will increase, but these spaces may be located anywhere, even outside of the courthouse.

### **B. Videoconferencing**

Video conferencing is changing the interactions among litigants/defendants and the court. The use of video conferencing for arraignments and other types of preliminary hearings means fewer prisoners being brought to the courtroom. This will reduce the prisoner traffic in the courthouse and may mean smaller holding facilities.

Videoconferencing has also become prevalent among court interpreters and magistrates and will become commonplace in other areas, such as the clerks' offices, Commonwealth Attorneys, public defenders, probation officers, social workers, and others who need to interview and make visual assessments of persons with whom they are speaking, or who need to travel a lot in their investigations.

Videoconferencing will reduce the number of face-to-face meetings, thus reducing the amount of time in transit and increase the amount of productive time in the office. The use of video conferencing frees people from the need of physical adjacency and permits greater flexibility in the organization of the courthouse.

### **C. Evidence Presentation**

The challenge with the inclusion of evidence presentation systems in the courtroom has been to make it appear unobtrusive. This means raised floors for cabling and wires, built-in equipment and flat panel video display monitors at multiple locations so that they do not block peoples' view, and careful



Courtroom Electronic Evidence Display System  
Fairfax County Courthouse

consideration regarding the location of cameras, display monitors, and other equipment so that it is usable without interfering with movement and sight.

With video cameras and individual display monitors everyone has a “front row seat”. Jurors can clearly see and hear the witness even if located on the far side of the courtroom. Sight lines and distance become less important as long as there still remains a semblance of visual contact.



Evidence Display Monitor Located at Jury Box  
Fairfax County Courthouse

Equipment must be located where it supports the trial activities without disrupting normal functions of the court and the individual work areas in the courtroom.

The following are some of the possible design features that may be required to accommodate and facilitate seamless court technology.

- Raised floors to permit wiring and re-wiring;
- Built-in video monitors for jurors, the judge, witness, court staff, and attorneys;
- Built-in computer workstations for judge and clerks;
- Equipment/AV rooms to house servers, AV and computer equipment that do not need to be in the courtroom; and
- Larger clerk’s station with storage space to accommodate computer, scanner, printer, and other equipment.

#### **D. Electronic Access**

The use of remote electronic access to the courts has been growing steadily as a way of increasing efficiency and improving public service. Attorneys can file documents electronically, documents can be distributed electronically, parties in a case can look up court calendars and the status of a case and people can pay fines over the internet and download court forms.

Court staff will be able to work from any location in the courthouse and even outside. They will carry their office with them in the form of tablet computers with built in Wi-Fi. This will be important for prosecutors and public defenders that need to be in and out of court all day, but may not be able to get back to their “office.” The same

may be true for probation officers and other court service staff, or social workers, who need to come to court.

Just as with electronic filing and other technologies, the biggest impact will be on the need for people to come to the courthouse. With the exception of those who do not have access to computers and persons who are ordered to appear in court, or wish to observe court, people will no longer need to come to the courthouse to conduct routine business. The reduction in the number of persons having to come to the courthouse also will relieve pressures on parking and mean that much less public circulation may be required in future courthouses.

#### **E. Imaging and Workflow**

Over 80 courts in Virginia now have document imaging systems and are beginning to scan criminal case documents. As this trend accelerates, the need for large court record rooms and record storage vaults will diminish as more information is automated, imaged, stored, and made available electronically. The space needed for imaging equipment and workstations, public access terminals and work carrels or other public access workstations, may increase. But, these spaces may be located outside the courthouse in the form public accessible workstations such as might be found in the public library, thus reducing the number of people that need to come to the courthouse to conduct their business.

Considerable savings in space can occur in clerk's records areas as the result of replacing lien books, order books, judgment books, and even case files with imaged documents stored electronically. The greatest impact on court operations and courthouse design, however, will be the result of the ability to conduct court from any location and have immediate access to court case files by phone or data line. Adjacency needs of the courts and support offices will change as work can be done without being physically close to the case files.

## **II. GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR TECHNOLOGY**

The responsibility for providing the technology equipment in the courthouse is split between the Virginia Supreme Court and the local governing body. The Virginia Supreme Court provides all of the computer equipment for the judges and clerks, including the judge's bench and clerk's workstation in the courtrooms. In general the county/city is responsible for everything else, including the Commonwealth Attorney Office and any video equipment or electronics at the jury box and the attorney tables. The local government also provides the wiring/cabling to OES specifications. This currently requires CAT 6 wiring to every jack in the building.

As a general rule, judges will use laptop computers in chambers but require a desktop computer and two video display monitors at the bench<sup>3</sup>. One display is for viewing documents and case information on the computer and the other is dedicated for viewing the evidence display system.

The designer shall coordinate the requirements and configuration of the utility supply connections and technology design requirements with the Office of the Executive Secretary and the utility service providers to determine service criteria. In order for the office to have sufficient time to review the design, this should be done before the completion of 60% architectural documents. Telephone and data lines should be provided underground to the building's main terminal connection point. The building should have conduits for telecommunication and data transmission systems to all current and future identified workstations. The same applies to electrical supply.

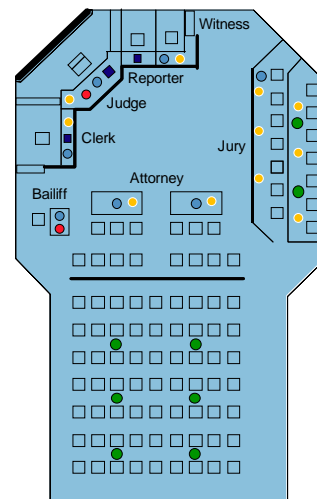


Raised Access Floor System

It should be assumed that the courts and other building tenants will each have their own computer system with personal computers (PCs) connected via Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN), with internet access. It should also be assumed that wireless networks will rapidly become the standard in many areas of the courthouse. Separate data server rooms may be required for the courts, Sheriff, Commonwealth Attorney, and other agencies in the building.

**A. Future Implementation of Technology**

The most critical consideration in planning for the future implementation of technology is to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to permit the easy upgrade of current systems in the future. This means that the courthouse should be designed to make it as simple as possible to handle general expansion of systems as well as frequent changes and upgrades to existing systems. Telecommunications and data connections should be considered in light of the relatively short life of today's systems. Raceways for voice, data, and power cabling/wiring should be designed to provide the greatest amount of future



- Evidence Display Monitor
- Duress Alarm
- Speakers
- Microphone
- Computers

**Courtroom Electronics Transfer**  
 Courtesy of HOK

<sup>3</sup> The second display monitor is for viewing evidence. If an electronic evidence display system is not going to be installed in the courtroom(s) the second monitor is not needed. However, wiring and cabling should be installed to allow for future installation.

flexibility for hookups to all areas of the courthouse, and the ability to add and replace wiring and cabling in the future as new technologies are installed.

#### **B. Floor Systems**

The rapid pace of technological improvements requires the upgrade and addition of new equipment at ever more frequent intervals. Additionally, the continued transition from centralized data processing to distributed processing, and the use of local and wide area networks means continual changes to equipment locations and wiring. With these changes in technology, come changes to office workflows and processes in courts and court-related offices, which mean movement and changes to office workstations and equipment. In order to avoid obsolescence, it is essential to maintain flexibility in the building's capacity and ability to change in response to these needs. One means of achieving this flexibility is through the use of access flooring. Consideration may be given to their use in open-office environments and courtrooms.

#### **C. Workstations**

It should be assumed that every workstation, or office, in the courthouse will require a computer workstation with video display monitor, a printer, and document scanner. Many workstations will require dual monitors. Other devices that may need to be accommodated include phone chargers, battery chargers, and computer tablets.

Additional computer workstations will include the public counters in the clerks' offices and Circuit Clerk's records room. Counter workstations should have the capability of including a document scanner and printer. Generally it should be assumed that each workstation will require at least two data and one voice line (3 CAT 6 lines), and a minimum of two quadriplex electrical outlets. Specialized workstations may require additional electrical outlets. Because of the heat generated by electrical equipment, steps should be taken to ensure that equipment is cooled. Plans should include room for considerable growth in electrical demand.

#### **D. Video Conferencing**

Design of courtroom workstations, office spaces, and conference and meeting rooms should anticipate use of video conferencing for communications in the future. All courtrooms, judicial chambers, and judicial conference rooms should have access to video conferencing equipment for the purposes of viewing remote witness testimony, including expert and child witnesses, as well as the ability to conduct remote hearings and interviews.

#### **E. Video Cameras in the Courtrooms**

All courtrooms should have security cameras installed that terminate at the Sheriff's security control center. Security cameras should have the ability to record events within the courtroom.

Another use of video cameras is to view the proceedings from a remote location. In situations where the press and media are permitted to broadcast live images of court proceedings, the court may want to give consideration to equipping several courtrooms with video cameras for this purpose. The advantage to the court of installing its own equipment is that it avoids the necessity of setting up portable cameras within the confines of the courtroom. It also provides the court with greater control over their use and in the images broadcast.

If installed, cameras should be located to view the judge and witness, the attorney tables, and public gallery. Cameras should not show the jurors at any point in the proceedings. All controls for such video cameras should be located at the clerk's workstation and the judge should have a switch with which to turn off the cameras at any point.

#### **F. Sound Reinforcement Systems**

Courtrooms over 1,000 SF need audio amplification to permit the judge, jurors, litigants, and public spectators to hear clearly and understand the participants. Instead of hard surfaces in the courtrooms, soft acoustic surfaces should be installed whenever audio enhancement systems are installed.

Microphones should be located at the bench, clerk's workstation, witness stand, lectern, jury box (where present), and attorney tables. Controls should be located at the clerk's station.

Sound reinforcement systems consist of microphones, electronic mixers, signal processors, amplifiers and speakers. The sound system should be designed to operate automatically with automatic mixers controlling microphones (turning on microphones which are being spoken into). Microphone switches should be provided at each microphone, which will function as Off-Auto. Automatic volume controllers should be used to help compensate for variations in voice levels and microphone distances.

Systems also should be provided with electronics equalization to compensate for the acoustic properties of the finished courtrooms, speakers, and microphones. The master controls should be located at the clerk's station, or judge's bench, and should include a power switch, master volume control, and override controls.

#### **G. Assistive Listening Systems**

Permanently installed assistive listening systems should be provided in courtrooms, hearing rooms, jury deliberation rooms, and jury assembly or orientation rooms. Fifty percent, but not less than one of each type of courtroom, is to have a permanently installed assistive listening system. Additionally, 50% but not less than one of each of the following types of spaces is to have a permanently installed assistive listening system: hearing rooms, jury deliberation rooms, and jury assembly or orientation

rooms. The minimum number of receivers shall be four percent of the room's occupant load, but not less than two receivers.

Because it is not always possible to change courtrooms or jury deliberation rooms if someone requires an assistive listening device, consideration should be given to installing such equipment in all courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms.

#### **H. Public Address System**

Each courthouse should be equipped with a public address system reaching all public areas of the courthouse. Especially in large courthouses, it is possible that a paging system may be needed to locate parties. When court schedules fall behind or move ahead more rapidly than anticipated, the court may benefit from a means of paging parties throughout the courthouse. Such systems should not operate in courtrooms or office areas.

#### **I. Acoustics**

The growing use of hands-free telephones and advances in voice recognition systems and their integration into office workstations increases the importance of acoustics in the design of all work spaces. Design of courtroom workstations, offices, counter positions and public reception area positions require good sound clarity where teleconferencing or video conferencing is likely to be used.

Careful consideration must be given to the choice of textures and materials used for carpets, screens, and wall coverings. Ceilings, floors, and all furniture and workstation construction require high levels of sound absorption. Normal privacy between open-office workstations can be provided through use of high sound absorptive ceilings, moderately high screens, and sufficient ambient sound (either through general sounds in the office, or through use of an electronic sound masking system). Confidential privacy in open-office areas is very difficult to achieve and requires use of tall screens and highly absorptive ceilings and floors.

#### **J. Lighting**

Where video display terminals are being used, lighting intensity and contrast between room surfaces must be reduced. This becomes more difficult in courtrooms where there is a need for clear observation and recognition of facial features and expressions, and court exhibits. As a general rule, where VDTs are in use, illumination levels should be generally lower to ensure user comfort; display screens should be capable of being tilted and rotated; the top of the screen should be lower than the eyes of the user; and illumination levels ranging from 20-50 foot candles should be provided on horizontal work surfaces. In general, a moderate level of general illumination combined with high performance task lighting should be used throughout the buildings.

Courtroom lighting has traditionally been designed to provide general illumination (30 FC) throughout the room and higher illumination levels (70 FC) in the litigation well. With the use of VDTs at the judge's bench, clerk's workstation, and attorney tables, workstations should be provided specific lighting and individual lighting controls.

At the workstations, individual lighting requirements should be met through the use of individual control of the halogen lamp sources illuminating the respective work areas, and through the use of localized task lighting.

### III. ELECTRICAL POWER AND ELECTRICAL CLOSETS

The building's vertical power distribution system should be designed for easy change and modification through vertical stacking of electrical closets and provision of simplified modular connections to horizontal distribution systems. A minimum of two electrical closets per floor should be provided.

#### A. Emergency and Standby Power Systems

The need for and capacity of the emergency power system should be carefully evaluated, based on the building size, location, and usage. The purpose of an emergency power system is to: comply with code requirements; provide safe evacuation of the court building; and to allow for the orderly shutdown of building systems. The fuel storage capacity should be based on the minimum requirements to provide life safety and egress lighting.

Each project should undergo and document an evaluation process to document the specific need for emergency and standby power.

#### B. Uninterruptible Power System (UPS)

UPS should be small, localized, rack-mounted units to serve individual racks or equipment. In a larger facility, one or more centralized UPS may be appropriate. During the project Schematic Phase, a review should be made of the projected UPS loads along with their locations and supporting functions in order to determine the optimal UPS system solution for the facility. In the study, the confirmation of the required battery backup time should be confirmed, taking into consideration outage scenarios and the availability of onsite generators. UPS for the data processing equipment should include rectifier/battery charger, solid-state inverter, static bypass transfer switch; maintenance-free batteries sized for 15 minutes, and synchronized circuitry. External maintenance bypass switches should be provided.

### IV. TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The functions provided by traditional telephone systems are becoming part of the services provided by computers through the data server rooms. Voice over IP (VoIP) phone



technology is growing rapidly as is video transmission over the IP-data networks. Shortly, VoIP may replace the traditional phone systems in most new buildings.

The telephone system should provide one telephone line per workstation in office areas and telephone lines in the courtroom to the judge's bench, clerk's workstation, attorney tables, and bailiff's station. Telephones located at any of these locations in the courtroom should be equipped with lighted rather than acoustic ring. A telephone should also be located in the prisoner holding areas.

Public phones should be provided in the lobby. While the advent of mobile phones has generally caused the disappearance of the public telephone, many courts prohibit such phones from the courthouse and provision should be made for the availability of public pay phones in the lobby or other public location.

Telephone jacks should be available in all waiting areas, such as police waiting rooms, attorney/client conference rooms, witness waiting rooms, and police waiting areas. (Phones may not be installed in all cases, but provided as needed.)

## V. BUILDING BACKBONE

The courthouse should be designed with a service entrance or main data room (MDR) for voice/data/AV communication systems. This room should be planned to terminate wiring and to house building electronics and cabling systems. The building should be designed with a fiber optic backbone with riser facilities formed by stacking communications/data rooms, and providing sleeves/slots through the floors. The backbone/riser facility should extend from the service entrance room to the floor IDR rooms, and provide a pathway for intra-building cable and for communication system ground.

## VI. SERVICE ENTRY ROOM

A combined telecommunications and data entry room is needed to serve the entire building. This is the main entry location for all communications, data lines, and service provided termination components into the building and should be the main connections for all telecommunications equipment, video conferencing systems, and network servers for all

offices in the building. From here, telecommunication and data lines go to the building's main data room.



Communications Room Cable Trays  
Fairfax County Courthouse

The placement of the entrance facility will depend on the location of service provider networks, overall building size, the location of the electrical power entrance, and location of other building communications rooms. Whenever possible, co-locate the entrance facility within the main distribution facility to minimize the need to develop a separate, dedicated space.

It should be planned to terminate wiring for the public switched network and to house building-level electronics and cross-connected inter- and intra-building cabling systems, using wiring distribution frames/backboards, protective blocks and other equipment required by the telephone and cable utilities.

The entry room should be equipped with proper lighting for maintenance and access. The equipment should be installed in a manner that provides sufficient access to the back of equipment panels. Access also must be made available to the file server and telecommunication devices for installation, upgrades, and maintenance of equipment.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS).

The entry room should be approximately 300 square feet and planned to support logical expansion in place, or accommodate future equipment and entrance conduits for future expansion. It should be located at ground level on a perimeter wall adjacent to the local telephone company access. It should not be located in an area where flooding may occur.

The room should be safe, secure, and dust free and protected by full-height fire walls of at least two-hour rating with no windows and no false ceilings. Ceilings should be waterproofed.

It should be positively pressured to prevent dust infiltration. An ambient air temperature of 72 degrees F and 45% relative humidity should be maintained. A backup system to control room temperature and relative humidity is required and must be on the emergency power panel.



Computer Server and Communications Room,  
Fairfax County Courthouse

## VII. MAIN DATA ROOMS (MDR)

A separate telecommunications and data room needs to be provided to serve the courts, clerks, and all other offices located in the building. The room should contain all of the buildings and court's communications and data equipment. If the court and other offices have separate computer networks the room will need to be partitioned for the different servers.

The room must be equipped with a secure cipher lock, card reader, or keypad to limit access to authorized persons.

Temperature and humidity control is essential. It should be positively pressured to prevent dust infiltration. A/C units should be on emergency generated power and should be

independent from the building air. For security and temperature reasons the room should be located away from outside windows and doors.

The data room should be equipped with proper fire extinguisher devices and smoke detectors.

Floors must be leveled and be free of excessive vibration. Data rooms are usually unfinished with exposed concrete block walls, sealed concrete floors, and not finished ceiling. Carpeting should not be used. Smooth tiles with raised access flooring may be provided.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS).

The electrical feed should be isolated, including neutral and ground, from the rest of the building's electrical system.

Cable runs should not be placed in areas where high electromagnetic field strength exists.

### **VIII. INDIVIDUAL DATA ROOM (IDR)**

At least one IDR should be provided on each floor (two for larger floors) to house floor-level electronics and cross-connect the building backbone to horizontal building wiring. Closets should be positioned so that the maximum cable length from the closet to the termination point is 90 meters.

Rooms should be stacked vertically (common walls) and be pathway interconnected between floors.

Rooms should be positioned so that it is possible to gain access without disrupting normal office work and sized to allow an engineer to work within the room and provide front and back access to the cabinets with space for additional wall mounted data patching frames.

The room must be equipped with a secure cipher lock, card reader, or keypad to limit access to authorized persons.

Temperature and humidity control is essential. It should be positively pressured to prevent dust infiltration. A/C units should be on emergency generated power and should be



Dedicated Courtroom AV Closet,  
Fairfax County Courthouse

independent from the building air. For security and temperature reasons the room should be located away from outside windows and doors.

The room should be equipped with proper fire extinguisher devices and smoke detectors. Floors must be leveled and be free of excessive vibration. Data rooms are usually unfinished with exposed concrete block walls, sealed concrete floors, and not finished ceiling. Carpeting should not be used.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). The electrical feed should be isolated, including neutral and ground, from the rest of the building's electrical system.

Cable runs should not be placed in areas where high electromagnetic field strength exists. Access flooring may be used to accommodate the cables entering from the riser, connecting to the frames and accessing the secondary distribution system.

Telecommunications pathways, or conduit, should not be located in elevator shafts. Rooms should have waterproof ceilings and no windows, HVAC ducting and pipe work should be kept out of the telecommunications risers.

## **IX. DEDICATED AV CABINETS/CLOSETS**

With the advent of electronic evidence display systems being used in many new courthouses, consideration should be given to providing a space associated with each courtroom for multiple audiovisual racks. This may be an AV cabinet located within the courtroom or a closet that is accessible from the courtroom depending upon the amount of equipment required. In either case, attention must be given to providing the proper ventilation and cooling.

## **X. LOBBY TECHNOLOGIES**

The lobby of the courthouse should contain a building directory and diagrams of the floor plan to assist in guiding visitors to the proper location. A bulletin board should be provided for the posting of public information such as daily court dockets. Provision also should be made for the installation of electronic directories and electronic docketing systems, using overhead-mounted video monitors in public areas, to display court cases being heard in each courtroom. Additional docket display locations may be located on individual court floors. Locations should be determined now and wiring provided for future installation if systems are not to be installed immediately. The courts also may want to consider touch screen displays, or kiosks, to provide individualized directions and case information<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Caution should be exercised because kiosks and touch screen systems are limited to one user at a time and should be used only for specialized information.

**Summary of Technology Requirements**

LOCATION	EQUIPMENT	ELECTRICAL, DATA, AUDIO, COMMUNICATIONS DISTRIBUTION	LIGHTING
Bench	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concealed, silent, supervised duress alarm.</li> <li>▪ Desktop computer with silent keyboard and flat panel video display.</li> <li>▪ Notebook computer.</li> <li>▪ Separate built-in flat panel video display monitor for evidence display.</li> <li>▪ Microphone connected to a mixer and amplifier controlled by the judge or clerk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A minimum of two flush-mounted quadriplex electrical outlets.</li> <li>▪ One dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and two audio jacks.</li> <li>▪ One phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting augmented by task lighting directly above the bench. Lighting controls for the entire courtroom should be located at or near the bench or clerk's station. Lighting controls should have preset setting</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Clerk Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concealed, silent, supervised duress alarm.</li> <li>▪ Desktop computer with silent keyboard and flat panel video display monitor.</li> <li>▪ Document scanner and quiet color printer.</li> <li>▪ The control console for the sound amplification system may be located at the clerk's station.</li> <li>▪ Controls for video and teleconferencing equipment.</li> <li>▪ Microphone connected to a mixer and amplifier controlled by the judge or clerk.</li> <li>▪ Telephone with silent ring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A minimum of two flush-mounted quadriplex electrical outlets.</li> <li>▪ One dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks.</li> <li>▪ Two audio jacks.</li> <li>▪ One phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting augmented by task lighting directly above. Lighting controls for the entire courtroom should be located at or near the bench or clerk's station. Lighting controls should have preset setting.</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Attorney Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Microphone.</li> <li>▪ Flat panel video display monitor for attorneys to view evidence, documents, and video conferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of two quadriplex electrical outlet per table, flush mounted in the floor.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and two phone jacks per table.</li> <li>▪ Two audio jacks per table.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Witness Stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flat panel video display monitors for evidence and document display.</li> <li>▪ Microphone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One quadriplex power outlet.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks.</li> <li>▪ One audio jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Evidence Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Video Projection screen and/or large screen video monitor for evidence display.</li> <li>▪ Marker board or electronic "Soft Board."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of one flush-mounted quadriplex electrical outlet.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Court Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Steno machine (provided by reporter).</li> <li>▪ Space for a laptop computer.</li> <li>▪ Audio Recorder.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of one flush-mounted quadriplex electrical outlet.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting with task lighting from above.</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>

LOCATION	EQUIPMENT	ELECTRICAL, DATA, AUDIO, COMMUNICATIONS DISTRIBUTION	LIGHTING
Jury Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Microphone.</li> <li>▪ Video display monitors for viewing electronic evidence displays, remote witness testimony, and documents (one for every two jurors).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One flush-mounted quadriplex electrical outlets located at opposite ends of the jury box.</li> <li>▪ Data jacks for flat panel video monitors.</li> <li>▪ Two audio jacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> <li>▪ Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Lectern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lectern should house the electronic evidence display system.</li> <li>▪ Combo VCR/DVD player.</li> <li>▪ PC with flat panel video monitor.</li> <li>▪ Microphone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A minimum of two flush mounted quadriplex electrical outlets.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and two phone jacks.</li> <li>▪ Two audio jacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> <li>▪ Task lighting for reading.</li> </ul>
Spectators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One or two large screen video monitors that can be viewed by spectators are optional.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> </ul>
Security Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supervised, silent duress alarm.</li> <li>▪ Telephone with visual display/silent ring.</li> <li>▪ Notebook computer (optional).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One quadriplex power outlet</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> </ul>
Courtroom Generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sound amplification system with controls located at clerk's station.</li> <li>▪ Video conferencing system for viewing remote or expert witness testimony.</li> <li>▪ Security cameras.</li> <li>▪ Assistive listening devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate power and cabling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting.</li> </ul>
Judge's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each office should be equipped with a personal computer, monitor, printer, TV, and telephone.</li> <li>▪ Office may also be equipped for future video conferencing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal power supply for private office.</li> <li>▪ One dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and one phone jacks, and a cable TV outlet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting with task lighting at the desk.</li> </ul>
Judicial Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each workstation should be equipped with a personal computer with monitor and printer, and telephone.</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting with task lighting at the desk.</li> </ul>
Law Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each workstation should be equipped with a personal computer with monitor and printer, and telephone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle,</li> <li>▪ Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Normal room lighting with task lighting at the desk.</li> </ul>

LOCATION	EQUIPMENT	ELECTRICAL, DATA, AUDIO, COMMUNICATIONS DISTRIBUTION	LIGHTING
Court Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should be equipped with a personal computer with monitor and printer, and telephone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle,</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting with task lighting at the desk.</li> </ul>
Interpreter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should be equipped with a personal computer with monitor and printer, and telephone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle,</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting with task lighting at the desk.</li> </ul>
Support Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other office equipment may include a shared printer, copier, facsimile machine, coffee machine, microwave, and other miscellaneous office equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficient electrical receptacles for noted equipment.</li> </ul>	
Judicial Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal computer workstation with keyboard and video display monitor.</li> <li>Printer.</li> <li>Facsimile machine.</li> <li>Photocopier.</li> <li>Video conferencing equipment.</li> <li>Telephone.</li> <li>Video screen and video projector equipment.</li> <li>Large screen video display monitor mounted on wall.</li> <li>Marker board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each identified workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack located at each identified station.</li> <li>At least one cable TV outlet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting.</li> <li>Room should be capable of being dimmed for viewing presentations.</li> </ul>
Clerk Workstations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should be equipped with a personal computer with monitor, printer, and scanner. Some workstations may require two monitors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting with individual task lighting at the work area.</li> <li>Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Public Counter Staff Workstation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal computer with keyboard and video display monitor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two quadriplex power outlets per workstation and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting with individual task lighting at the work area.</li> <li>Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
Cashier Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal computer with register printer and video monitor.</li> <li>Security camera at all cashier stations.</li> <li>Duress alarm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two quadriplex power outlets per workstation and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> <li>Two data jacks and one phone jack.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal room lighting with individual task lighting at the work area.</li> <li>Need to avoid glare on video monitors</li> </ul>

LOCATION	EQUIPMENT	ELECTRICAL, DATA, AUDIO, COMMUNICATIONS DISTRIBUTION	LIGHTING
<b>Public Access Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one public access computer terminals with keyboard and video monitor in each clerk's office, located at the public counter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One quadriplex power outlet per public access station.</li> <li>• Two data jacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal room lighting.</li> <li>• Need to avoid glare on video monitors</li> </ul>
<b>Records Rooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security cameras.</li> <li>• Document viewing stations require one large screen video display monitor and computer terminal with keyboard.</li> <li>• Printers.</li> <li>• Photocopiers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two data jacks for each document imaging review workstation.</li> <li>• Each identified workstation requires one quadriplex power outlet, and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal room lighting.</li> <li>• Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
<b>Document Scanning Station</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each document scanning workstation should include 2 PCs with 2 large document video monitors and 2 printers.</li> <li>• Scanner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four data jacks and one phone jack per workstation.</li> <li>• Each identified workstation requires two quadriplex power outlets, and one dedicated computer power receptacle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal room lighting.</li> <li>• Need to avoid glare on video monitors.</li> </ul>
<b>Support Equipment and Work Rooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopiers.</li> <li>• Shared printers.</li> <li>• Facsimile machines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiring, power supply, HVAC, and acoustical design should meet individual equipment and systems specifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal room lighting.</li> </ul>



**CHAPTER 8 - PLANNING FOR COURT SECURITY**

There are few traditions in our nation as cherished as that of free-and-open access to justice. The expectation and reality of judicial safety, both inside and outside the courthouse is integral to fulfilling our justice system's promise of accessibility, impartiality, transparency, and the right to a fair and impartial trial. Free and open access to justice requires a safe and secure environment in which all those who come to the courthouse are free from fear and intimidation. Judges, employees, and the public users of the facility need to feel safe if they are to conduct themselves in a fair and impartial manner and in accordance with a sense of judicial decorum. Security measures, however, should remain as unobtrusive as possible. The use of overt security measures evokes an image of justice held hostage. In addition to these guidelines additional security recommendations may be found in the Court Security Handbook drafted by the CCJ/COSCA Joint Committee on Court Security.

A broad approach to court security should be adopted; one that assesses the likelihood of all potential threats and develops appropriate plans to protect people, property, and information. In today's environment the threat of terrorism is a natural concern, but evidence suggests that most of the violence that occurs in the courthouse is case related and that the most dangerous cases are family and domestic matters. Other safety concerns range from the possibility of assaults, theft of property, harassment, damage to property or equipment, to disruptions of judicial proceedings because of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and other severe weather events. Each courthouse should periodically have a threat risk assessment completed and have in place a building security plan that addresses the most likely threat scenarios.

When planning a new courthouse or performing a major renovation of an existing courthouse, the planning and design should assure a high degree of security and safety within and about the building. The site, landscaping, building exterior, internal organization and circulations systems, and environmental and building systems should be planned to maximize the security and safety of judges, court staff and all visitors; the physical structures, equipment, and property; and the information contained in the courthouse.

The goal of Courthouse Security is to protect persons, property and information. The courthouse should provide an environment in which the work of the courts can proceed in a safe and dignified manner with relatively little danger to the judiciary, the staff, and the public who are in court. The judiciary, court employees, victims and witnesses, accused and family members, attorneys, and member of the public should be able to perform their duties and conduct their business without the fear of intimidation, harassment, or physical harm.

Additionally, the courthouse's physical structure and equipment contained therein represent a major public investment. Damage to the building(s) or the equipment can cause delays and threaten the fair administration of justice. Finally, record keeping is central to the operations and functioning of any court. The information, including land records, court orders, and other case and government records are all vital information that must be protected.

Security is achieved through a combination of architectural/physical, personnel and operations, and technological/equipment measures. The appropriate choice depends on the costs of

construction and operations, propriety, legality, effectiveness of responses, adaptability to change, administrative control, and timeliness.

A key element in courthouse security is the separation of the public, judiciary and staff, and in-custody defendants. In small rural courthouses this may be achieved through operational means, but in larger courthouses this is best achieved architecturally through the maintenance of three separate and distinct circulation systems. This is essential for security and safety reasons as well as the operational efficiency of the court.

At a minimum, architectural features that enhance safety include:

- A single point of public entry to the building;
- An entry screening station where everyone entering the courthouse is screened for weapons;
- Separation of public, judicial/staff, and prisoner circulation systems;
- Secure vehicular sally port for transfer of prisoners to and from the building;
- Use of central and court-floor in-custody holding areas accessed by secure circulation;
- Sufficient public waiting space to separate opposing parties, particularly in domestic cases;
- Elimination of blind areas and dead ends within the building or places where people can hide and the use of large open spaces to increase visibility;
- The installation of Intrusion systems to monitor the status of doors, windows, and other exterior openings in the building;
- Access control systems to control entry to restricted areas of the building;
- The installation of fences, walls, or other physical barriers to define the perimeter of the building and prevent attacks on the exterior of the building;
- The installation of exterior lighting to illuminate accesses to the building and parking areas; and
- Secure parking for the judiciary within the building with secure access to the building and the private circulation.

## **I. SITE AND PERIMETER**

It is recommended that when possible the courthouse be set back from the perimeter of the property to protect the exterior from vehicular attack. Also, the use of decorative walls, bollards, planters, berms or other structures may be used to prevent vehicles from

approaching too close to the building. The following actions directed toward securing the site and perimeter are recommended.

- Determine appropriate standoff distance from the street (a minimum of 50' from the curb is suggested)
- The perimeter of the courthouse grounds should be clearly defined by fences, walls, or other physical barriers. All exposed fixtures should be weather and tamper resistant.
- Maintain clear access routes for first responders.
- Illuminate exterior of the building, site perimeter, walkways, and drives and parking areas.
- Where it is not possible to provide adequate standoff, provide appropriate barriers to prevent a vehicle from approaching the building and adequate protection from potential blast effects.
- Natural barriers such as trees and constructed barriers such as planting boxes, heavy masonry benches and tables, access ramps with masonry walls, fences, and bollards can be used.
- Built in landscaping such as planters against the building up to window height provide a barrier to vehicles without elevating the building.
- Retaining walls can be used to define the property boundary and serve as barriers within the landscape design.
- Where landscaping features such as trees and fences are used, they should not hinder visibility or provide the opportunity for concealment of people or vehicles.
- Landscape features that provide places for potential intruders to hide weapons or other dangerous items should be eliminated.
- If video cameras are used to observe the site, their sightlines should not be impeded by leaf canopies or areas that are hidden from overhead observation.

## II. WINDOWS AND GLAZING

The most severe injuries in a blast event are the result of shattered glass. Typically the choices range from regular glazing such as would be used in a general office building to either a bullet resistant or attack resistant glazing. Bullet resistant glazing is designed to withstand the impact of a high velocity projectile but generally does not withstand low velocity heavy objects (such as a chair or brick) or the impact of a bomb blast. Based on the level of risk assessment, a decision should be made regarding the type of glazing to be used on all exterior windows and doors.

At a minimum, it is recommended that all ground floor windows and doors should be equipped with attack resistant glazing to prevent breakage from vandalism or storms.

### **III. PUBLIC PARKING**

No public parking should be located under, or in, the courthouse. Any public parking facility should be built adjacent to the building with a minimum 100 foot separation.

### **IV. SECURE PARKING**

All courthouses should have secure parking for judges and Constitutional Officers provided. Secure judicial parking ideally should be located in an underground garage with secure access. There should be a roll down security gate that is continually monitored by CCTV and intercom from the Sheriff's central control center. Separate entrances should be provided for the judicial and elected official parking and the Sheriff's and prisoner transport vehicles. Once inside the secure parking area, judges and officials should be able to reach their offices by means of the private circulation system.

If underground parking is not possible then secure parking may be provided at grade level within a secured compound with secure access. If secured parking is not feasible, judges may be provided unmarked reserved parking spaces located as near as possible to a secure building entrance. This area should be patrolled frequently. There should never be any signage that identifies who is parking in the space.

### **V. ENTRANCES AND LOBBY**

Weapons screening is a standard practice in nearly all large urban courthouses. All courthouses should have a single public entrance through which all persons, including employees, should pass.

#### **A. Entrance Screening Station**

The weapons screening station requires electrical power for the installation of metal detectors and x-ray machines. Depending upon the number of persons entering the building on a daily basis, more than one screening station may be required to cover peak hours of activity. Best practices recommend that the screening area should be located outside the main mass of the building structure to lessen potential blast effects on the main structure in case of an IED discovery at the entrance.

Sufficient space should be allowed to permit at least 20 people to line up within the building prior to walking through the screening stations. People should not have to wait outside in hot, cold or inclement weather.

Space needs to be provided for at least two security officers per screening station (one to operate the x-ray machine and another to hand check persons who set off the metal detector).

All courthouses require the following,

- A single point of public entry to the building is preferred;
- An entry screening station at every public entrance where everyone entering the courthouse is screened for weapons;
- That all deliveries, packages, mail, as well as couriers and delivery persons should be screened or visually inspected for weapons, explosive devices, or hazardous materials. Courthouses with receiving docks should have personnel and equipment available to screen all incoming materials.
- An area outside the security screening area where the public may queue prior to being screened. This area should be sheltered to protect persons from the elements.
- Sufficient staff and screening equipment at the security screening station to permit the screening of everyone coming to the courthouse in a timely and efficient manner at peak hours.
- A building security control room located off the lobby overlooking the main public entrance for ease of surveillance. The control room should be coordinated with the holding cell control room so that its surveillance responsibilities are transferred to the main floor after hours.
- There should be no places outside the screening area where persons can store or hide anything prior to being screened.

#### **B. Staff Entrances**

It is a best practice to have all employees entering the building screened like everyone else, including the use of a metal detector and x-ray machine. The building may be designed with a separate employee entrance to avoid having employees wait in line with visitors entering the building. The employee entrance should be located near the main area where employees are to park. The entrance will need to be staffed by security staff and requires a single metal detector and x-ray machine.

It is a common practice, however, to have a separate employee entrance where staff may enter by displaying a court issued ID.

#### **C. Service Entrance**

Larger courthouses should have a service entrance for the delivery of supplies, equipment, and other large items, and the collection of trash and recycling. Everyone entering the building through this location should be screened.

The receiving dock security screening area should be located immediately adjacent to the receiving dock bay(s) where all packages and deliveries to the building can be screened or x-rayed. It must be wired for a large x-ray machine and metal detector.

The receiving dock requires CCTV cameras inside and outside the receiving dock. The Sheriff’s command and control center should have local and remote control of overhead and access doors. A duress alarm is required in the general receiving area and there should be an intercom between the receiving dock security station and the outside receiving area.

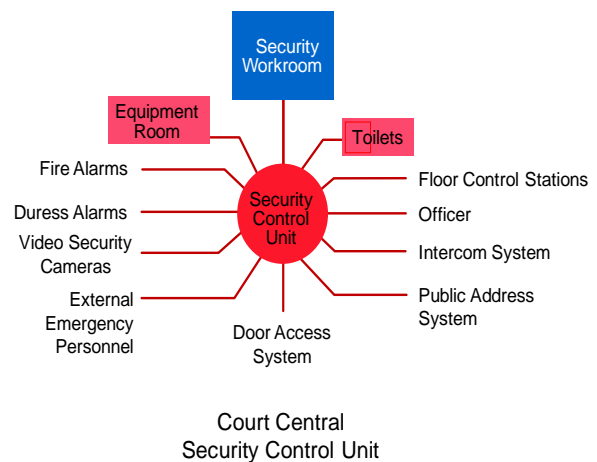
Consideration should be given to creating a mail receiving room adjacent to the receiving dock where all mail deliveries can be received and the mail x-rayed as needed.

**VI. ALARMS AND CONTROL SYSTEMS**

The courthouse should be equipped with intrusion and duress alarms.

Duress alarms are designed to signal for immediate help.

Intrusion alarms are designed to alert security staff to unauthorized entry after hours. The alarms can be of several varieties, including space alarms, vibration alarms, and door contact alarms. The alarm system can be set to produce a loud sound to alert the police and deter entry, or alarms can be silent to alert police only. After hours the alarms should sound at the nearest police station.



Door alarms should also be placed at all exits from the building. Staff sometimes prop doors open for breaks and then forget to close them. Side doors should be marked, “Emergency exit only; alarm will sound.”

The alarm should sound at the court’s central security control station and at the responding local law enforcement agency.

**A. Duress Alarms**

A supervised alarm system (duress alarm) should be installed in the courthouse. In non-supervised systems, if the wires between the switch in the courtroom or chambers are severed, the circuit is rendered inoperative with no indication at the monitoring location. The circuit remains inoperative until it is tested and repaired. In

a supervised system, whenever the circuit is broken the alarm sounds. This occurs if the alarm button is pressed or if the wires are severed for some reason.

The alarms should sound at the Sheriff's command and control center. If a fixed system is installed, buttons should be located at the following locations:

- All public counters,
- All cashier stations,
- All courtrooms at the judges' bench and clerks' station,
- All judicial chambers,
- All holding areas,
- Sally port,
- Entry screening stations,
- Probation Offices,
- Court Service Offices,
- Commonwealth Attorney Office.

The most common type of duress alarm is a hard-wired system with fixed positions. Newer systems are wireless and may be triggered by a device that is carried by judges and court employees on their person. It has the advantage of being able to be activated from any location without having to get to a fixed location. The signal is picked up by receiving stations located throughout the building and passed on to the central security control. The control monitors will identify which receiving station is relaying the signal as well as identify the person who activated the alarm.

## **B. Intrusion Alarms**

Intrusion systems monitor the status of doors, windows, and other exterior openings. They can be coordinated with an access control system to alert of unauthorized or forced access of doors, glass breakage, or roof intrusion.

All movable, accessible openings into the courthouse within 18 feet of firm ground should be alarmed. Glass or composition panels should be protected with glass break sensors. The alarms should annunciate at the Sheriff's central command and control console.

It is also recommended that CCTV cameras be installed at all entrances and exits. The unauthorized opening or attempting to open an exit door should activate the camera and a recording (see section on video surveillance).

Motion detectors also may be considered for monitoring against after-hours unauthorized intrusion in sensitive areas of the building. Any motion detectors should alert the security staff in the Sheriff's command and control center or nearest local law enforcement station.

**C. Access Controls**

Access control systems control entry to restricted areas of the building. Typically activated by numeric keypad or card / proximity readers, access control systems allow door release to the private circulation systems and other “secure” areas of the building.

All doors in the courthouse should be equipped with an electronic access control system.

**D. Environmental Controls**

All environmental controls in the courthouse should be secured, with access restricted to authorized personnel. In order to avoid tampering and sabotage, access to controls for heating, air conditioning, ventilation should be limited to authorized staff. Outside air intake mechanisms should also be secured so they cannot be used as access to the building or as a conduit for biochemical attack. Outside air intake also should not be located near any loading dock or other area where trucks or other vehicles may idle to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the building.

**VII. VIDEO SURVEILLANCE**

Typically video cameras are used in prisoner holding areas to monitor prisoners and prisoner movement. They also are used to observe entrances to the building, particularly receiving docks and service entrances that may not have a permanent security presence, to monitor public and private corridors and access to sensitive areas, as well as to monitor courtrooms.

- Security cameras should be placed to observe the natural approaches to the courthouse.
- Wall mounted cameras should be located on the opening side of entrance doors at controlled entrances to obtain a profile picture of the individual entering the building as well as viewing the area immediately around the door.
- Cameras should be placed at the entrance to the judges/officials parking garage. Cameras should be installed so as to observe the judges’/officials’ automobiles and the walkways to the elevator/entrance. The size of the parking garage and walking distances should determine the number of cameras required.
- Security cameras should be mounted on the interior side of all emergency exit doors. When the door is opened the alarm should sound at the command and control center monitoring console and the switcher should bring up the camera to a large central monitor.
- Unless a credible threat exists hallway cameras are not essential, except in the public waiting areas of the juvenile and domestic relations courts.



- Cameras should be installed inside all courtrooms. One camera should observe the front portion of courtroom, one observe the spectators, and one observe the main entrance door. The cameras should be monitored in the Sheriff’s command and control center.

Other areas that should be monitored include:

- Lobby
- Entrance screening stations
- All public counters and cashier stations
- The receiving dock and service entrance
- Prisoner holding cells
- Prisoner circulation corridors and elevators
- Courtroom holding areas and cells
- Vehicular sally port

**VIII. PUBLIC ADDRESS**

The courthouse should be equipped with a public address system reaching all public areas of the building. Especially in large courthouses, a paging system may be needed to locate parties when court schedules fall behind or move ahead more rapidly than anticipated. Such systems should not operate in courtrooms or office areas. The public address system also is useful in the event of an emergency in the courthouse.

**IX. CENTRAL SECURITY CONTROL OFFICE**

The central security control office is the location from which all security zones and safety alarm systems are monitored throughout the building. From this unit, the courthouse may be monitored through the use of closed circuit television systems, duress alarms, intrusion sensors and other security systems.



Isle of Wight Courthouse, Security Control Room

The security control office may best be located near the main public entrance or may be located with the central holding area control room.

Also located with the central security control office is the protective equipment such as security and duress alarms, fire alarm, emergency elevator control, public address system, fire alarm enunciator panel, etc.

All power and lighting for this room should be from the building's emergency electrical service. All equipment should be on an uninterruptible power supply and all electricity should be conditioned.

Access to the life safety equipment panel should be limited to building management.

## **X. VEHICULAR SALLY PORT**

The courthouse should have a secure vehicular sally port for the secure transfer of in-custody persons to and from transport vehicles. The sally port should be sized to hold at least one transport van. It should be located within the Sheriff's secure parking area and have a security gate. It needs to be well ventilated and lighted. Many courthouses make use of a drive through sally port in order to eliminate the need for a turnaround area. Courthouses with a direct connection to a jail may not require a separate sally port if detainees coming to court from other facilities are able to be processed through the jail.

In-custody detainees should enter the building's central holding area directly from the sally port.

## **XI. CENTRAL PRISONER HOLDING**

In-custody defendants and witnesses need to be separated from the public while maintaining their safety and constitutional rights. Prisoner detention facilities increase the efficiency of the courts by allowing in-custody persons to be located close to the courtroom at the scheduled time of appearance.

All but the smallest courthouse should have a central holding area located on the ground floor or basement of the building that will service all courts within the building. It should be located immediately adjacent to the vehicular sally port.

The holding area should consist of the following elements: holding cells for adult males and females; holding cells for juvenile males and females; a control center to monitor and control in-custody movement; entry vestibule at the entrance from the sally port; a processing and transfer area or room; staff offices; staff toilets; elevators to the court floors; elevator lobby; equipment room; and attorney / client visitation booths for attorneys to meet privately with clients prior to court.

Sight and sound separation needs to be maintained between males and females, and adults and juveniles.

The building's central control center may also be located in this area, either as part of the holding control room or as a separate facility adjacent to the holding area.

The holding area control center monitors the operations all movement of prisoners and controls access to the holding cells. The officer(s) staffing the station should have a direct view into the holding cells or have visibility through CCTV monitors and should be able to

see and control all entrances and exits. The control station should be secured from unauthorized entry and should include a dedicated staff toilet. Intercoms and CCTV cameras should be located at all doors.

All cells should have their own toilet facility. This eliminates the need for security officers to escort prisoners to and from toilets. Drains are necessary in any cell with toilets. Drains for sinks and toilets should be large enough so that they cannot be easily blocked. A modesty panel should be provided around the cell toilets to maintain proper privacy.

Toilets and drains should be installed along a wall on the corridor side of the holding facility or along an accessible service duct so that repairs can be made from the outside.

Sufficient transfer areas for moving in-custody individuals should be provided near the sally port entrance as well as the secure elevators. Corridors should be wide enough to prohibit detainees from grabbing officers and to allow adequate two-way passage and prohibit the transfer of contraband from one prisoner to another.

Attorney/client interview booths should be provided at the central holding area. These booths should be divided with appropriate security glazing to separate the parties. Attorneys should not have to enter the holding areas to enter the conference booth. The booths should have a paper pass to permit the signing of any documents.

Temporary holding cells for prisoners awaiting court appearances should conform to appropriate state and American Correctional Association standards for lighting, ventilation, heating, and cooling in short-term holding and detention facilities.

Lighting fixtures and ventilation registers should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons. The cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture. It is extremely important that holding areas be soundproofed.

All prisoner areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The holding cells should have solid ceilings.

## **XII. COURT FLOOR HOLDING AREAS**

In larger courthouses, separate prisoner holding cells should be located adjacent to the courtrooms in addition to the central holding facility located adjacent to the secured prisoner entrance to the courthouse. These court floor holding facilities are best located between pairs of courtrooms and serviced by a dedicated prisoner elevator that transports prisoners to and from the central holding area or prisoner entrance.

The court floor holding area should consist of a security officer station, holding cells, and entrance vestibule in front of the elevator, and, if possible, attorney/prisoner interview booths. The security station need not be enclosed and should provide the security officer with direct visibility to all areas.



Court Floor Holding Cell, Isle of Wight Courthouse

or jurors. It is critical that the holding area be soundproofed so that no sound from the holding area is heard in the courtroom.

There should be separate holding cells for men and women with sight and sound separation. Also if juveniles are to be held in a court floor holding area that may also contain adults, sight and sound separation needs to be maintained.

It is not unusual for in-custody defendants to attempt to disrupt court proceedings by shouting insults, using abusive language, banging on walls, or flushing toilets. Such noise from court floor-holding cells disrupts court proceedings, causes embarrassment, and intimidates witnesses

**CHAPTER 9 - PLANNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND ADA**

Access to justice is a fundamental right that can only be guaranteed if courthouses are easily accessible to all the public. Persons with disabilities must be provided convenient entry to the courthouse and barrier-free access to all appropriate interior spaces. Courthouses, however, present a special problem for persons with disabilities, because courthouses traditionally have been designed and built to project an image of strength and dignity. Architectural elements such as large columns, heavy doors, and grand staircases that have traditionally been used to convey a reverence for the law impede accessibility.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that people with disabilities be afforded equal access to government buildings and services. All courthouses should comply with the requirements of The Americans with Disabilities Act and all Commonwealth accessibility requirements.

**I. BACKGROUND**

The laws on accessibility in public buildings such as courthouses were significantly strengthened by the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 had mandated the removal of barriers in buildings and facilities constructed or altered by the federal government or with federal funds after 1969 (or after 1977 in the case of leased facilities).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating on the basis of handicap. This legislation also required "program accessibility" in existing buildings. A program or activity "when viewed in its entirety" must be "readily accessible to handicapped persons ... through such means as redesign of equipment or reassignment of classes or other services." It mandated accessibility to government services, but did not require the physical removal of existing barriers. Recipients of federal aid were permitted to reschedule their services to make them accessible to the handicapped. Amendments in 1978 extended the mandate to "programs conducted by federal agencies," as well as to recipients of federal funds.

On June 20, 1994, the Access Board published in the Federal Register an interim rule for judicial facilities (Section 11) to ADAAG. On that same date, the Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation published notices of proposed rulemaking to adopt sections 11 through 14 as standards.

Most recently, the Department of Justice published revised regulations for Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 in the Federal Register on September 15, 2010.

**II. FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For information about the ADA, including the revised 2010 ADA regulations, visit the DOJ website [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov);

The final report of the Access Board on Courthouse Accessibility can be found at the following website: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/ada-standards/single-file-version#a4>.

The following is a brief summary of some of the standards pertaining to judicial facilities. This is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of accessibility standards, but should serve to provide general guidance concerning some of the major requirements.

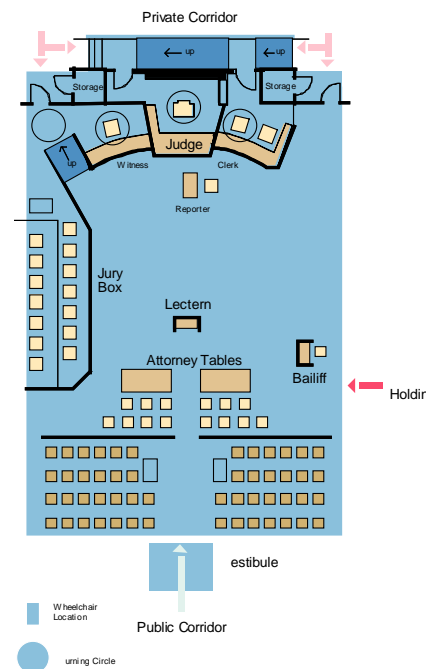
**III. COURTROOMS**

The leading issue in designing accessible courthouses is wheelchair access to raised areas such as jury boxes, witness stands, and judges’ benches. The ADA requires that all public areas of the courtroom (public seating, witness stand, attorney tables, jury box, court reporter stations, and bailiff location) must be located on an accessible route and accommodate a wheelchair.

Areas that are accessed by ramps or platform lifts shall provide unobstructed turning space. Vertical access to a raised judge’s bench or courtroom Clerks’ workstation need not be installed immediately, provided that the areas maneuvering spaces, and, if appropriate, electrical service are installed at the time of initial construction to permit future installation of either ramps or lifts without requiring substantial reconstruction of the space.

While the Access Board generally discourages the use of platform lifts they are allowed in courtrooms and have become a common means of providing access to witness stands and judges’ benches. Common issues, however, include platform deflection and downward settlement; interlock malfunctions; and operation requiring assistance such as the removal of steps, platforms or millwork.

Ramps often are preferred for a number of reasons. While ramps may take up more space, they generally cost less than lifts and are easily constructed. Ramps require minimal maintenance and require railings only if the level change is greater than 6 inches. No power source is required, nor are mechanical parts that can malfunction involved. Most importantly, ramps permit all users, including people who use wheelchairs, to use the element independently, with no disruption to court proceedings. Ramps are always useable in case of emergency evacuation, and require no assistance.



**Wheelchair Accessible Courtroom**  
 Courtesy of HOK Architects and Engineers.

The following are the minimum requirements for ramps that are utilized as part of an accessible route:

- Ramps must be permanent, not pull-out, flip-down or removable.
- Ramps must provide a minimum clear width of 36 inches between handrails.
- Landings where ramps change directions must have a minimum dimension of 60 inches x 60 inches.
- If a door is located at the top or bottom of a ramp, the landing must be large enough for adequate maneuvering clearances at the door. If the door swings back over the landing, there must be adequate landing space to back up to clear the door swing.
- Raised platforms accessed by ramps must have a turning space to allow an individual to turn around to go down the ramp.
- Ramps must have a maximum slope of 1:12.
- Ramp runs and landings with drop-offs must have edge protection, such as a curb, barrier, or extended surface as specified in the guidelines.
- Ramps with a rise of greater than 6 inches need handrails. Handrails must be located along both sides of a ramp at a height above the ramp surface of 34 inches to 38 inches measured to the top of the handrail.
- Most model building codes require a guard where there is a drop-off of more than 30 inches. If the ramp or landing has such a drop-off along any side, it must also have a guard at that location in addition to handrails. The minimum height of a guard is 42 inches with maximum openings of 4 inches.

#### A. Recommendations for Best Practice

Ramps should not be located where they will be a tripping hazard for other circulation routes through the space.

Ramps should not be located where they will block the means of egress, including maneuvering clearances at doors.

Ramps should be located along the same path of travel as provided for the general population.



Electronic Lift at Judge's Bench, Isle of Wight Courthouse

When ramps are exterior, they should be located or designed to limit the accumulation of water, ice and snow.

When ramps lead to doors that may be locked, a turning space should be provided at the door to allow someone to turn around if they cannot enter. This is also advisable at exterior doors because the force to open the door may be too high for some people with disabilities to operate.

Although ramps with a rise of 6 inches or less are not required to have handrails, where possible, handrails to provide stability for people with ambulatory impairments are recommended for all ramps.

#### **B. Public Seating / Gallery**

The public seating area of the courtroom is treated as an assembly area and must include wheelchair seating space. Also all courtrooms must be equipped with assistive listening devices.

#### **C. Jury Boxes and Witness Stands**

All jury boxes and witness stands are required to be fully accessible. Section 808.3 requires that each jury box and witness stand should be large enough to accommodate a wheelchair within its defined area. In alterations, the wheelchair spaces may be located outside the defined area of the jury box or witness stand, if the ramp or lift access poses a hazard to any required egress from the courtroom.

A simple solution to both jury box and witness accessibility is to place the first tier of the jury box and the witness stand at floor level, thus eliminating the need for ramps or lifts at these locations. Care needs to be exercised, however, to ensure that this does not interfere with proper sightlines within the courtroom. Depending on the location of the witness stand, lowering it to floor level may partially obstruct the view of the witness by attorneys or some jurors.

#### **D. Judges' Benches and Courtroom Workstations**

Judges' benches and workstations for clerks and other court personnel must be accessible. The ADA and ABA guidelines provide an exception for vertical access to judges' benches and raised employee stations. Under this exception, it is not required to provide vertical access at the time of construction provided that clear floor space, maneuvering space, and electrical service for lifts are provided at the time of initial construction for later installation of lifts for ramps.

A preferred practice for vertical access to judges' benches is locating ramps or lifts outside the courtroom or at least out of view from the well and public gallery. Further, for purposes of emergency or security evacuation, as well as ease of independent operation, judges may prefer ramp access.



**E. Court Reporter Station**

The court reporter's station must be accessible with adequate access to the work area and maneuvering room.

**F. Attorney Tables**

The counsel tables must be accessible with adequate maneuvering room behind the table. Microphones should be movable and have a long neck.

**IV. JURY ASSEMBLY AREAS**

If provided, the jury assembly area shall be on an accessible route from the main public entrance and provide a minimum of 5% wheelchair accessible spaces at any fixed or built-in seating or tables. Refreshment areas, kitchenettes and fixed or built-in refreshment dispensers are to be fully accessible. If fixed seating is used, the number of accessible wheelchair spaces, location, and dispersal must comply with those requirements for assembly areas included in the ADA Accessibility Guidelines.

**V. JURY DELIBERATION AREAS**

Jury deliberation rooms shall accommodate at least one accessible wheelchair space at built in seating and tables. Other requirements are identical to those required for the jury assembly room. Refreshment area, kitchenette, and toilets must be accessible.

**A. Assistive Listening Systems**

Permanently installed assistive listening systems shall be provided in each courtroom. The minimum number of receivers shall be four percent of the room occupant load, as determined by applicable State or local codes, but not less than two receivers. An informational sign indicating the availability of an assistive listening system must be posted in a prominent place.

Where an instructional or orientation video is shown provisions must be made for the visually impaired.

Fifty percent of each type of jury deliberation room shall have a permanently installed assistive listening system. A portable assistive listening system may be used in the remaining deliberation rooms. From an operational point of view, it may be easier and more efficient to make every deliberation room fully accessible than to rely on moving equipment to and from different rooms and it may not be feasible to have jurors make use of alternative jury rooms to accommodate handicapped jurors.

**B. Courthouse Holding Facilities**

Where separate central holding cells or court floor holding cells are provided for adult male, juvenile male, adult female or juvenile female, one of each type at each location

must be accessible. Where central-holding cells are provided, which are not separated by age or sex, at least one cell shall be accessible.

Each accessible cell shall provide an accessible turning space, doors, toilets, lavatories; grab bars, and drinking fountain. An exception is allowed for doors operated only by security personnel.

**C. Other Courthouse Areas**

- Parking spaces – Designation of handicapped parking.
- Entrances to buildings – Use of ramps.
- Elevators – Use of Braille lettering and audio recordings for identification.
- Restrooms – Design of lavatories and toilets.
- Drinking fountains – Lower height.
- Entrance doors to all offices – use of wide doors with lever type door handles.
- Clerks counters and public access computer terminals – Lower counter height.
- Records room – Increased space between aisles and entrances.
- Public telephone – wheelchair accessible

**CHAPTER 10 - COURTHOUSE COMPONENTS**

**I. COURTROOMS**

The courtroom is the focal point of courthouse activity and provides the setting for conducting most legal proceedings. In varying numbers and combinations the following participants may be involved in, or present during, courtroom proceedings: judge, jurors, bailiff or deputy sheriff, court reporter, clerk, attorneys, litigants, witnesses, probation personnel, media representatives, and spectators. Courtroom design must accommodate the particular needs of each participant while facilitating the flow of proceedings within the courtroom. When combined, the individual elements of courtroom design should blend to produce a dignified, functional space conducive to court proceedings.

**II. GENERAL DESIGN CRITERIA**

Each courtroom should be designed and furnished to create a dignified yet functional setting for the matters to be conducted in the courtroom. The symbolism attached to a courtroom as a hall of justice requires that care be given to the design and furnishings of each courtroom. The final product will vary depending on the type of court. Circuit court courtrooms require jury boxes; district court courtrooms do not. Juvenile and domestic relations district court courtrooms have less need for spectator seating than do general district and circuit court courtrooms. In all cases, however, the importance of the appearance of the courtroom to the public should not be overlooked. Certain common elements should be incorporated into the plans of all courtrooms.

**A. Size and Shape**

Courtroom shape and size should be determined by the anticipated use of the courtroom and in consultation with the judges. The traditional shape of a courtroom is rectangular and can be divided into two areas: the public gallery (spectator) and the litigation well.

Most courthouses require at least one large courtroom, perhaps capable of holding 100 or more spectators, to accommodate ceremonial functions, public and civic meetings, large motions calendars, or docket calls. Where two or more courtrooms are required, the second and subsequent courtrooms may be smaller, depending upon their projected use. The present and future demands on the courts should be taken into account when planning both the size and shape of the courtrooms.

<b>Type of Courtroom</b>	<b>Public Seating</b>	<b>Area (Sq. Ft.)</b>
Hearing room	20 persons	1,040
Standard General District	60 persons	1,200 – 1,400
Large General District	150 persons	2,000 – 2,200
Standard J & DR	30 persons	1,000 – 1,200
Large J&DR	60 persons	1,200 – 1,400
Standard Circuit	60 persons	1,400 – 1,600
Large Circuit	100 persons	2,000 – 2,200

**B. Location of Bench**

The judge should be able to clearly view the entire courtroom and all of its occupants. Generally, all participants within the litigation area should have a clear unobstructed view of each other. It is particularly important that jurors have a clear view of the witnesses, defendant, judge, and attorneys.



Colonial Heights Courthouse, General District Courtroom with center bench

The traditional arrangement is to have the bench centered on the back wall of the courtroom. Most judges prefer this arrangement because of its prominent location and the view that it provides of the courtroom. An alternative location is in the corner. The corner bench arrangement generally provides better sightlines for courtroom participants and makes more efficient use of space.

**C. Number and Size of Courtrooms**

The number of courtrooms required will depend upon a number of factors, including the size of the court's caseload, the types of cases, the scheduling practices of the court, and the number of judges. While it is possible to provide some general guidelines regarding the number of courtrooms, the exact number and size of courtrooms that are required will need to be determined during the programming phase of the project.

Generally, most communities will want to have separate courtrooms for their circuit, general district, and juvenile and domestic relations district courts. In small counties (cities) where cases are scheduled for only one or two days each week courts may be able to share courtrooms. This most commonly occurs with the general district and the J&DR district courts.



Fairfax County J&DR Courtroom with corner bench

Circuit courtrooms must handle both jury and non-jury cases, involving all types of matters, including divorce, criminal, and civil. To accommodate this wide variety of needs, each courthouse should have at least one large jury circuit courtroom, capable of seating approximately 100 spectators that can also be used for jury assembly and selection, ceremonial purposes, and other public functions. If additional circuit

courtrooms are needed, medium-sized courtrooms may be adequate, depending upon their projected use.

General district courts, because of their high volume caseloads (traffic and misdemeanor), will require a large non-jury courtroom capable of seating 100-150 persons. In multi-judge courts the second courtroom may be somewhat smaller, depending upon the court's calendar and scheduling practices. Also, some smaller rural communities may require only a medium-sized, non-jury courtroom for its general district court. Again, these are issues that are normally decided during the master planning or programming phases of the project.

Juvenile and domestic relations (J & DR) district courts may be smaller than other courtrooms. While certain delinquency cases and cases involving adults are open to the public, most juvenile hearings are not open to the public. The general practice among J&DR courts around the state is to include in the courtroom only the immediate participants in the case and to have everyone else wait outside the courtroom. For most J&DR courtrooms capacity to seat 25-30 persons in the public seating area would be sufficient. Consequently, J&DR courtrooms require more public seating outside the courtroom than do the other courts.

The following space guidelines give approximate seating and space requirements for a variety of courtroom types:

- Courtroom design must include separate work areas for all participants and provide adequate circulation for participants within the litigation area.
- Court proceedings will progress more smoothly if participants have sufficient workspace suited to their particular needs. Properly designed and furnished workspaces allow individuals to perform their tasks more easily and with less distraction to others in the court.
- Courtrooms should be easily accessible to the public. In all courtrooms, the public should enter through a single public entrance vestibule and the judge and court staff should be able to enter the courtroom by means of a private entrance at the back of the courtroom from a private corridor. In-custody defendants should enter directly from a secure holding area adjacent to the courtroom. When entering the courtroom, prisoners and defendants should not be escorted near the judge, the public, jurors, or witnesses. Prisoners should enter the courtroom from the opposite side of the courtroom from the jury. Likewise, jurors should not have to pass near the defendant or the public when entering or exiting the courtroom. Jurors should be able to exit the courtroom immediately from the jury box and enter the deliberation room.

**D. Environmental Controls**

Each courtroom should be equipped with controls accessible by court staff for the heating, cooling, ventilation, and lighting systems for the courtroom.

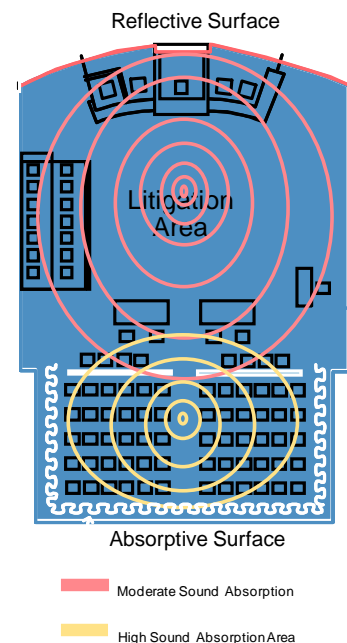
Maintaining suitable environmental conditions within the courtroom is important. A courtroom that is too hot or too cold can adversely affect the participants. The ability to regulate the heating, cooling, and ventilation will help maintain a proper atmosphere within the courtroom.

Similarly, courtroom lighting should be controlled by court staff and be located where they are easily accessible by court personnel. Keeping these controls within the reach of court personnel also prevents distractions or problems caused by intentional or accidental contact with the controls by others in the courtroom.

**E. Acoustics**

Courtrooms should be designed with superior acoustics within the courtroom and large courtrooms should include a public address system.

Courtrooms should be designed to enhance the acoustics within the well, that area occupied by the judge, jury, witnesses and litigants. Features such as soundproofing between courtroom and surrounding spaces (particularly holding cells), double door entry ways from public corridors, and carpeting help to reduce the extraneous noise within the courtroom. Larger courtrooms, particularly those in general district courts should be equipped with a public address system.



**Acoustical Characteristics**

Courtesy of HOK

**F. Technology**

Courtrooms are forums for the presentation of evidence, and judges, court staff, and attorneys need access to audio/visual equipment, computers, communication devices, and information databases. The following are among the different technologies that need to be incorporated into a modern courtroom:

- Large flat panel video display monitors to view evidence displays and remote witness testimony;
- Electronic evidence display system,
- VCR/DVD Player;

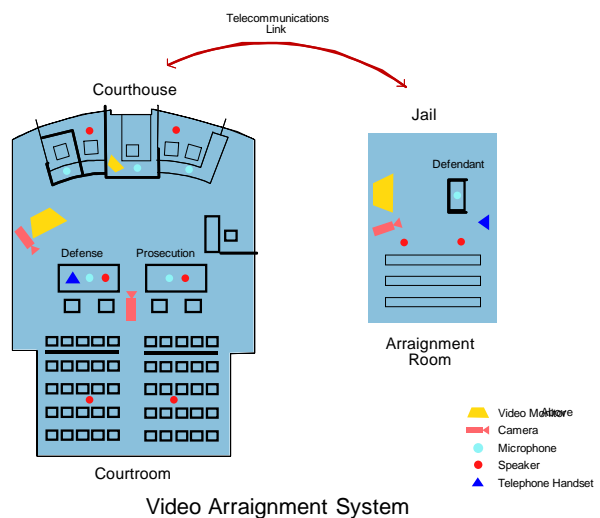
- Real-time transcription capability;
- Audio recording and playback systems;
- Video recording system (optional);
- Teleconferencing;
- Video conferencing for remote testimony, expert witness testimony, arraignments, and preliminary hearings;
- Document scanners;
- Laser and color printers;
- Facsimile machine;
- Light pens for marking video screens;
- Desktop personal computers;
- Notebook and tablet computers;
- Assistive listening devices;
- Audio enhancement equipment;
- Interpreting services;
- CCTV security surveillance cameras;
- Security and duress alarms.

**G. Video Conferencing**

Courtroom design should anticipate the need to incorporate video conferencing capabilities in the courtroom.

Each type of courtroom has different needs for video conferencing within the courtroom and should be equipped with a video conferencing system for the

purpose of viewing remote witness testimony, including expert and child witnesses, conducting video arraignments, and other types of remote hearings and conferences.



Microphones need to be located at the bench, clerk's workstation, and witness stand, lectern, and attorney tables. Controls should be located at the clerk's station or judge's bench.

District courtrooms should have audio recording and playback equipment available, as well as video arraignment equipment installed. This requires video and audio communication between a prisoner at the jail and persons in the courtroom, including the judge, defense attorney, Commonwealth Attorney, and clerk. Controls should be located at the judge's bench or clerk's workstation. Each participant requires a video monitor, camera, microphone and speaker. A video recording capability for the preparation of a combined audio and video record of the proceeding would be optional.

A facsimile machine at both ends of the video link may be used to transmit paperwork with signatures, and telephones permit attorneys to speak privately with their clients at the jail. An alternative configuration would be to use scanners and to transmit documents (with signatures) via e-mail.

#### **H. Sound Reinforcement and Audio Recording Systems**

All courtrooms over 1,000 square feet need audio amplification to permit the judge, jurors, litigants, and public spectators to hear clearly and understand the participants.

Sound reinforcement systems consist of microphones, electronic mixers, signal processors, amplifiers and speakers. The sound system should be designed to operate automatically with automatic mixers controlling microphones (turning on microphones, which are being spoken into). Microphone switches should be provided at each microphone, which will function as Off-Auto. Automatic volume controllers should be used to help compensate for variations in voice levels and microphone distances. Systems should also be provided with electronics equalization to compensate for the acoustic properties of the finished courtrooms, speakers, and microphones. The master controls should be located at the clerk's station, or judge's bench, and should include a power switch, master volume control, and override controls.

When audio amplification is used in courtrooms, soft acoustic surfaces should be installed instead of hard surfaces.

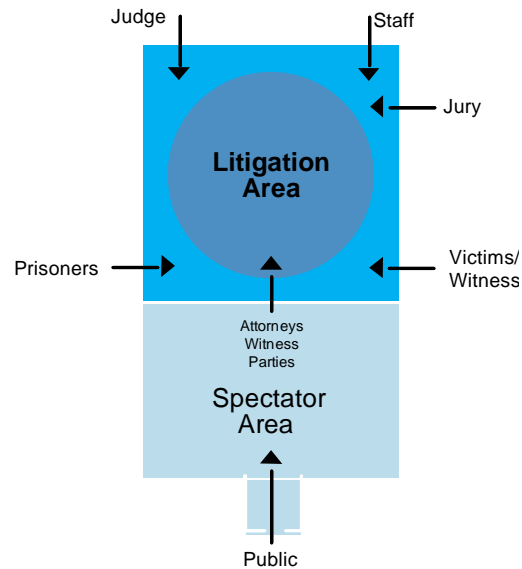
Cables run over carpeted floors are not only unsightly, they also pose a safety hazard. Planning sufficient convenient locations for audio jacks for public address systems, audio recording, and video equipment will keep the courtroom functional and uncluttered.



**I. Computer workstations and monitors**

Personal computers in both circuit and district court courtrooms should be located at the bench and court clerk's station. Computers should be connected to the courts' case management system and other and have access to the internet.

In addition to the judge's bench and clerk's station, flat panel video display monitors for the purpose of viewing evidence should be planned for the attorney tables, lectern, witness stand, and jury box for the viewing of electronically displayed evidence. The coming use of computer tablets with WiFi networks may make the installation of fixed video display monitors obsolete in the future.



**Courtroom Access and Circulation**  
Courtesy of HOK

Judges may wish to make use of notebook computers with a docking station located in their chambers and on the bench instead of using a desktop personal computer.

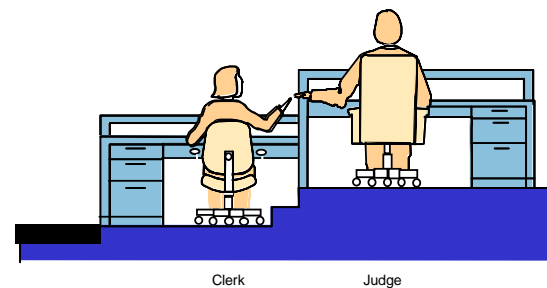
**III. CIRCUIT COURTROOMS**

**A. Courtroom Entrances**

Courtrooms should have separate entrances from restricted, secure, and public corridors. Controlling access to the courtroom from each of the three circulation systems increases courtroom security and facilitates the movement of people within the courthouse. Entrances from all public corridors should have a vestibule with double sets of doors to serve as a sound-lock.

**B. Judge's Bench**

The courtroom should have a dignified elevated bench that provides sufficient work space for the judge. The construction of the bench should enhance the safety of the judge while in the courtroom.

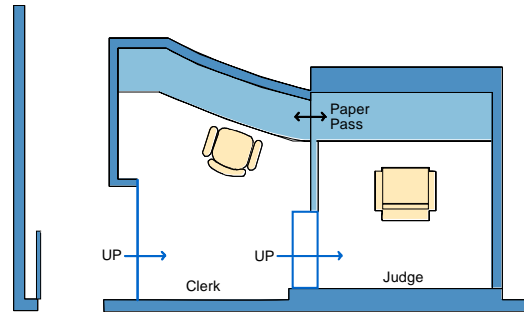


**Judge/Clerk Relationship**  
Courtesy of HOK

The judge's work area should be equipped with adequate task lighting. Each bench should be equipped with a shelf to hold bench books and copies of the

Virginia Code, and a place for side bar conferences. The judge should have a clear view of all parties in the courtroom.

- The judge is the symbol of the administration of justice and the judge's bench needs to reflect the dignity and authority of the judiciary. The judge must be able to view and hear all courtroom participants, address all persons in the courtroom, and pass and receive documents from attorneys and the court clerk. The judge should have a clear view of all parties in the courtroom while in both an upright position as well as while reclining in a swivel-back chair.



Judge/Clerk Relationship  
 Courtesy of HOK

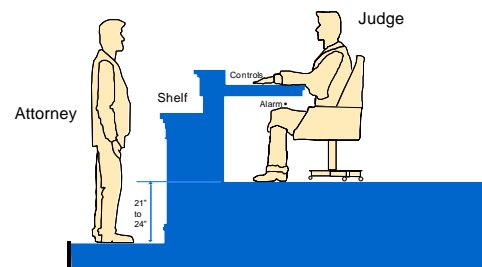
- The size of the bench should be proportionate to the size of the courtroom.
- The bench should be raised at least two risers (14 inches) above the floor. While seated, the judge's eye level should be higher than that of a standing person of average height.



Barrier/Shelf at Judge's Bench, Isle of Wight Courthouse

- If at least six feet of space is allowed behind the judge's desk, the judge can move freely for side-bar conferences, reach for reference books, and easily enter and exit the bench. Space should allow for the future installation of a ramp or lift for wheelchair access.

- In order to shield the judge's work surface and prevent attorneys and others from reading documents of the judge's desk, there should be a barrier, such as an ornamental rail or shelf, along the front of the bench.
- Several drawers should be provided for forms, supplies, and personal items, as well as a book shelf for legal references.



Judge's Bench  
 Courtesy of HOK

- The bench should be designed to facilitate the transfer of documents and

verbal communication with the court clerk and court reporter, as well as provide clear lines of sight to the witness.

- Benches may either be centered along the back wall of the courtroom (the traditional arrangement) or in the corner. Corner benches, while not favored by many judges offer excellent sightlines and tend to make more efficient use of the courtroom space.
- Each bench should be constructed of, or lined with, a projectile resistant material.
- A silent duress alarm system should be installed in the bench, accessible to and clearly marked for activation, by the judge in case of emergency. Care should be taken to avoid placement where the alarm could be activated accidentally.
- The bench should be located in the courtroom so that the judge approaches the bench from a private entrance off a restricted access passage. A large clock should be mounted on the wall opposite the judge's bench.
- Normal room lighting should be augmented by task lighting located directly above the bench. Lighting controls for the entire courtroom should be located at or near the bench, or clerk's station. Lighting controls should have preset settings.
- A minimum of two quadriplex electrical receptacles, two data jacks, two audio jacks, one phone line, and video display monitor and desktop or laptop computer should be installed at the bench in all courtrooms. All receptacles should be flush-mounted. Most benches will require two display monitors; one for viewing case information and one for viewing evidence presentations.
- The bench should be equipped with a microphone connected to an amplifier controlled by the judge or the clerk.

### **C. Clerk's Station**

A station for the courtroom clerk should be located adjacent to the judge's bench, positioned to provide a clear view of all courtroom activity and equipped with a private writing surface, a telephone, and controls for courtroom lighting, audio amplification systems, and audio recording systems if provided. The court clerk is responsible for maintaining a record of all court proceedings, checking case files, and recording appropriate case



Courtroom Clerk Workstation, Isle of Wight Courthouse

dispositions. In this capacity, the clerk frequently passes files to and from the judge and requires immediate proximity to the judge.

The clerk's station should be compatible with the style and finishes of the judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.

The clerk should be elevated at least one riser above the courtroom floor in order to provide the clerk with a better view of the courtroom. The height difference between the clerk's station and the judge should not exceed 12". To aid in the transfer of documents a "pass-through" or other millwork solutions may be considered. The clerk's station is located on the same side as the bailiff and near a doorway to the private corridor.

The court clerk's work surface should be large enough to accommodate the case files exhibits, supplies, forms, work papers, and a personal computer with video display monitor and keyboard. Space should also be provided for a silent printer and document scanner. The counter should be approximately 30 inches in depth and about 48 inches in length. Approximately 30 to 40 square feet are required for a single clerk's workstation.

- The court clerk's station should have the same amount of task lighting as the judge's bench.
- There should be sufficient space to install a ramp or lift in the future should the need arise. A ramp must have a slope of no greater than a 1-foot rise over 12 linear feet and cannot rise more than 30 inches without a 5-foot level landing.
- The court clerk's station should have the same duress alarm/intercom system as the judge, providing direct linkage with the central security station.
- Normal room lighting should be augmented by task lighting located directly above the bench.
- An elevated front and/or side on the clerk's station will provide privacy for note taking as well as screening equipment, such as telephone, microphone controls, computer, and printer from public view. The separation will avoid participant distraction and preserve the dignified appearance of the courtroom.
- The clerk also is responsible for exhibits during trials. Sufficient space should be provided for safe storage of these materials during trials. In addition to drawer and shelf space in the clerk's station, an inconspicuous closet should be provided in the courtroom for storing large items during continuing trials.
- Each workstation should have two quadriplex flush-mounted electrical receptacles, one telephone jack, two data jacks for computers and built-in video display monitors. Other equipment includes a silent printer and document scanner.

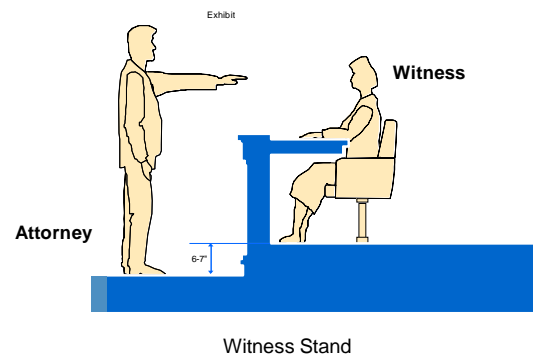
- The clerk should have a phone with silent ring. The control console for the sound amplification and video recording systems should be located here, along with a microphone connected to a mixer and amplifier controlled by the judge or clerk.
- All controls for video and teleconferencing equipment should be located at the clerk's station.

#### **D. Witness Stand**

Each courtroom should have a witness stand clearly visible by the judge, jurors, and litigants. The stand should be equipped with a comfortable chair, a modesty panel, a sound amplification system, and an exhibit display area. A flat panel video display monitor may also be located at the witness stand to allow witnesses to view electronically displayed evidence.

The witness, along with the judge, should be the focal point of all courtroom proceedings. It is critical that all courtroom participants clearly hear and see all verbal and nonverbal communication from the witness.

Elevating the stand and providing sound amplification facilitates this result, however, placing the witness at floor level eliminates the need to provide a ramp or lift for wheelchair access.



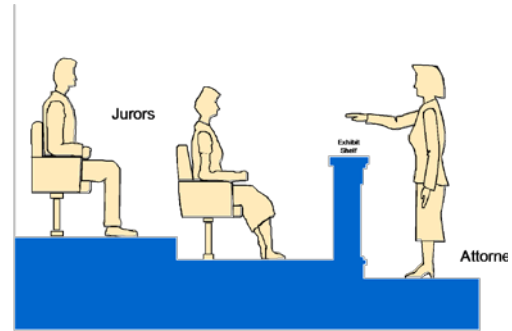
Courtesy of HOK

- The witness stand requires 15-20 sq. ft. The location of the witness stand is traditionally next to the judge, but depending upon the configuration of the courtroom a free-standing movable witness stand is permitted.
- The exhibit area for screens, chalkboards or marker boards, and large screen video display monitors should be close to the witness stand and easily viewed by the witness and other courtroom participants. The exhibit area might be located between the witness stand and the jury box for ease of viewing by both the jurors and witness.
- There should be at least one quadriplex, power outlet and two data jacks for a video display monitor. A microphone should be mounted unobtrusively at the witness stand and be able to receive clearly the testimony of children and soft-spoken witnesses.
- Earphones or other assistive listening devices should be available for hearing impaired witnesses.

**E. Jury Box**

All circuit courtrooms should include a well lit, jury box sized to accommodate at least 14 jurors.

Jurors perform an important function in the circuit court. Proper placement of the jury box facilitates the juror's ability to observe and follow the proceeding. Writing surfaces may be included for each juror. Protected pathways to and from the courtroom and jury deliberation room reduce public contact with or harassment of jurors. Situating the jury box so jurors can see other participants or spectators, without being too close, reduces opportunities for harassment, distraction, or overhearing attorney-client exchanges. Because jurors may be sitting for long periods, comfortable chairs and a modesty panel should be provided.



Two-Tier Jury Box

Courtesy of HOK

The dimensions should be approximately 8' by 18' and the first row of jurors may be at floor level to permit easy wheelchair access without having to provide a ramp or lift to the jury box. If the first row is raised above the litigation floor, additional space will be required for wheelchair maneuvering and ramps;

- Each juror should have clear lines of sight to the witness stand, the counsel tables, the judge, and the evidence display areas.
- To provide jurors with the best possible view, the rows of seats should be tiered, and there should be ample room between the rows for easy entrance and exit of jurors.
- Jurors should have a direct path to and from restricted access corridors;
- The jurors should have direct access to the jury deliberation room from the courtroom by means of the private circulation system;
- Audio jacks for earphones may be installed at one or two positions for use by the hearing impaired.
- The jury box should be equipped with electrical receptacles and data jacks for the installation flat, panel video display monitors for jurors to view evidence and documents (at least one for every two jurors). A large screen video monitor for viewing evidence is optional. A microphone should be placed near the fore person's position in the jury box.

**F. Counsel Tables**

Each courtroom should have separate tables for defense and plaintiff (prosecution). Each table should accommodate from two to four persons, including the litigants or defendant. There should be sufficient space for reference books, documents, notes and evidence, and notebook computers.

Counsel tables serve several purposes for attorneys in court: a general workspace for papers, files, and note taking; a place to confer with clients; and a position from which to observe other participants, question the witness, and address the court. To accommodate these varying functions, care must be given to the placement of counsel tables within the litigation area. Counsel tables should be located so that:

- Counsel and client can see and be seen by all other participants;
- Counsel has a clear pathway to the bench, witness stand, jury box, clerk's station, and lectern;
- Conversations between client and counsel will not be overheard by other participants, jurors, or spectators.
- To accommodate cases with large numbers of participants, an additional row of chairs or a bench might be provided behind each table just in front of the rail.
- A minimum of two quadriplex electrical receptacles; two data jacks, one phone line, and two audio jacks should be installed for each table. Space should be allowed for the installation of a personal / notebook computer, monitor. Space for a silent printer and document scanner also may be required.

**G. Lectern**

Space for a moveable lectern with a microphone should be provided in the courtroom.

The preference of the judges and attorneys will determine the actual use of the lectern. In many recently constructed courthouses the lectern has been developed into a media presentation center with personal computer and electronic presentation system that includes a video camera.



Fairfax County J&DR Courtroom  
Lectern with Evidence Display System

Task lighting may be provided at the lectern to aid reading. The lectern should be easily accessible from the attorney tables and should not interfere with the view of the proceedings by the litigants or the jurors.

**H. Display Area**

Each courtroom should include an area for the display of evidence. This may include a large flat screen video monitor, a built-in white marker board or softboard, x-ray shadow box, or projector screen. All such display equipment should be positioned to allow easy viewing by the witness and all other participants.

By incorporating the majority of the equipment needed for evidence display into the litigation area's design, the confusion and clutter of free-standing units can be avoided. Traffic patterns within the well should be designed to accommodate access to the equipment and the need for additional storage space in the courthouse will be limited. The use of flat panel (and perhaps computer tablets) to view electronically displayed evidence is replacing many of the older display systems and the need to provide space for marker boards and projectors.

**I. Bailiff Station**

Space should be provided for a bailiff in each courtroom. Due to the varying duties of the bailiff, more than one space may be needed.

The bailiff, or deputy sheriff, is responsible for the security of the courtroom and all participants, maintains order in the courtroom, and removes disruptive persons. The bailiff generally moves about the courtroom but for convenience and comfort a small table with movable swivel chair may be provided. Typical locations include: near the bench, by the defendant, near the jury box, and near the main public entrance.

From each location the bailiff should be able to see the entire courtroom and have easy access to a silent emergency alarm. In planning for specific courtrooms, the judges involved should be consulted. The total area need be no more than 15 square feet.

The bailiff workstation requires at least one quadriplex electrical receptacle; one data jack, one phone line, and one audio jack. The bailiff's station may also have a telephone with a silent ring.

**J. Court Reporter Station**

Each courtroom should provide a workstation near the bench and witness stand for a court reporter.



Most courts in Virginia make use of contract court reporters and the court reporters provide their own equipment. The configuration of the court reporter's space will be determined by the method of court reporting used:

Steno type – a moveable chair and adequate electrical outlets are required.

Electronic recording – a permanent work station that will accommodate the required recording equipment and space for note taking. Wiring for the sound recording equipment should be incorporated into the courtroom's design.

Computer-aided transcription – a moveable chair, adequate electrical outlets and data jack for computer connection.

Videotaping – camera locations, a permanent work station that will accommodate the required monitoring equipment and conduits for wiring should be incorporated into the courtroom design.

For testimony and proceedings to be recorded accurately, the court reporter should be located adjacent to or in front of the witness stand so that the reporter can clearly view the witness's facial expressions and hear voice testimony. The court reporter should also have an unobstructed view of the entire litigation area. This field of vision should include the judge, witness box, jury box, and attorney's tables.

For a steno-typist or reporter, using computer-aided transcription, being able to hear and be heard by the participants is crucial. When sidebar exchanges occur between the judge and attorneys, the reporter must be able to move quickly into a position to hear and record the remarks.

For electronic recording, proper placement of microphones to pick up each speaker's remarks is crucial. In addition, because log notes indicating the tape counter location of each witness' testimony should be taken, a work surface to accommodate note taking should be provided. If a centralized recording system is used, this task may be performed by the courtroom clerk, thus eliminating the need for a court reporter's station in the courtroom. A central recording and storage room and extensive wiring arrangements would, however, be required.

Although in Virginia, general district and juvenile and domestic relations district courts are not considered "courts of record", these courts also should include court reporter stations in the courtrooms. This is because attorneys may wish to provide their own reporters to make a transcript in some cases.

The court reporter station should have a minimum of four electrical outlets, two data jacks, and two audio jacks. Enough space should be allowed for stenographic equipment and a personal computer. A silent printer in the courtroom may be needed for producing transcripts.

**K. Defendant's Station**

In courtrooms that will be used for criminal trials, the defendant's station should be located near the entrance to the prisoner holding facilities.

Criminal defendants who are in custody should enter the courtroom from restricted passages connected to the prisoner holding facilities. For the security of the prisoner and those in the courtroom, the distance from this entry to the defense table should be kept to a minimum. The defendant should not pass the jury box, the bench, or through the spectator area en route to the defense table or defendant's station.

If feasible, provision should be made to handle the violent defendant. In larger courthouses with several courtrooms, at least one courtroom might be equipped with a secure holding room adjacent to the courtroom to hold violent prisoners during trials. If provided, this room should be equipped with a security glass window opening onto the courtroom so that the defendant can be observed by the jurors, judge, and other participants. The room should also be wired for a speaker and microphone so that the defendant can hear the proceedings and respond to questions as necessary.

**L. Public Gallery and Spectator Seating**

A seating area for spectators should be provided in all courtrooms, including juvenile and domestic relations district courts. Courtrooms used for ceremonial purposes will require greater seating capacity. Spectator seating area should be separated from the well (litigation area) area by a railing or other physical barrier.

Because the majority of court proceedings are open to the public, including many juvenile hearings, spectator seating should be provided. The amount of seating will vary depending on the type of courtroom. Decisions about seating capacity should take into consideration the following:

- Use of courtroom for jury impaneling
- Type of activity planned for courtrooms, i.e., criminal courtroom, motions courtroom, regular civil trials, traffic court, juvenile, etc.
- Other public or civic uses

Fixed, pew-type benches allow greater flexibility in seating capacity than individual chairs and reduce courtroom distractions caused by chairs scraping the floor. Auditorium (theater) style seating provides greater comfort and may be more appropriate in courtrooms with longer proceedings.

**Approximate Public Seating Capacities by Courtroom Size**

<b>Type of Courtroom</b>	<b>Spectators</b>
Large	101-150
Medium	51-100
Small	31-50
Hearing Room	20

**IV. GENERAL AND JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURTROOMS**

District courtrooms have many of the same features and requirements as circuit courtrooms with the exception that district courts are not courts of record and do not have jury trials. They do not, therefore, require jury boxes or adjacent jury deliberation rooms.

Even though they are not courts of record, district courts use audio recording to record the proceedings in the courtroom and private attorneys may on occasion wish to hire a reporter to make a transcript of the proceedings.

When planning and designing new district courtrooms, however, consideration should be given to possible future changes in court jurisdiction and to how the current courtroom may be used in the future. Future flexibility is enhanced by the design of fairly generic courtrooms that can be used for a variety of court functions over the years. This would mean designing district courtrooms that are at least large enough to accommodate a future jury box in case the district courtroom should ever be needed to be used as a circuit courtroom. Future expansion strategies may include the possibility that the district court will vacate the building to an addition or another building and that the current courtrooms be converted to circuit courtrooms.

In most other respects, judges' benches, witness stand, attorney tables, prisoner holding, spectators, and security district court design should follow closely that of circuit courtrooms as described above.

Likewise, district courtrooms will have many of the same technology requirements as do circuit courtrooms. Generally, however, the evidence display needs are not as elaborate in district courts where trials are shorter and usually involve fewer witnesses, and the issues presented are less technical. District courts also make use of audio recording instead of live court reporters to take the record. Most evidence may still be presented using a DVD player or other electronic media, white marker board, or overhead projector.

In many district court proceedings, attorneys and litigants/defendants often stand at the bench. There should be a small shelf incorporated into the bench design where attorneys can place papers and documents. The shelf also helps to prevent attorneys and others from viewing the judge's notes and documents.

While district courts will make use of audio recording to take the record, there may be occasions when a live real-time transcription is required for the hearing impaired or when private attorneys wish to have a record made. For those occasions, a court reporter station should be located adjacent to, or in front of, the witness stand so that the reporter can clearly view the witness's facial expressions and hear voice testimony. The technology requirements for the court reporter are the same as for a circuit courtroom.

Cases heard in district court are generally shorter than circuit court with less evidence being presented. The space requirements are somewhat less as is the need for electronic equipment at the attorney tables. Nonetheless, courtroom functions may change over the years and planning should consider possible future requirements.

J&DR district court proceedings are often private and less formal than in general district court and circuit court. There are also fewer spectators present in most J&DR proceedings. J&DR courtrooms are generally smaller than other courtrooms and need to seat no more than 30 in the public gallery.

#### **A. Hearing Rooms**

In multi-judge courthouses and courthouses with a juvenile and domestic relations district consideration should be given to providing at least one hearing room in which informal hearings may be conducted by judges, commissioners, special justices, or magistrates.

Hearing rooms should be provided for hearing minor infractions or small hearings of a private nature. Hearing rooms are generally informal, private, and require less space. They are particularly well suited to hear private juvenile and domestic matters.

Generally, hearing rooms should meet the same standards for environmental controls and working standards as courtrooms. They should be well-lit, free from outside noise and distractions, and free from obstructions within the room. Because the hearings generally involve fewer people, less public seating is required; generally no more than 10 persons. There should be work tables for each of the parties, and the judge's bench should be slightly elevated (usually one riser is sufficient). If a witness stand, reporter's station, clerk's station, or bailiff's station is required, they should conform to the standards of a regular courtroom. Consideration should be given to using moveable furniture, including the judge's bench.

The same standards as to circulation patterns should be followed. The judge should be able to enter the hearing room from a secure, private corridor. The public and litigants should enter through a separate public entrance. The work area and the public seating area should be separated by a physical barrier. The judge should have complete and unobstructed view of all participants in the room.

A hearing room should accommodate at least 15 people (non-spectators) in the litigation area and seat about 10 spectators. A typical hearing room requires approximately 700 - 940 sq. ft.

Generally, technology requirements of hearing rooms will be similar to that required in courtrooms. Planning should include computers at the bench and clerk's workstation, video conferencing capabilities, and video display monitors to view evidence. Electrical outlets, voice and data jacks should be planned for the bench, clerk's workstation, witness box (if present), and attorney tables.

## **B. Conference Rooms**

Each courthouse should have conference rooms capable of seating four to six persons for the use of attorney's and their clients and the Commonwealth's attorney's office. Large multi-purpose conference rooms seating ten to fifteen persons may be required at other locations in the courthouse for use by judges, the clerk, Sheriff, Commonwealth Attorney, or court administration.

Elsewhere in these guidelines mention has been made for the need for witness waiting rooms and attorney/client conference rooms. This would fulfill many of the needs for conference space needed by attorneys and the Commonwealth's attorney. Juvenile and domestic relations district courts, however, have special needs for conference space where private conferences may occur between parties in child custody, neglect, and other types of sensitive cases.

Larger conference rooms seating ten to twenty persons may be needed in the clerk's offices and the judges' chambers. The judges' conference room may double as a small hearing room and consideration should be given to the use of flexible furnishings. In small courthouses (one or two judges) the law library may also double as a conference space for special meetings or events.

In all cases, the conference rooms should be sound-proofed in order to allow private conversations that cannot be heard from outside the door or through the walls.

Conference rooms should be equipped with adequate electrical outlets and data jacks to permit users with laptop computers to work and access local or wide area computer networks. Larger conference rooms may also be equipped with video conferencing equipment for the purpose of long-distance training or meetings.

## **C. Witness Waiting Room**

Each courtroom should have two witness waiting rooms, located near the courtroom, one for each side in a case.

Witnesses often must spend long periods of time waiting in court to be called to testify, sometimes at extreme inconvenience. They deserve comfortable, secure, and private surroundings. In many older courthouses it is not uncommon for witnesses to

be forced to wait in the courtroom or hallways. Often these accommodations are uncomfortable, lack privacy, and place witnesses in positions where they may be threatened, intimidated, or come into contact with opposing witnesses.

Witness waiting rooms should be provided in all circuit, general district and juvenile and domestic relations district courts.

The need to protect witnesses, particularly in criminal and juvenile cases, is an important consideration in the design of witness waiting areas. Witnesses should not be placed in situations where they can be intimidated by defendants or other individuals. It is also necessary to provide control over witnesses so that they are available to testify when needed.

Attorneys on occasion need to confer in private with witnesses before they are called to testify, and witness waiting rooms also can serve this purpose.

Witnesses are generally excluded from courtroom during the testimony of other witnesses so that they cannot be influenced by contact with other witnesses, or by hearing testimony given by others. Witness rooms should be constructed in a way that isolates the rooms from courtroom sounds and activities, and should be soundproofed.

The rooms should be ventilated and well-lighted, require a minimum of 100 sq. ft., and hold up to four persons.

Witness waiting rooms should be equipped with a telephone jack and electrical outlets so that witnesses might work while waiting (phones might be provided upon request).

#### **D. Attorney-Client Conference Room**

Each courtroom should have two rooms for private conferences between attorneys and their clients.

There should be at least two conference rooms for each courtroom. Conference rooms should be required for circuit and juvenile and domestic relations district courtrooms; they should be considered optional for general district courts.

Attorneys need to meet with their clients during the litigation process to discuss matters in private. In many courthouses, these conversations must take place in crowded corridors or even outside on the courthouse steps. Attorneys could use these conference rooms rather than the public areas for their discussions.

In smaller courts, witness waiting rooms or jury deliberation rooms could serve double duty. Conference rooms should be located close to the courtroom and be accessible from public circulation. A common configuration is to have the conference rooms accessed through the courtroom's entry vestibule.

The minimum space requirement should be approximately 100 sq. ft. The rooms should be soundproofed. The rooms may be equipped with PA speakers so users can hear public announcements.

The room should be equipped with a telephone jack and electrical outlets (phones might be provided upon request). The installation of phone jacks permits the room to be used for some other purpose in the future.

**V. JURY OPERATIONS**

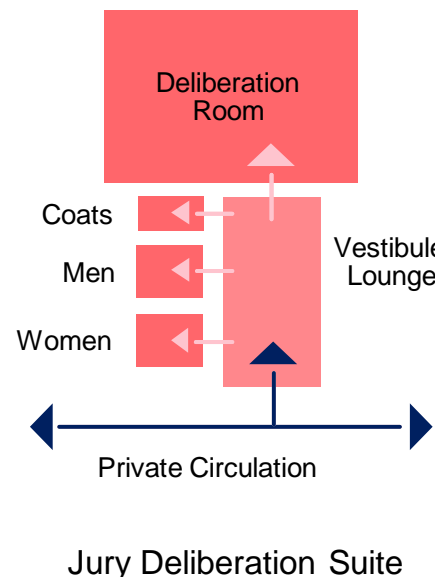
**A. Jury Deliberation Room**

Each jury courtroom should have available a jury deliberation room which is accessible by means of the private circulation system.

The jury deliberation room is where jurors confer to reach a verdict. It must protect the privacy of the jurors and their deliberations from outside detection. It should also be free from distractions and outside interference. The jury deliberation room should be sound-proofed, well-ventilated, well lighted, and air conditioned. It should provide visual and acoustical privacy for the jurors. To provide security, the room should not have vented doors or transoms and should not adjoin the attorney conference or witness waiting rooms, because of the possibility of jurors being overheard or overhearing conversations by others. Access to and from the jury room should be barrier-free.

To minimize contact between jurors and outside persons, the jury room should be designed to eliminate the need for jurors to leave the room. A small service area with kitchen counter, sink with running water, and space for a coffee machine should be located within the room. Handicapped accessible toilets for both men and women should be provided. The restrooms should be soundproofed and acoustically separated from the room so that they may be used without embarrassment. The doors should not open directly into the main jury room to preclude jurors having a direct view of the toilet facilities. Restrooms should be designed for use by the handicapped.

Jurors should have strict privacy while deliberating. There should be no contact with the public or other persons. To insure their security, provision should be made for the proper supervision of the jury deliberation room by a bailiff or other court staff person.



There should be a security station outside the jury deliberation room. There should also be a signaling system so jurors are able to notify someone of any special needs or if they have a question.

- The room should hold a conference table that accommodates 14 jurors, have comfortable chairs, and have a blackboard and facilities such as a large video display screen to view video recordings or electronically displayed evidence.
- If the jury deliberation room is located on the ground floor of the courthouse, it should not have windows that would allow someone from outside to look into the room or from which jurors could view demonstrations or persons outside the courthouse. Windows, if any, should be high and should not open onto public areas to prevent persons outside the courthouse from hearing the deliberations.
- In large courthouses with several circuit courtrooms it may not be necessary to have one jury deliberation room for every jury courtroom. It is unlikely that each court would have a jury in deliberation at the same time. A ratio of one jury deliberation room per two or three courtrooms may be sufficient depending upon the frequency of jury trials.
- Smaller courts with infrequent needs for jury deliberation may wish to enlarge the jury deliberation room so that it may also serve as a jury assembly room or other type of conference space.
- Deliberation rooms may need to be equipped with a wall-mounted writing, display, or projection surface.
- Although telephones should not be allowed in jury deliberation rooms, at least one telephone jack should be installed for times when the room is not in use by jurors.
- There should be electrical outlets and a data jack connection for a computer and video display monitor to permit the review of transcripts and recorded evidence.
- The space required for a 14-person jury is approximately 265-400 sq. ft. including toilet facilities and vestibule.



Isle of Wight Courthouse, Jury Assembly Room

## **B. Jury Assembly**

Each circuit court in which a substantial number of jury trials are held should have a jury assembly room.



Jury duty is a public service often performed at great inconvenience to the individual. It is also often the only contact many people will have with the justice system. Prospective jurors should be provided a separate jury assembly room where they may wait and receive orientation in comfort and safety.

In larger jurisdictions where several jury trials may be held on the same day, the size of the jury pool may be large, requiring special facilities to accommodate them. In small and rural courthouses where the number of jury trials is limited (an average of one or two a year), no special facilities may be required other than an enlarged jury deliberation room or large circuit courtroom.

Where the jury assembly room is not needed full-time, the room should be adaptable to other uses such as larger conferences, meetings, or training programs.

Once assembled in the jury assembly room, jurors' movements should be restricted. Prospective jurors should not come into contact with parties in the cases in which they are likely to serve because of the possibility of affecting the juror's ability to view the case objectively. Provisions should be made for their entertainment and comfort. The room may be equipped with a television, comfortable chairs, tables, refreshment center or vending machines, coat closet, and toilets.

- All facilities should be handicapped-accessible. Assistive listening devices should be available for hearing impaired persons.
- Access to the jury assembly room should be barrier-free and access to and from the courtroom from the assembly room should be likewise barrier-free.
- Space should be available for a variety of activities such as receiving orientation, reading, television viewing, using laptop or notebook computers, or listening to music or playing games on electronic devices.
- The room should contain enough chairs to provide a comfortable seat for each prospective juror.
- The orientation area requires theater type seating and should be large enough to seat all prospective jurors. Theater seating requires 8-10 sq. ft per juror.
- A variety of different seating may be provided. Reading and work carrels require 30 to 35 sq. ft. per person; table seating requires 25 sq. ft per person; and casual seating 20 to 25 sq. ft per person. For early planning purposes an average of 15 sq. ft. per prospective juror should be adequate.
- The jury assembly room should be equipped with a large video display or TV to view jury instructions and orientation. Several TV cable outlets might be provided for televisions for use by waiting jurors. Electrical outlets and WiFi may be provided so that jurors with notebook computers, computer tablets, or other electronic devices may work or view entertainment while waiting.

- A reception area is generally needed where jurors check in, receive badges, and store personal belongings. The size of the adjacent workstation should be sufficient for clerks to call jury panels, prepare jury lists, and arrange payment to jurors.
- The rooms should be well ventilated and acoustically treated to lower interior noise and reduce disruptions to adjacent offices.
- Natural light is desirable, although if located on the ground floor, windows should be high to prohibit persons outside from communicating with potential jurors.
- Jury assembly areas are best located on a lower floor of the courthouse; but not in the basement. They should be easily accessible from the main public entrance. For convenience, it is helpful if the assembly room is near the snack bar or vending area, if a vending area is not provided within the jury assembly area.

### C. Grand Jury Room

One jury deliberation room in each circuit courthouse should be designed to accommodate grand juries. In the largest circuit courts in the Commonwealth, where grand juries regularly meet during each term of court, consideration may be given to providing a room dedicated solely to the grand jury's use.

The major responsibility of the grand jury is to determine whether the Commonwealth's Attorney has sufficient evidence on which to prosecute a suspect. The grand jury consists of five to seven individuals and may sit for several days each month. A special grand jury consisting of seven to eleven citizens may be called by the circuit court to investigate criminal activities. They are generally impaneled in the courtroom by the judge, and convene to listen to evidence given by prosecution witnesses. Indictments are usually presented to the judge in open court. Present in the grand jury room are the witness, court reporter, and (at certain times) the prosecuting attorney.

The grand jury room should be a private, secure room, and may be located near the Commonwealth's Attorney's office. All spaces in the room should be acoustically soundproof and should not be located where the public can see or hear the proceedings. Adjacent to the grand jury room, but acoustically private, should be a witness waiting room.

Grand jurors should be comfortable and have the same requirements for secure toilet facilities, refreshments, and environmental controls as petit jurors.

## VI. JUDICIAL CHAMBERS

The group of offices provided for the judge and his or her personal staff is referred to as the judge's chambers. Personal staff may include a judicial secretary and/or law clerk. The

location, size, and furnishings of the judge's chambers should reflect the dignity and importance of the judiciary.

There should be a private office for each resident judge in the courthouse.

When not presiding in the courtroom, the judge's work includes legal research, preparation of opinions or judgments, preparation for upcoming hearings and trials, review and study of case files and records, and meetings and conferences with attorneys and court personnel.

There should be sufficient space for study, case preparation, and personal library and reference materials. The office also needs to be able to accommodate informal conferences between the judge and attorneys and court staff. Larger conference space may be located outside the judge's office and shared with other judges or offices in the court.

The office should accommodate the judge's desk and work space, files, personal library, an informal conference area for at least four persons, coat storage and a restroom.

Generally, space requirements range from 300-380 sq. ft.

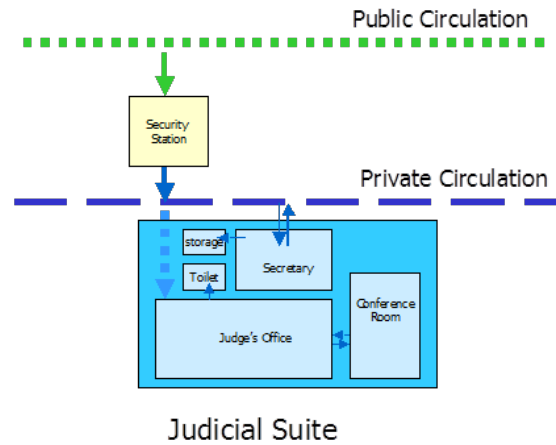
Equipment will include a personal computer with monitor and keyboard, personal computer, a printer, document scanner, and facsimile machine. The judge's office should have two data jacks and at least one phone jack. Future judges' offices may also be equipped for video conferencing.

The judge should be conveniently located to the courtroom and be able to access the courtroom by means of the private circulation system.

It is customary for judicial chambers to be located on a private corridor immediately behind the courtroom(s), although it is permissible to locate several chambers together on a court floor into a collegial suite in an effort to more easily share common support operations.

In some larger urban courthouses, such as Norfolk, the judicial chambers have been located on a separate judicial, or collegial, floor. The advantage of this is that judges can more easily share common resources, increased security, and a single point of public access to the judicial areas.

Keeping the chambers close to the courtrooms allows judges to robe in private before entering the courtroom. During recesses or other breaks in courtroom proceedings the judge also can quickly retire to his or her office to handle other matters and it makes it easier for



judges to hold private conferences with attorneys if the chambers are close to the courtrooms.

There should be a private, secure corridor between the building's judicial entrance and the judges' chambers.

Security is of great concern. Judges should be able to enter and exit the building inconspicuously and should not be required to encounter the public, attorneys, or prisoners being brought to court while entering the courtroom or his or her chambers. The private circulation system should extend from the judicial chambers to the main judicial entrance (usually the judicial parking area).



Judge's Office, Portsmouth J&DR Court

Each judge's chamber should be equipped with a private restroom or the judge should have access to one that is convenient and where public access is restricted.

For security reasons the judge should remain separated from the public. In small older courthouses it may be acceptable for the judge to share a private restroom with court staff. Public access should remain restricted. Generally, 49 - 64 sq. ft. is needed for a private restroom.

Each judicial chambers area should have a secured, controlled entrance from public circulation where attorneys and other visitors can be screened.

There should be an entrance to the judicial chambers area from public circulation so that attorneys and other are able to meet with judges in their chambers. Persons entering the chambers area should be screened and if possible escorted back to the judge's office. This may be done by a bailiff, security officer, or judicial secretary or other staff person. When several judges share one or more secretaries, a central reception area may be used. Access to the judges' chambers from this reception area should be controlled by a security door or monitored by the judge's secretary or security personnel.

Each circuit court judge's chamber should be equipped with space for a judicial secretary.

Not all judges have a judicial secretary, but sufficient space should be allowed for a judicial secretary, if one is provided, for each judge. The secretary's office should be located outside and adjacent to the judge's private office and should also serve as the visitor reception area. It should be large enough to accommodate a desk, computer workstation, video display monitor, printer, document scanner, several filing cabinets, and bookcase or equipment cabinet. Generally 150-200 sq. ft. should be adequate, depending upon the size of the reception area.

Each secretarial, clerk, or law clerk workstation should have at least two quadriplex electrical outlets, two data jacks, and one phone jack.

The judge's office should be soundproofed, adequately heated, cooled, ventilated, and receive natural lighting.

Much of the judge's work requires quiet and a distraction-free environment. Additionally, conversations with other judges, attorneys and litigants regarding pending cases may be confidential. For these reasons the judge's private office should be constructed to be soundproof and relatively quiet. It should not have transoms or vented doors. Normal conversations held within the offices should not be able to be heard by persons seated outside the room.

Environmental controls for the office should be located within the chambers.

Sufficient space should be provided for law clerk and bailiff, if required.

Some courts, particularly larger, urban circuit courts provide law clerks and a bailiff for the judges. A bailiff would require approximately 80-100 sq. ft. for an open workstation located adjacent to the judge's private office, while a law clerk requires space to perform legal research and review case files. A private office of approximately 100-120 sq. ft is required.

Each workstation should have at least two quadruplex electrical outlets, two data jacks, and one phone jack.

## **VII. COURT REPORTER'S OFFICE**

Where court reporters are on the court's payroll, each reporter should have a separate private office in which to transcribe court proceedings and to store equipment.

Most courts in Virginia make use of audio recording systems or free-lance court reporters and offices for a court reporter are generally not included in the courthouse. All circuit court criminal proceedings are recorded, while civil matters are reported at the discretion of the parties. Although the district courts are not "courts of record", some district courts make use of audio recording equipment.

Where court reporters are part of the court's staff, each reporter should have a private office in which to transcribe their notes or tapes and store their equipment. In courts that make use of free-lance reporters, consideration may be given to providing the reporters with space in which to work prior to court and during court recesses. This is optional on the part of the local governing body.

If provided, offices should be located near the courtroom so that the reporter can quickly move back and forth as required. Because the work requires concentration, offices should be soundproofed, and provide a comfortable work environment. Space should be provided for a desk, personal computer with video display monitor and storage cabinets to hold the

reporter's notes or tapes or other storage devices. Each office should be approximately 120-150 sq.

## **VIII. CLERK OF COURT**

Separate clerk's offices serve the circuit and district courts; however the clerks' offices for certain general district and juvenile and domestic relations district courts in Virginia may be combined. The circuit clerk is an elected official while the two district court clerks are appointed state employees of the Virginia judicial system. In smaller jurisdictions the two district court clerks' offices may be combined under a single clerk.

The court clerk's office for each court is accountable for all of the business activities and record keeping functions of that court. Clerks collect all court fees and fines. Circuit Clerks have additional responsibilities beyond those of "clerk of the court," such as maintaining land records, issuing licenses such as marriage licenses and docketing judgments from other courts and appeals from the district court. The number and scope of the functions performed by each clerk's office varies depending on the court's jurisdiction and the size of the clerk's staff. The number of staff may range from two or three to over 100 employees.

Each office should be designed to promote a smooth and efficient work flow. In small offices, staff normally is cross trained to perform several functions, while in larger offices greater specialization is common. Therefore, as the size of the office increases more spatial differentiation between activities is required.

In support of the court's judicial activities the clerk receives and processes pleadings and documents to initiate court cases as well as all subsequent filings in support of on-going litigation.

Circuit court clerks in Virginia also are responsible for non-court related recording functions, such as recording of deeds and issuance of marriage licenses. These records must be received, processed, indexed, and stored securely, while providing convenient public access. More and more court records and documents are being received and stored electronically, requiring deputy clerks to spend more time working with documents using a computer instead of receiving documents at the public counter.

General district courts are high volume courts that process large numbers of traffic and misdemeanor cases, while juvenile and domestic relations district court matters involve children and families, and many of these records are confidential requiring secure locked storage.

Clerks' offices should be in a highly visible location and easily accessed from the building's main public entrance. As a general rule, the clerk should be located on the first floor whenever possible. At the same time, the location of the clerk's office should allow convenient staff access to other areas of the building. When more than one clerk's office is to be located in the courthouse, the office with the greatest volume of traffic should be located nearest the main public entrance.

It is common practice to locate each clerk's office near the court it serves. This makes it easier for the clerks to service the courtrooms and facilitates fine payments after court. Where the clerk may be separated from the courtroom, particularly with the two district court clerks, a special fine payment window that is staffed during court hours may be located adjacent to the courtroom to make it easier for persons to pay their fines before leaving court.

Alternatively it is permissible for all clerks' offices to be located together on the first floor thus providing greater convenience to the public, attorneys, and litigants needing to conduct business with the clerk. Such an arrangement also permits the clerks to share common support functions such as rest rooms and break areas.

Spaces in each clerk's office can be classified as (1) public access, (2) staff-only areas, or (3) controlled public access. Public access areas include the reception and waiting areas and the public counter. The public also requires access to land records, judgments, liens, and other recordings in the circuit clerk's office and to case records in the circuit and general district courts. In the juvenile court, limited public access may be required for access to adult records.

Staff-only areas include staff workstations, some judicial records storage, the exhibit room, computer equipment room, supplies storage; photocopy machine, sorting areas and other behind-the-counter staff work areas and the employee's break room.

Controlled access should be afforded to the clerk's private office and deputy clerks' workstations so that visitors can be received in an orderly and professional manner. Another area requiring controlled access is the probate office in the circuit clerk's office and court case files.

Each clerk's office should have its own controls for heating, cooling, and ventilation systems as well as lighting appropriate for the various work stations.

Zoned heating and cooling systems within a courthouse are important for comfort as well as energy conservation. Energy can be saved when heating or air conditioning is turned down in an idle courtroom, however, work goes on in the clerk's office and the air temperature should be controllable.

Lighting requirements may vary in different parts of the office depending on the type of activity being pursued. Glare should be reduced wherever employees are working at computer terminals or using video display monitors. In areas where the public is reviewing land records and other paper documents maximum lighting is needed.

Acoustics should be designed to mute sound from walking and conversation that could distract workers or researchers.

Carpeting, acoustical ceiling tiles, and wall treatment designed to muffle sound are appropriate for various parts of the clerk's office, particularly in high traffic and equipment areas.

Where the work requires a high degree of concentration and low interaction with other staff members, barriers such as sound-absorbing room dividers may be used. Semi-private offices are another possibility but offer less flexibility in rearranging the office layout as needs change.

**A. Public Counters**

The public reception or waiting area and the public counter should be highly visible and large enough to accommodate anticipated needs.

The public reception and counter areas is where most business is transacted. The public counter separates the general office area from the public area. The reception or waiting area on the public side of the counter should be large enough to avoid crowding and should be furnished with chairs or benches if waiting periods of five minutes or more are anticipated. Other features might include writing tables if individuals need to prepare forms and provision for public access computer terminals.

On the private side of the counter space is needed for several individual workstations that include a computer, display terminal, printer, scanner, and cash register. Under counter areas can be useful for the storage of forms and supplies used at the counter.

There are generally several counter positions so that more than one person may be served at the same time.

Persons on the public side of the counter usually are standing. Deputy clerks on the private side of the counter may either stand or be seated. A stand up counter is normally 40" high with a 24" wide writing surface. A sit down counter is desk height and useful for interview-type contact when a member of the clerk's staff is receiving information from an individual for various applications and a private setting is unnecessary.



Public Transaction County, Isle of Wight Courthouse



A split-level counter offers an opportunity for staff members to be seated at a work station on the office side and a customer to approach a stand up counter. This arrangement has the potential for improved space utilization and quicker response. This arrangement is also more appropriate where one or more deputy clerks are permanently assigned to work at the public counter.

A decision must be made as to whether the public counter will be open with no barrier or closed with a glass barrier between the public and the deputy clerks. The former design is often preferred by circuit clerks while district clerks often prefer the latter design.

At least one position at the counter should be lowered to allow wheelchair access by the public.



Public Counter, Portsmouth Circuit Clerk

The counter may be located fully within the clerk's office or built into a wall opening on to a public corridor. In the latter case, a secure closure should be installed for non-office hours security.

Each public counter station should be equipped to handle money transactions.

Counter workstations should have the capability of including a computer, video display monitor, document scanner, and printer. Generally it should be assumed that each workstation will require at least two data and one voice line (3 CAT 6 lines), and a minimum of two quadriplex electrical outlets. Specialized workstations may require additional electrical outlets. Because of the heat generated by electrical equipment, steps should be taken to ensure that equipment is cooled. Plans should include room for considerable growth in electrical demand.

In general district courts where fines are imposed on a large number of traffic offenders a semi-secure fine payment area adjacent to the courtroom is often used to ensure that defendants take care of payment arrangements before leaving the courthouse. This payment area reduces the need for security personnel to escort individuals until their transactions are completed.

Judicial and non-judicial records should be reviewed by the public in controlled areas to permit staff monitoring and staff assistance when needed.

In the land records area of the circuit clerk's offices, information storage technologies are rapidly supplanting the need for vast counter areas to review oversized indexes and document books but substantial space is still required for microform readers, reader/ printers and computer terminals and printers to view microfilmed and imaged documents. Even in the most advanced courts, total conversion to new technologies will take time so adequate space for storage of existing books may still be required. Entry and exit to the public records room cannot be strictly controlled but it should be designed so that monitoring can occur as needed and researchers can be offered assistance when necessary.

Review areas for judicial records in all three courts should also be placed to permit staff monitoring in a controlled area.

**B. Signage**

Signs directing members of the public to various functions of the clerk's office should be of a consistent design and clear in their instructional content.

Appropriate signage can be very helpful both to the public and the staff. Signs can smooth the workflow and lessen the need for interaction with the public. The court customer will more often know where to go for specific court activities and questions seeking direction can be reduced causing fewer staff interruptions.

Signs over the counter will place people at the proper position for various types of transactions with the clerk's office, so there is some likelihood that the staff member approaching the counter will know the nature of the person's business. In busy courts, signs could avoid persons waiting in the wrong line and having to be re-directed to another location.

Temporary, hand written signs should be avoided.

**C. Staff Work Spaces**

Staff work spaces should be designed with sufficient flexibility to accommodate increases in staff or changes in organizational structure.

The clerk's staff is either engaged in public contact work over the counter or internal administrative functions, which involves document processing, accounting, or telephone communications. Some of the jobs should be done out of public view, such as money counting and confidential case processing. Some tasks require special equipment such as sorting for filing and processing both incoming and outgoing mail. Space requirements are generally estimated at about 48-70 sq. ft. per clerk, excluding public areas. While the Clerk and Chief Deputy Clerks will have private offices all other work positions should be open workstations.

Each clerk of court should be provided a private office.

The size or type of court does not necessarily determine the size or need for a private office for the clerk of court since all clerks generally have a similar scope of responsibility and need to conduct business in private on occasion, although as a Constitutional elected official the circuit clerk may be afforded a slightly larger office similar to that of a judge. The clerk's private office should have a window that permits the clerk to view the staff work areas and the public counter if possible.

Total space needed for the clerk's private office is 180-240 sq. ft. (circuit clerks 300-380 sq. ft.)

In larger courts where the clerk has a private secretary or administrative assistant, a secretarial workstation should be provided that will accommodate several pieces of equipment including a desk, phone, personal computer with video display, and correspondence filing equipment. Approximately 100 sq. ft. is required for the working area and 15 sq. ft. per person for the waiting or reception area.

A semi-private office for supervisory conferences and for dealing with confidential or sensitive matters should be provided for the chief deputy clerk.

A chief deputy clerk is often the line supervisor in the clerk's office. Management effectiveness can be significantly increased with an appropriate office space for this individual. The chief deputy clerk's office may be located adjacent to the clerk of court's office or in another location within the main office complex. Placement may be a function of the size of the office and whether it is envisioned that the clerk's secretary will also serve the chief deputy on a regular basis. The office should be approximately 130-150 sq. ft.

#### **D. Records Storage**

Active case files should be located behind the counter within the private areas of the clerk's office where they are readily accessible by deputy clerks.

The size, in filing inches, of the active filing system should be calculated based on the annual quantity of filed material, average active life of cases in each case type, and the clerk's judgment as to how long closed files should be retained in the active system.

Courts are transitioning to electronic case files in Virginia, but paper case files are still in use in many jurisdictions at this time and older cases will still need to be stored. The maximum size of the active filing system for court



Records Room, Isle of Wight Courthouse

case files should be defined based on appropriate calculations and projections. Floor space requirements should be determined based on the use of movable open shelf filing units. Once court cases are closed they may be moved to an inactive records storage area.

It has been traditional for court case files to be stored in a records vault, but with the advent of electronic case files this is no longer necessary. Paper files may be stored in an open area within the clerk's office. Some juvenile court records are confidential and must be secured in locked storage units.

Inactive court records should be stored in an inactive records storage area that affords relatively convenient access.

Inactive records that may not be destroyed should be transferred to storage outside the clerk's office. To maximize space utilization, a system of warehouse-type shelving and one cubic foot records storage boxes is recommended for inactive/closed paper case files awaiting transfer to archives or destruction in accordance with approved court records retention schedules. The less bulky court case indices and related docket sheets or case histories are normally stored for lengthy periods in the clerk's office.

#### **E. Exhibit Storage**

Exhibits received by the court as evidence in criminal cases and civil litigation should have their own special, secure storage area.

The storage and eventual return or destruction of exhibits is a responsibility of each clerk of court in Virginia. Exhibits are one-of-a-kind irreplaceable items and should never be loosely stored in office areas or records rooms. The majority of exhibits should be stored in a separate room with highly controlled access. Only exhibits of high value or a sensitive nature such as drugs or weapons need to be stored in a secure vault.

Exhibit rooms should be a minimum of approximately 100 sq. ft. and should be equipped with appropriate shelving for the orderly storage and efficient retrieval of exhibits. Security measures, such as secure doors, no windows, and intrusion alarms, should be provided for exhibit storage areas.

Space for microfilming and microfilm equipment may no longer be required in the clerks' offices.

Microfilm has been the preferred means of storing court documents and records for many years, but with the advent of electronic document imaging the need for microfilming equipment and supplies is no longer required. Space, however, still needs to be provided for existing microfilm and microfilm readers. Also because microfilm is a proven archival medium, electronic images will still be printed to microfilm for long term archival storage.

**F. Office Support Spaces**

To provide positive inventory control over supplies and equipment required in the clerk's office an appropriately sized and properly equipped supply room should be provided.

Mismanagement of office and equipment supplies leads to theft, waste and abuse. A supply room gives the clerk an element of physical control over supplies. A room of 100-150 sq. ft., depending on the size of the office, with adjustable shelving on three walls should be provided.

A staff lounge and staff restrooms for work breaks and lunch should be provided within or near the clerk's office.

Court staff is constantly under the watchful eye of the public and deserve a place to retreat on breaks and during lunch. Size, furnishings, and equipment will depend on the office location and staff size. A minimum of 120 sq. ft. or 20 sq. ft per person, is desirable. It also is desirable for the break room to be equipped with a small counter, kitchen sink, refrigerator, and microwave, and overheard cabinets. Other equipment in the break room normally includes a coffee maker.

Depending upon the organization of the courthouse there may be an opportunity for different offices to share a break room.

**G. Technology Considerations**

Automated case management, electronic case filing, document imaging, and the use of electronic media for the payment of fees and fines are all becoming common place, therefore offices need adequate electrical receptacles and wiring for both voice and data at each workstation, the public counter, and records rooms.

Other equipment include personal computers, facsimile machines, printers, photocopiers, document scanners, imaging work stations, and file servers. Each workstation, including those at the public counter, requires two quadriplex electrical outlets, two data jacks, and one phone jack. Each public counter workstation also should have space to install a document scanner and printer.

Public-access computer workstations should be available at the public counter for review of case management information. The records rooms will require public access document imaging terminals for viewing land records, liens, judgments, and court files. At some future date, imaged court records may be available through an on-line service provider or the internet, reducing the amount of space needed for on-site research, and reducing the number of on-site, public access computer workstations required.

Wiring, power supply, HVAC, and acoustical designs for a computer or file server room and photocopy room should meet individual equipment and systems specifications. General lighting should be provided. Humidity and temperature should be controlled according to equipment manufacturer's requirements.

A separate room is not required for imaging workstations. Space, however, should be planned for document imaging workstations and hookups should be provided for the eventual installation of public access imaging terminals for viewing imaged documents.

A special environmentally controlled room should be provided to house servers and other computer equipment serving the courts.

Separate telecommunications and computer rooms need to be provided in the courthouse to serve the courts, clerks, and other offices located in the building. The room will contain all of the termination equipment for the building telecommunications systems, and computer servers for the various computer networks in the building. If the court and other offices have separate computer networks, the room will need to be partitioned for the different servers. The room must be equipped with a secure lock, card reader, or keypad to limit entrance to authorized persons.

The telecommunications/computer server room should have controlled temperature and humidity. A/C units should be on emergency generated power and should be independent from the building air. For security and temperature reasons the room should be located away from outside windows and doors and should not be located in the basement to avoid possible flooding or water damage.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) located in the building. The electrical feed for the computer room should be isolated, including neutral and ground, from the rest of the building's electrical system.

## **IX. COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY**

Space may be made available in each courthouse to accommodate the Commonwealth's attorney's office.

The Commonwealth's Attorney prosecutes criminal cases in all three courts and assists victims and prosecution witnesses appearing in court. Offices must accommodate prosecuting attorneys and staff, visiting private attorneys, witnesses and victims, law enforcement officers, and the general public.

While it is not essential for the prosecutor to be located in the courthouse, it is fairly common and should be accommodated if at all possible. If located outside the courthouse, it

is important that the Commonwealth’s Attorney have offices near the courthouse, because of the necessity for the prosecutor to be present in court for long periods and to have access to court records and personnel.

Because only a small portion of the work occurs in the courtroom, the Commonwealth’s Attorney requires a great deal of flexibility and variety in the kinds of space needed.

The offices should project an image compatible with that of a private law firm. The Commonwealth Attorney’s private office should be comparable to that of the judges and reflect the prosecutor's status and importance in the judicial system and as a Constitutional Officer.

In addition to the general office activities, prosecutors need to be able to interview witnesses, police officers and victims, conduct legal research, maintain case files, store evidence, conduct investigations, and prepare written reports and documents. These activities require waiting areas, interview rooms, records and evidence storage areas, clerical offices, attorney private offices, conference rooms, library, trial preparation room, mail and work room, supply storage, staff lounge, and forensic services.

Attorneys should have private offices that accommodate two to three visitors and are located in areas removed from the noise and circulation traffic of the main office. A typical attorney office should be 120-140 square feet. Law clerks or interns may use semi-private offices.

In smaller offices the library and conference room may be combined and this may also serve as a trial preparation room. Larger, busier offices may need separate trial preparation rooms. Also most interviews may take place in the attorney’s private office, but in larger jurisdictions separate interview rooms may be needed that can accommodate 6-8 persons. Additional spaces include file and storage areas, records review area, photocopy and work room, supply and equipment storage, evidence storage, and a staff break area and restrooms.

Because of the need to interview victims and witnesses while conducting an investigation, the reception area should be directly accessible from the public areas of the building. The Commonwealth’s Attorney’s office should have access to the courtrooms, law library, and the clerks’ offices by means of the public circulation system. Within the offices there should be a semi-private circulation pattern connecting spaces used by the attorneys and staff.



City of Portsmouth, Commonwealth Attorney Reception Window

A special need of the Commonwealth's Attorney is secure storage of evidence. It is critical to effective prosecution that evidence be stored in tamper-proof areas. Access to evidence storage areas should be restricted, and storage areas should be equipped with metal shelving and tamper-proof doors with locks.

When the Commonwealth's Attorney is located outside the courthouse, a work or field office may be provided in the courthouse for the convenience of attorneys while in the courthouse. Such "field" office should be equipped with a desk, chairs, and work table.

- Attorneys require personal computer workstations with video display monitors, printers, and document scanner. It is anticipated that attorneys will be connected to an office LAN with access to legal data bases, court case management systems, and offender and criminal history data bases. Each attorney's work area requires two quadriplex electrical outlets, one phone and two data jacks. The attorney's private office requires normal electrical supply and normal room lighting with task lighting at the workstation.
- The Commonwealth's Attorney requires a secure room in which to locate a computer terminal connection to the State Police criminal data base.
- The office also will require other shared equipment including facsimile machines, photocopiers, shredders, and video conferencing equipment. (Attorneys may eventually have desktop videoconferencing capability.)
- The Commonwealth's Attorney's Office should have a separate and readily identifiable public entry from public circulation.
- There should be a small reception area with chairs for persons to wait. There should be a secure reception window where visitors may be received. Entry to the Office should be by means of a secure entrance controlled by the receptionist.
- The general office area will be separated from the visitor waiting area by a secure entry vestibule and public reception counter.
- The Commonwealth's Attorney's Office must not be located near the Judges' chambers in order to avoid concerns about a close relationship between judges and prosecutors.
- It is desirable that the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office be accessible from the main entrance for after hours and weekend use.
- Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney offices should be lockable and have blinds covering any windows or sidelights.



**X. PRISONER HOLDING AND TRANSPORTATION**

Every courthouse in which criminal trials are held, or in which in-custody defendants appear in court, should have prisoner holding facilities.

Prisoners awaiting a hearing or trial should be kept apart from the public and spectators in the courtroom. There should be a secure holding facility within the courthouse in which to temporarily hold in-custody defendants and witnesses while they wait the start of court or their hearing.



Isle of Wight Courthouse, Holding Area Control Room

Common practice is to have a central holding area normally located in the basement of the courthouse and adjacent to the vehicular sally port where in-custody defendants can be processed and held before and after their court appearance. This is generally supplemented with temporary holding cells immediately adjacent to each courtroom. In small courthouses with only one or two courtroom it may not be necessary to have both the central holding and courtroom holding areas. The need for holding cells and their capacity should be determined at the time of planning and be based upon actual utilization.

Where prisoners must be transported from the jail or other detention center to the courthouse by vehicle, there should be a sally port for the delivery of prisoners. In communities where the jail is adjacent to the courthouse prisoners may be brought to the courthouse by means of a secure walkway or tunnel.

**A. Vehicular Sally Port**

The courthouse should have a secure vehicular sally port for the secure transfer of in-custody persons to and from transport vehicles.

The sally port should be sized to hold at least one transport van. In larger jurisdictions where multiple vans (buses) may be used, the sally port should be sized to hold at least two vehicles. It should be located within the Sheriff's secure parking area and have a security gate. It needs to be well ventilated and lighted.

A drive through sally port is preferred in order to eliminate the need for a turnaround area, but where this is not possible space for vehicle turn around is needed. Courthouses with a direct connection to a jail may not require a separate sally port if detainees coming to court from other facilities are able to be processed through the jail.

In-custody detainees should enter the building's central holding area directly from the sally port.

**B. Central Prisoner Holding**

There should be a central holding facility for the temporary holding of in-custody defendants and witnesses appearing in court.

In-custody defendants and witnesses need to be separated from the public while maintaining their safety and constitutional rights. Prisoner detention facilities increase the efficiency of the courts by allowing in-custody persons to be located close to the courtroom at the scheduled time of appearance.

All but the smallest courthouse should have a central holding area located on the ground floor or basement of the building to service all courts within the building.

The central holding area should consist of the following elements: holding cells for adult males and females; holding cells for juvenile males and females; a control center to monitor and control in-custody movement; entry vestibule at the entrance from the vehicular sally port; a processing and transfer area or room; staff offices; staff toilets; elevators to the court floors; elevator lobby; equipment room; and attorney / client visitation booths for attorneys to meet privately with clients prior to court. Additional space may include an area for photo ID and fingerprinting of individuals taken into custody in the courthouse.

The number and type of cells should be determined during the planning phases of the project and will depend upon the number of prisoners during peak hours.

Sight and sound separation needs to be maintained between males and females, and adults and juveniles.

The building's central control center may also be located in this area, either as part of the holding control room or as a separate facility adjacent to the holding area.



Isle of Wight Court Floor Holding Cell

The holding area control center monitors the operations all movement of prisoners and controls access to the holding cells. The officer(s) staffing the station should have a direct view into the holding cells or have visibility through CCTV monitors and should be able to see and control all entrances and exits. The control station should be

secured from unauthorized entry and should include a dedicated staff toilet. Intercoms and CCTV cameras should be located at all doors.

All cells should have their own toilet facility. This eliminates the need for security officers to escort prisoners to and from toilets.

Drains are necessary in any cell with toilets. Drains for sinks and toilets should be large enough so that they cannot be easily blocked. A modesty panel should be provided around the cell toilets to maintain proper privacy.

Toilets and drains should be installed along a wall on the corridor side of the holding facility or along an accessible service duct so that repairs can be made from the outside.

The holding cells should have solid ceilings.

Sufficient transfer areas for moving in-custody individuals should be provided near the sally port entrance as well as the secure elevators.

Corridors should be wide enough to prohibit detainees from grabbing officers and to allow adequate two-way passage and prohibit the transfer of contraband from one prisoner to another.

Attorney/client interview booths should be provided at the central holding area. These booths should be divided with appropriate security glazing to separate the parties. Attorneys should not have to enter the holding areas to enter the conference booth. The booths should have a paper pass to permit the signing of any documents. The number of such booths will depend upon the number of courtrooms and the number of in-custody defendants.

Lighting fixtures and ventilation registers should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons. The cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture.

A minimum of 100 sq. ft. should be allowed for up to four prisoners. Additional prisoners require an additional 15-20 sq. ft. each. Individual cells should be 70 sq. ft. It is extremely important that holding areas be soundproofed.

All prisoner areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Holding cells should conform to appropriate state and American Correctional Association standards for lighting, ventilation, heating, and cooling in short-term holding and detention facilities.

**C. Court Floor Holding Areas**

In larger courthouses, separate prisoner holding cells should be located adjacent to the courtrooms in addition to the central holding facility located adjacent to the secured prisoner entrance to the courthouse.

Court floor holding facilities are best located between pairs of courtrooms and serviced by a dedicated prisoner elevator that transports prisoners to and from the central holding area or prisoner entrance.

The court floor holding area should consist of a security officer's station, holding cells, and entrance vestibule in front of the elevator, and, if possible, a attorney/prisoner interview booth. The security station need not be enclosed and should provide the security officer with direct visibility to all areas.

There should be separate holding cells for men and women with sight and sound separation. Also if juveniles are to be held on a court floor holding area that may also contain adults at the same time, sight and sound separation needs to be maintained.

All cells should be well-lit and ventilated. Lighting fixtures and ventilation registers should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons. Cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture.

A minimum of 100 sq. ft. should be allowed for up to four prisoners. Additional prisoners require an additional 15-20 sq. ft. each. Individual cells should be 70 sq. ft.

It is not unusual for in-custody defendants to attempt to disrupt court proceedings by shouting insults, using abusive language, banging on walls, or flushing toilets. Such noise from court floor-holding cells disrupts court proceedings, causes embarrassment, and intimidates witnesses or jurors. It is critical that the holding area be soundproofed so that no sound from the holding area is heard in the courtroom.

Some other means of egress from the court floor holding area should be planned in the event of power failures or the breakdown of the elevator. In emergency situations it may be permissible to escort in-custody individuals through private corridors if staff or judges are not present.

**D. Juvenile Holding Facility**

Every juvenile and domestic relations court should be equipped with temporary holding facilities for juveniles and adults.

Juvenile and domestic relations district courts handle a wide range of juvenile and family cases involving violent and sometimes dangerous juveniles and adults, as well as abused, neglected, and other non-violent juveniles. Each court needs facilities that can accommodate a wide range of types of juvenile offenders while awaiting hearing or trial. Additionally, in-custody adults may be called upon to testify on occasion, and

separate holding areas need to be provided with sight and sound separation from that used by juveniles.

All juvenile courts should have a private holding area that is out of the public's view, and separate from adult offenders. Non-violent juveniles should be separated from violent and dangerous juvenile offenders and may be kept in a non-secure setting. Non-secure holding areas should be furnished to minimize stress, be located near the courtroom, and have private toilet facilities. They may be furnished with tables and chairs and may double as client interview rooms.

Violent and potentially dangerous juveniles require secure facilities with secure doors and windows, although the room should not be made to look like an adult holding cell.

Secure detention holding facilities should be equipped with vandal-proof furnishings. Provision should be made for constant supervision by court staff. In larger courthouses, particularly where the caseload warrants a separate juvenile court facility, separate facilities for boys and girls should be provided.

In courts where there is seldom a need to handle violent/dangerous juveniles, the construction of secure holding facilities may still be needed for adult defendants who appear in juvenile and domestic relations court.

A minimum of 100 sq. ft. should be allowed. Additional juveniles will require an additional 15-20 sq. ft. each. Individual cells should be 70 sq. ft.

## **XI. MAGISTRATES**

Magistrates are part of the Virginia Judicial System and should be provided a private office, and a public hearing space equipped to handle small hearings involving 3-4 people.

Since 1974, the principal function of the magistrate in the Virginia judicial system has been to provide an independent, unbiased review of complaints brought by police officers, sheriffs, deputies, and citizens. In each city and county in Virginia, the position of the magistrate represents a key point of interface between the judicial system and the citizenry.

Magistrates perform work that is highly interactive, as well as paper and procedure-intensive. The work involves conducting judicial hearings in response to requests from law enforcement officials, privately employed security guards, and citizens. These judicial hearings may be conducted in the presence of both the complainant and the accused as well as by video conference. Magistrates conduct interviews with complaining parties, the accused, and other appropriate persons to obtain the facts necessary to establish probable cause or to determine bond or other terms of release. Magistrates must maintain order and proper decorum, administer oaths, define issues, interpret and explain pertinent laws, take testimony, question parties, and issue legal processes.

Magistrates are called upon to determine whether there is probable cause to charge a person with a crime and, if so, whether that person's liberty should be denied -- taking into account such factors as the evidence brought before them, the seriousness of the accusation, and the potential danger to society or to the accused. These determinations may be conducted at the magistrate's window with the arrestee on site or by video conference with the arrestee located at a remote site such as a jail or police station

In addition, magistrates provide general information on criminal processes and procedures.

In 2008, the Code of Virginia was amended and supervisory authority of the magistrate system shifted from the Chief Circuit court judge in each Circuit to the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia. This included the elimination of all part-time and on-call magistrates, an increase in educational standards and training, and a management system to include a Magistrate Regional Supervisor in each region. Each chief magistrate appointed after July 1, 2008 is required to be a member in good standing of the Virginia State Bar.

Virginia is divided into eight magisterial regions comprised of between three and five judicial districts. A chief magistrate supervises the magistrates serving within each judicial district. Each region has a regional magistrate supervisor who provides direct supervision to the chief magistrates.

Each magistrate is authorized to exercise his or her powers throughout the magisterial region for which he or she is appointed. Magistrates provide services on an around-the-clock basis, seven days a week, hearing complaints and taking testimony in person and through videoconferencing systems.

The Code of Virginia provides that each county and city is to provide suitable quarters for appointed magistrates. Magistrates' quarters should be located in a public facility and be appropriate to conduct the affairs of a judicial officer as well as provide convenient access to the public and law-enforcement officers. The county or city is to provide all furniture and other equipment necessary for the efficient operation of the office. Some counties and cities have established more than one magistrate's office to best serve their localities.

Magistrates may be located in the courthouse but are often located within the local police station, Sheriff's office, or jail. Regardless of the location the magistrate should be provided a private office and a separate public hearing space equipped to hear testimony and complaints from as many as 3-4 people. The design for a magistrate's office should present a dignified and judicial appearance to conform to traditional images of justice.

The Magistrate is a judicial officer and the office should be clearly identified as an office of the court and not part of the Sheriff or police department. The Magistrate's office should be conveniently located near an outside entrance to the building with convenient and separate public and law enforcement access that is accessible 24 hours a day, without having uncontrolled access to the rest of the building.

Each office should have a small public waiting area with seating for 5 – 6 persons. The office should be divided into a public area and a private work area separated by a barrier such as a counter, large desk, or security type window. There should be a small holding area, or access to a holding area, adjacent to the public area, where in-custody detainees can be held. If located in the courthouse, the office should have access to the courthouse's prisoner circulation system.

The office should be equipped with duress alarms that sound at the building's main security station. After hours it should sound at the main dispatch office of the Sheriff or local police department. A video surveillance camera should also be installed to cover the main public room and holding area. The camera should be viewable at the magistrate's office and the main security office.

For reasons of security, separate reserved, but unmarked parking areas, including spaces near private entrances, should be provided. If the magistrate is located in the courthouse the magistrate should receive secure parking with the judges.

A small safe is useful for purposes of securing cash that is transacted by way of cash bonds and prepayments, etc.

A private bathroom and small kitchenette or break area should be provided to those magistrate's offices that are staffed around the clock. Other spaces include a supply closet to house forms and office supplies and file storage space.

All workstations should be equipped with two quadriplex electrical outlets, at least two data lines, and one phone line. Each workstation should be capable of handling video conferences. Other office equipment will include a desk and chair, file cabinet, book shelves, a personal computer with video display monitor and keyboard, printers, photocopier, document scanner, fax machine, and document shredder.

Chief magistrates have the same powers as do other magistrates but are also responsible for the supervision and administrative operation of the districts' magistrates. Chief magistrates normally need a private office separated from the main public office for conducting private discussions with magistrates, governmental officials, and citizens. The chief magistrate's private office should be furnished with a desk and chair, side chairs for guests, filing cabinets for personnel and administrative records, bookshelves for storage of various manuals and the Code of Virginia, and a credenza.

Any new construction or renovations for magistrate's offices should be done in consultation with the chief magistrate, magistrate regional supervisor and the magistrate IT department.

Office space may also be needed for each magistrate regional supervisor at a location within each region.

## **XII. SPECIAL SERVICES AND RELATED JUSTICE AGENCIES**

### **A. Probation and Court Services**

Space may be provided within the courthouse if probation and juvenile Court Services wish to be located within the building. Inclusion of either probation or juvenile court services within the courthouse is optional.

In Virginia, court services offices handle juvenile and domestic relations cases, including the intake procedures for the juvenile court. If located in the courthouse, court services should be located so that they are easily accessible from the building's main public entrance. There should be a public waiting area, which is supervised by a receptionist and provides a comfortable and pleasant non-threatening environment.

Other requirements include private interview rooms, private offices for court services staff, a small conference room, and records storage rooms. Public restrooms should be available; staff should have separate private toilet facilities.

The requirements for probation offices are generally the same as for juvenile court services.

Staff offices should be centrally located with access to the records room and interview rooms. They should be acoustically soundproofed and may double as interview rooms. If staff are going to use their private office to conduct interview the offices should be enlarge slightly to accommodate several persons and for safety reasons.

Space requirements measure approximately 120-140 sq. ft. for intake and private offices, 130-150 sq. ft. for a supervisor's office, and 200-300 sq. ft. for a conference room. Interview rooms should allow 100-120 sq. ft.

Each office work area requires two quadriplex electrical outlets, a phone jack and two data jacks. Private offices require normal electrical supply and normal room lighting with task lighting at the workstation. The office also will require other shared equipment including facsimile machines, photocopiers, shredders, and video conferencing equipment.

### **B. Attorney Lounge**

In large multi-judge courts, consideration may be given to providing a lounge for the exclusive use of trial attorneys.

An area or lounge for the use of attorneys while waiting for trials to begin or between hearings is a useful convenience for members of the bar. The lounge should not, however, become a substitute for a client/witness interview room which should be located elsewhere. Also it should not become a replacement office for the attorneys. It



should be used for group meetings, conferences with colleagues, making telephone calls, and for reading, reviewing case materials, or writing.

The presence of an attorney lounge indirectly benefits the court because attorneys are more likely to remain in the courthouse between hearings or during recesses, where they are available when needed in court. It also prevents attorneys from waiting in clerical or other areas where they may interrupt the work of the court and its staff.

The lounge should be located near the courtrooms and should be accessible to the law library. A paging system may be installed to notify attorneys when they are needed in court.

The room should be furnished with lounge-type furnishings, such as sofas and chairs, and work tables.

### **C. Law Library**

A law library located in the courthouse is optional. If provided it should be conveniently located to all users, particularly judges and law clerks. A public law library may also be part of a self-help center serving pro se litigants.

Once prevalent in all courthouses, law libraries are becoming smaller and less utilized with the advent of online legal research capabilities and the availability of legal references on CD or other electronic media. Where present, law libraries are used by judges and private attorneys, and by the general public seeking to represent themselves in court. While some courts have an organized law library, many courts maintain several separate collections of legal reference books. Judges often have their own reference collections in their chambers, the Commonwealth's Attorney may have its own, and in some cases the clerks may maintain some reference materials.



Law Library and Conference Room, Colonial Heights Courthouse

Even with a central library collection, each judge should have a minimum set of reference materials in chambers. Today, most legal references are available on-line or on compact disk, so that judges can have easy access to a sizable library in their own offices.

The library should be conveniently located to all users and located where court staff can easily supervise its use. Where significant after hours use of the library is anticipated, it should be designed with a separate after hours entrance and arrangements made for after hours security.

It should have a quiet environment. It should not be stuffy or hot, nor should there be noisy air conditioners or drafts. The library should be soundproofed to prevent outside noises from distracting users. Natural lighting is highly desirable where possible; overhead lighting should be glare-free. Adequate work surface is important.

Free-standing bookstacks give maximum flexibility. The units should have adjustable shelves and space between stacks should be 36". Because of the weight of the books and other holdings, consideration should be given to the location of the library, particularly when renovating older court facilities or in the construction of larger court facilities with a large law library.

Large libraries in multi-judge courts may require a full-time librarian, and separate private office space should be located within the library for the librarian. Also, libraries should have space for microfilm reading and storage, and a photocopy machine. All libraries should be designed with facilities for computer terminals for viewing imaged documents and references. Occasionally, especially in smaller courthouses, the library may double as a conference room as long as the activities do not interfere with normal library use.

All librarian work stations and reading carrels should be equipped with two quadriplex electrical outlets, and two data jacks. Locations for printers, fax machine, document scanner, and other office equipment are needed and should be located so as not to disturb users.

For additional standards governing county law libraries, see American Association of Law Libraries' Standards for County Law Libraries (American Association of Law Libraries, 53 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60604).

#### **D. Victim Witness**

Many jurisdictions have a victim witness program to assist and aide victims who come to testify in court. These programs are part of the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office. Depending upon the size of the court and number of victims/witnesses the space needs vary from one or two rooms where witnesses may wait to testify to more elaborate accommodations that include staff offices, interview rooms, child waiting rooms, and perhaps video conferencing equipment for remote testimony.

The entrance to the victim/witness offices should be separate from that of the Commonwealth's Attorney.

Staff/counselors should have a private office. In small jurisdictions staff may interview witnesses in their offices, while in busier courts separate interview rooms may be required.

Waiting rooms with comfortable chairs should be provided as witnesses may have to wait long hours before testifying.

Provisions may be needed for remote video conferencing to allow vulnerable or child witnesses to testify by video.

The victim/witness offices should be located in a quieter area of the building where victims can feel safe from public observation.

The victim/witness offices must have convenient access to the courtrooms, but preferably not be on the main traffic flow.

Access to the victim/witness offices should be through an entry vestibule. A reception counter with secure glazing will allow staff to control visitor access into the office and waiting area with a door release button and card access for staff.

The victim/witness office space must provide a comfortable and secure environment for witnesses to wait until their case is heard. The layout should prevent visibility into the visitor and child waiting areas from the entry vestibule.

Internal washrooms for clients and a staff washroom are desirable.

#### **E. Interpreters and Services for Limited English Proficiency**

There should be clearly displayed signage as soon as one enters a courthouse to indicate the availability of free language access services. It is desirable for this message to appear in English and also in any language for which there are at least 1000 individuals served by the courthouse within a one year period (to the degree that each language possesses a written component).

Additional signage is useful for those with limited English proficiency (LEP). In particular, this verbiage may be functional rather than tied to specific court terminology. So, rather than identifying a "Docket," a sign may be more useful for someone with LEP if it were to send the message, "Verify case information here." All signs should be reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis as offices and functions may shift locations within a courthouse, and the signs should contain the English equivalent in addition to its translation. In no event should signs be updated in English, without its translated equivalent being updated as well. Courts should especially consider multilingual signs to identify important locations for post-court obligations (i.e. fine paying station). Signs can and should rely on images whenever possible, given the fact that any individual without visual impairment can understand them, regardless of language proficiency. Many courts currently use such image

signs to specify items that are forbidden within a court building, to advertise the existence of a non-smoking policy, and to identify the locations of male and female restrooms.

Information desks, along with translations of printed maps, forms, checklists, and brochures, located in courthouse lobbies offer assistance to those with LEP. An individual self-service computer kiosk with a translated application (e.g. I-Can!) can also assist those with LEP when completing court forms that are suitable for filing in court. However, despite a court's attempts to make written target language materials available for those with LEP, the existence of these written options should not be considered sufficient to ensure meaningful communication with someone with LEP, as the meaning may not have been conveyed adequately.

### **Interpreters and Equipment**

All public transaction counters (windows) such as at the clerks' offices should have an expanded service area where an in-person interpreter may facilitate the transaction between the court staff person and the individual with LEP. This is of particular importance when court staff is reliant on the use of over-the-phone interpreters during these transactions, as there may be significant noise disruption to the rest of the office.

Interpreting equipment, either infrared (line-of-sight, installed within a particular location), wired (within a courtroom, to either wired or wireless headsets) or radio frequency (portable, rechargeable), should be made readily available in areas that frequently use in-person interpreters. If the equipment is utilized by anyone other than a staff interpreter, it should be signed in and out in a similar fashion as that interpreter signs in or out on an assignment log. In-person interpreters also benefit from the use of microphones (to include areas such as the judge's bench, witness stand, and defense/prosecutor's tables).

Currently, many courts have access to video units. These offer an exciting option for courts to benefit from the visual component of an in-person interpreter and an expanded pool of language interpreting resources beyond the court's immediate geographic area. A court may be required to facilitate the use of interpreters for a more private interview than that which would occur openly within a courtroom. While this consideration is important in designing meeting space for attorneys and LEP clients when utilizing the services of an in-person interpreter within the courthouse, it is especially important when deciding where to permanently fix a video unit for video remote interpreters, or where to make a speakerphone available for over-the-phone interpreters. One option that might address the need for more private exchanges may be to utilize an existing meeting space and a portable speakerphone or a courthouse's Wi-Fi and a portable tablet-style computer as a video remote interpreting unit.

**F. Pro Se Litigants/Self – represented Litigants**

Both general district and juvenile district courts have a large number of persons who are either unable to afford a lawyer or who choose not to hire counsel to represent them. These citizens desire and need detailed information and assistance with the tasks of handling their affairs on a pro se basis. Their requests constitute a major demand upon the resources of the courts and consume the time of both clerks and judges as they try to address pro se litigant needs. Having a location in the courthouse where pro se individuals may find and study information on the judicial process and the legal issues surrounding their case is a benefit to both the pro se litigants as well as the court. The inclusion of such a space is optional but it might be located near or within the clerk's office. It should be readily accessible from the main public corridor. It should be furnished with work tables, public access terminals, court forms, and instructions. It should be viewable from the clerk's office so that the deputy clerks may monitor its use. An alternate location is the law library if one is to be provided in the courthouse.

**G. Press and News Media Accommodations**

In many multi-judge courts, some accommodation for the day-to-day activities of the press is desirable, and should be located in an area outside the courtroom.

With the exception of some juvenile and adoption matters, nearly all court proceedings are open to the public and the press. While the number of reporters in small communities probably would not be sufficient to warrant separate facilities, in larger courthouses with very active trial schedules the number of reporters may be considerable. Providing space in which they may conduct interviews and work on notes would relieve congestion in the public corridors, helping to make the court less crowded and noisy. Even in smaller courthouses where a separate room may not be practical, an area of the public space might be made to serve the needs of the occasional reporter or television news team.

The media room should be equipped with phone lines, and if video recording is present in courtrooms with video feeds connected to the courtrooms, with feed capability to mobile radio and television trucks and equipment. The room also should be furnished with tables and chairs adequate for working, and perhaps storage and work space for audio equipment, cameras and photographic equipment, and television video equipment. Because the public access is not a critical concern, the location of the press room can be very flexible. Although it should be convenient to courtrooms and external exits to the building, it also should not require the press to pass through restricted or secure areas of the building. Space requirements should not be great, but should probably accommodate one person per local newspaper plus extra room for television reporters. Twenty to twenty-five sq. ft. per reporter is sufficient. There should be adequate acoustical insulation to provide a quiet environment in which to work, as well as to insulate adjacent offices or courtrooms from any typing noise or conversations.

**H. Police Waiting/ Workroom**

On busy court days such as when traffic court is held large numbers of police officers may be in the courthouse waiting to testify. By providing officers with a designated area outside the public corridors where they may wait while being readily available, rather than waiting in other court offices or the courtroom, helps to reduce the congestion in the corridors. Here, they may complete reports, review testimony, make phone calls, converse, and relax before their court appearance or during recesses.

The size of the waiting area will depend upon the number of officers present in the courthouse on the typical court day. Planning should consider at least 25 square feet per officer. The workroom should be located near the courtrooms and be readily accessible from the public corridor. The workroom should be furnished similarly to the attorney lounge, with sofas, chairs, worktables, and telephones.

**XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES**

**A. Lobby**

There should be a covered area outside the main entrance to provide protection from rain and snow for people waiting to enter the courthouse.

The main entry should be configured to allow visitors and staff to enter through a dedicated entry door. A dedicated exit door, separate from and adjacent to the entry door, should allow people to exit from the building without interfering with the security checkpoint or queue.

The size and design of the entry lobby and the location of the queuing should accommodate the peak flow of people into the courthouse during the morning's peak hours as well as allow for people to be processed through the security checkpoint(s).

The specified queuing area for security screening should not be included in the circulation space. The queuing area for security should be located off to the side so that it does not impede the flow of people (i.e., staff entering and staff/public leaving).

The building security room should be located close to the main public entry and provide space for at least two security staff.

The building security room should be located so that there is a clear, unobstructed view of the main entry, including the security screening stations.

From the main entrance, it should be easy to find and access the vertical circulation to all courtrooms, any high volume courts such as traffic, jury assembly room, the clerks' public service counters and the entrances to other building occupants.

In large busy courthouses, a staffed information desk may be considered. If included, it should be located in a highly visible area near the main entrance just inside the security perimeter and clearly identified. Interactive touch screen displays that can provide directional as well as other building or case information can be located in the lobby or elsewhere in the building.

There should be a building directory and a building schematic diagram located at the main public entrance that lists all offices in the building.

Automated electronic docket screens should be located in the main lobby of the building. These screens should not display juvenile names.

**B. Central Security Control Office in Lobby**

The central security control office is the location from which all security zones and safety alarm systems are monitored throughout the building. From this unit, the courthouse may be monitored through the use of closed circuit television systems, duress alarms, intrusion sensors and other security systems.

The security control office may best be located near the main public entrance or may be located within the central holding area control room.

Also located with the central security control office is the protective equipment such as security and duress alarms, fire alarm, emergency elevator control, public address system, fire alarm enunciator panel, etc.

All power and lighting for this room should be from the building's emergency electrical service. All equipment should be on an uninterruptible power supply and all electricity should be conditioned.

Access to the life safety equipment panel should be limited to building management.

**C. Food Service**

In larger courthouses a limited food service outlet may be included in the building if no food service providers are located near the courthouse. The food service outlet is for the use of courthouse visitors and staff.

If a food service outlet is not provided a vending area may be provided near the main lobby.

**D. Building Support Services**

In larger courthouses an interior delivery bay is desirable for the delivery of equipment and supplies and for the removal of trash and recycled materials.

For the convenience of moving equipment and supplies a service elevator should be provided.

All deliveries to the courthouse should be screened by security. In larger courthouses it is recommended that a security screening station be located adjacent to the delivery bay and that all persons and packages entering the building be screened.

In smaller courthouses (1-4 courtrooms) where a loading dock is not provided a loading/delivery zone for delivery vehicles should be provided.

All packages entering the building should be screened at the main security station.

A drop-off zone for persons entering the courthouse may be located near the building's main entry. If provided it should be outside any defined security zone protected by bollards, berms, or other type of barrier.

#### **XIV. PROGRAM PARKING - JUDGES, ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Judges and Constitutional Officers should be provided secure parking, preferably in an enclosed garage with direct access to the court's private circulation system. Judges should never be provided unsecured parking in the public parking area and judges' parking spaces should never be identified.

Secure judicial parking is best located in the basement of the courthouse, although it is acceptable for parking to be located at grade within a secure parking compound.

There should be controlled access to and from the secure parking. This is generally monitored by the Sheriff's Office. Access may be controlled either remotely or by access cards.

Unauthorized vehicles should not be permitted below the courthouse at any time. The control point for access to below-grade parking should be at, or prior to, the point where a vehicle is at the perimeter line of the courthouse.

The judicial parking area should have direct access to the dedicated elevators and stair that provide access to the building's private circulation and to the judges' chambers.



## GLOSSARY OF COURTHOUSE PLANNING AND DESIGN TERMS

<b>Acoustical Panel</b>	A systems furniture panel with acoustical properties to absorb sound within the panel structure providing a higher STC rating for the overall workspace.
<b>Access Flooring (also raised floor or raised access computer floor)</b>	Access flooring provides an elevated structural floor above a solid substrate (often a concrete slab) to create a hidden void for the passage of mechanical, electrical services, and air flow. Raised floors are widely used in modern office buildings, and in specialized areas such as IT data centers and computer rooms. In courthouses it is most commonly used in computer rooms, clerks' offices and courtrooms and it permits the easy reconfiguration of office and workspaces.
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act.
<b>Adaptive Re-Use</b>	Conversion of a building into a use other than that for which it was designed, such as changing an office building into a courthouse.
<b>Adjacency Requirements</b>	Programming information concerning optimal functional proximity of various personnel groups and equipment areas. This information is a major element of the criteria used in space planning.
<b>A/E</b>	Architecture & Engineering
<b>Architect</b>	An individual, partnership, corporation or other legal entity licensed to practice the profession of architecture.
<b>Architectural Program</b>	A document that defines in tabular, narrative, and graphic form the size, functional relationships, budget, and mission of a building. The program can be developed independent of the architectural design process and is used by the owner to define the scope of the project and subsequently by the architect to define the spatial and functional requirements.
<b>Building Backbone</b>	The part of a communications network that carries the majority of traffic throughout the building from the entry room to cross connections on each floor.
<b>Barrier-Free Design</b>	Building and site design which is accessible to all people, regardless of age and abilities.
<b>Bay</b>	A vertical division of a façade or a structure division of a building, marked by column spacing, roof compartments, windows or similar measures. In a courthouse it usually refers to the spacing available for courtrooms.
<b>Block Diagram</b>	Initial form of space allocation in which the spatial requirements determined in the programming phase are shown. This diagram shows, in correct proportion, departments and their proposed locations within the courthouse.

<b>Bond Anticipation Note (BAN)</b>	A short-term interest-bearing security issued in advance of a larger, future bond issue issued by corporations and governments, such as local municipalities wishing to generate funds for upcoming projects. The bond anticipation notes are used as short-term financing, with the expectation that the proceeds of the larger, future bond issue will cover the anticipation notes.
<b>Building Envelope</b>	The volume of space in a building or courthouse, usually defined by dimensional requirements such as setback, stepback, permitted maximum height, and maximum permitted lot coverage.
<b>Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF)</b>	Building gross area, includes the total of all departmental areas, such as courtrooms, chambers, etc. with an additional factor to account for major public circulation between departments, elevators stairwells, mechanical and electrical spaces not specifically included in the project space program, exterior walls, and any other common spaces not clearly identified as net areas. Building gross area is measured to the exterior surface of permanent outer building walls, and includes all enclosed areas.
<b>Buffer</b>	A strip of land established to provide separation between land uses and typically developed as a landscaped area.
<b>Building grossing factor</b>	In architectural programming, another multiplier is added to the net and departmental gross square footage to account for exterior wall thickness, fire stairs, elevators and lobbies, and mechanical rooms that serve the entire structure, and not exclusively a department or component of the building. The total size of a building is the addition of the net area, the departmental grossing factor, and the building grossing factor.
<b>CENTREX</b>	A business telephone service offered by the local telephone company from a central office.
<b>Certificate of Participation</b>	A type of financing where an investor purchases a share of the lease revenues of a program rather than the bond being secured by those revenues. For example, the revenues generated from a future parking garage.
<b>Change Procedures</b>	A set of steps, or a plan, used to identify and manage the changes during the project life cycle, especially changes in project scope.
<b>Conduit</b>	Conduit is the actual cables or wires that connect equipment to the source of energy. In a courthouse where technology is constantly changing, the “trays” or “tunnels” that hold the wiring must be easily accessible without serious disruption of the operation.
<b>Construction Documents</b>	The drawings and specifications that are used to solicit bids for the construction of the facility are called “construction documents” that includes the schematic design, design development, and construction drawings of the facility. These documents are used by the contractor and subcontractors to first estimate the cost of construction and secondly to construct the facility.

<b>Demolition</b>	Dismantling or razing of all or part of an existing building.
<b>Departmental Gross Square Feet (DGSF)</b>	Departmental area – also called “usable area”– is measured in departmental gross square feet, including all net areas and a factor to account for interior wall thicknesses, corridors and pathways within a department, columns and other structural elements, and inefficiencies created by shaft spaces that penetrate through the floors within departmental areas, and the like. This value represents the total area that is typically used when calculating the area on a floor that a specific unit, such as judicial chambers or clerk’s office, would require.
<b>Departmental Grossing Factor</b>	The departmental grossing factor is a percentage of the net area of a component of the facility that is added to the net space. This percentage or multiplier accounts for the non-assignable space associated with a component of the building. For example, the Clerk’s area could include workstations, files, and public counters, all of which can be defined in terms of net square footage. The non-assignable areas, such as corridors leading to the work stations, are included in the departmental grossing factor.
<b>Design Guidelines</b>	Criteria established to guide development toward a desired level of quality through the design of the physical environment, and which are applied on a discretionary basis relative to the context of development.
<b>Elevation</b>	A drawing showing an external face of a building with all the features shown, as if in a single vertical plane.
<b>Engineer</b>	Any individual, partnership, corporation or other legal entity licensed to practice the profession of engineering.
<b>Facades</b>	The exterior wall of a building exposed to public view or that wall viewed by persons not within the building.
<b>Fenestration</b>	The arrangement of windows in a building.
<b>Finish</b>	The visual characteristics including color, texture and reflectivity of materials.
<b>Fixture</b>	An appliance or device attached to the facade (e.g., awning, sign, lighting fixture, conduit, or security gate).
<b>Floor Plan</b>	A horizontal arrangement of one level of the building that typically indicates walls, doors and dimensions.
<b>Floor Plan</b>	A scaled drawing showing the various levels of a building, that indicates the location of rooms, interior walls, and staircases and elevators.
<b>Footprint Size/ Building Footprint</b>	The area of the ground floor of a building that consumes site area. The term “footprint” refers only to the amount of the site that the building occupies at the ground level, and not the entire square footage of the structure.

<b>General Obligation Bonds (GOB)</b>	A municipal bond backed by the credit and “taxing power” of the issuing jurisdiction rather than the revenue from a given project. General obligation bonds are issued with the belief that a municipality will be able to repay its debt obligation through taxation or revenue from projects. No assets are used as collateral. This is the most common method of courthouse financing.
<b>Glazing</b>	A part of a wall or window made of glass.
<b>Grant Anticipatory Note</b>	A bond issued by a governing body that is secured by future expected funding, such as from Federal funding or grants. Governing bodies issue grant anticipatory notes to provide immediate cash to keep projects on time in anticipation of future funding being received.
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
<b>Improvement</b>	Any building, structure, place, work of art, or other object constituting a physical betterment of real property, or any part of such betterment.
<b>Kiosks</b>	Free-standing structures that can be located within the lobby of courthouses; outside the facility; and/or at remote locations that permit a citizen to electronically access information regarding a case; pay fines; and transmit documents to the Court are becoming more popular as a means of increasing accessibility and convenience to the court without creating increased foot traffic within the courthouse.
<b>Landscape improvement</b>	A physical betterment of real property or any part thereof, consisting of natural or artificial landscaping, including but not limited to grade, terrace, body of water, stream, rock, hedge, plant, shrub, mature tree, path, walkway, road, plaza, wall, fence, step, fountain, or sculpture.
<b>Mass</b>	The combination of the three dimensions of length, height, and depth which give a building its overall shape; a building is often composed of many masses, hence the term massing, which is often used to describe the form or shape of structures.
<b>Marquee</b>	The marquee is a part of the informational signage of the courthouse, usually located in the main lobby. The display can be electronic or utilize traditional methods to display courtroom assignments, directions, and announcements.
<b>Master plan (or facility master plan)</b>	A master plan is a phase of the pre design process that compares several different options of achieving the project’s objectives, in order to permit the owner or governing body to decide which strategy to pursue.
<b>Microfiche</b>	A technique for storing multiple pages of a document on a single sheet of photographic film.
<b>Microfilm</b>	The processed photographic film kept for later retrieval and viewing.
<b>Micrographics</b>	A generic term that encompasses microfiche, microfilm, rolled film, aperture cards, and similar technologies of storing images of documents.

<b>Millwork</b>	Built-in counters, shelving, cabinetry, wall or ceiling paneling, moldings, etc. usually found in courtrooms and clerks’ office, that is typically fabricated off-site and made of wood and/or similar materials.
<b>Mixed Use</b>	A development or area comprised of mixed land uses either in the same building or in separate buildings on either the same lot or on separate lots or, at a larger scale, in nodes. In courthouse projects it might refer to the inclusion of non-court functions as part of the project, either on the same site or within the building.
<b>Modification</b>	Any work to an existing improvement or landscape improvement other than (a) ordinary maintenance or repair; or (b) any Addition.
<b>Net Square Feet (NSF)</b>	Net area – also called “programmable area” or net assignable space – is measured in net square feet (NSF). Net area describes the actual working area of an office, workstation, or support space. Net area represents the actual area assigned for a specific space for function, excluding permanent structural or architectural elements and internal circulation.
<b>Net Area</b>	The net area of a room is the square footage within the walls that enclose the space. Net area does not include the wall thickness or the corridors that lead to the room or space. Architects design spaces to the net area, with an allowance for the square footage to accommodate the non-assignable areas such as wall thickness, stairwells, and mechanical shafts.
<b>Occupiable Space</b>	A room, or enclosure and accessory installations thereof, which are intended for human occupancy or habitation, also generally referred to as net area.
<b>Preservation</b>	Providing for the continued use of deteriorated old and historic buildings, sites and structure through such means as restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use.
<b>Public Art</b>	Site specific artwork created to enhance and animate publicly accessible spaces through artistic interpretations that range from individual sculpture to integrated architectural and landscape features and treatments.
<b>Publicly Accessible Spaces</b>	Buildings, streets and exterior areas, which may be privately-owned, but to which the public has access.
<b>Public Private Partnerships (P3 projects)</b>	A government service or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of government and one or more private sector entities. These schemes are sometimes referred to as PPP, P3 or P3 projects. These are generally design-build-finance projects where a private entity or business such as a contractor proposes to design, build, and finance the project for the government under an arrangement where the governmental entity agrees to lease purchase the facility over time.

<b>Renovation</b>	Modernization of an old or historic structure which unlike restoration may not be consistent with the original design.
<b>Restoration</b>	Accurately recovering the form and details of a building and site as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work.
<b>Revenue Bonds</b>	A type of municipal bond that is issued to finance utility or facility projects, such as electrical plants, water systems, sewer systems that is repaid from the revenues derived from the project. A bond is an interest-bearing or discounted debt security that is issued by a government or corporation in order to raise funds for capital projects.
<b>Scale</b>	The sense of proportion or apparent size of a building or building element as created by the placement and size of the building in its setting; scale usually applies to how the sense is perceived in relation to the size of a human being and refers to the apparent size, not actual size, since it is always viewed in relationship to another building or element.
<b>Seismic Conditions</b>	A seismic condition is an assessment of the potential for an earthquake. In the preparation of construction documents, the architect is required by building codes to consider the particular seismic zone within which the building will be located and certify that the structure is designed properly to withstand the intensity of the earthquake.
<b>Signage</b>	Any lettering, signs, or logos in general, used to direct users or provide information in the courthouse.
<b>Site Plan</b>	A drawing of the footprint of the building and immediate adjacent buildings indicating the location of the proposed work. It is a drawing that shows accurately with dimensions the boundaries of the site and the location of all buildings, structures, natural features, uses and principal site design features proposed for a parcel of land.
<b>Stepback</b>	A setback of the upper floors of a building which is greater than the setback of the lower floors.
<b>Setback</b>	The horizontal distance from the property line to the face of a building or from natural features to a building.
<b>Universal Grids</b>	Technology is changing rapidly in many spaces within the courthouse. The use of “universal grids” is a method of installing cabling either beneath the floor or in the ceiling that can be easily altered to accommodate new equipment or the replacement of outdated cabling systems.
<b>Utilities</b>	Facilities for gas, electricity, telephone, cable television, water and waste water, including overhead and underground power and telephone lines, all fire hydrants, water mains, storm and sanitary sewers.
<b>Vehicular Sally Port</b>	The enclosed or open, but fenced, structure for securing vehicles while inmates are being transferred into a booking or court holding area.
<b>Voir Dire</b>	The process of selecting the jury panel is called the “voir dire”.

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<b>Wayfinding</b>	The information available to people which they need to find their way around the city and can be verbal, graphic, architectural and spatial.
<b>Wide Area Network (WAN)</b>	Refers to the connection of several LANs together, usually by leased telephone lines, although satellite links are used as well.
<b>Workstation</b>	A table or desk with a three-sided partition surround, usually made for individual work. However, workstations are highly customizable, and are often used to reduce noise and provide privacy to individual employees working in a single room.

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**National Institute of Building Sciences.** NIBS hosts the **Whole Building Design Guide** (WBDG) and provides an authoritative source of advice for both the private and public sector about the use of building science and technology. The WBDG serves as a gateway for building professionals to information on “whole building” design techniques and technologies. It is especially useful for information pertaining to federal courts.

**Nebraska Courts Facility Planning: Guidelines and Standards.** (1999). *Supreme Court of Nebraska* The Supreme Court of Nebraska has provided these guidelines to assist local and county officials identify and solve their facility problems in such a way to meet current and future needs. The standards for courtrooms and court offices are suggested for all renovations and new construction.

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**Standard Level Features and Finishes for U.S. Courts Facilities.** (1996). *Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service* This is a complementary document to the “U.S. Courts Design Guide.” It establishes the baseline, standard-level features and finishes for U.S. courts facilities that are funded by the General Service Administration. It is intended to create a level of quality to determine costs.

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Zeruba, John E. **Courthouse Security - A Direction or a Destination?.** (2007). *Justice System Journal (Vol. 28, No. 1)*. To ensure that courthouses “meet today’s standards of protection,” the author outlines a three-step process that includes a threat analysis, a court facility site survey, and a court security committee.