



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project
Institute for Studies in Justice and Social Behavior
The American University Law School
Washington, D.C.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADDITION
OF SECOND COURTROOM AND ANCILLARY
FACILITIES IN THE MUSCATINE COUNTY
COURTHOUSE, MUSCATINE, IOWA

July, 1973

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NCJRS

MAR 8 1977

ACQUISITIONS

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Law Enforcement Assistance Administration Contract Number: J-LEAA-043-72

This report was prepared in conjunction with the Institute's Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project, under a contract with the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U.S. Department of Justice:

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OUTLINE

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PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS ON ADDITION OF SECOND COURTROOM
AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES IN THE MUSCATINE COUNTY COURTHOUSE,
MUSCATINE, IOWA.

Space Management Consultants, Inc., New York City, was asked to provide technical assistance in determining the feasibility of accommodating a second courtroom and ancillary facilities in the Muscatine County Courthouse. This has been made necessary as a result of the Unified Trial Court Act which goes into effect July 1, 1973. This brief study was made possible through the federally funded Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Project, The American University, Washington, D.C.

The purpose of this assistance is to review current court facility needs with local officials in Muscatine County, and to evaluate with them the impact of recent legislation on their facility requirements. Prior to the enactment of the Unified Trial Court Act, the municipal court was housed and operated in the City Hall. The new act requires the county to provide the necessary facilities and this brief study aims at determining the feasibility of housing such facilities in the existing county courthouse. Muscatine County has a district court judge and a district associate judge who was the municipal court judge prior to the recent court reorganization.

Municipal court facilities presently housed in the City Hall include a judge's chamber, a clerk's office with a staff of three, an office shared by the bailiff and the court reporter, and a combined courtroom and council chamber. These facilities are grouped in close proximity to each other, the only problem being that prisoners have to be brought into the courtroom via the public stairway and corridor.

It is anticipated that a preliminary facility program for the proposed Second District Court courtroom would include:

- a courtroom to accommodate 12-man jury trials and with a minimum public seating capacity of 40.
- a chamber in close proximity to the courtroom for the district associate judge.
- a combined office in close proximity to the courtroom and judge's chamber for the court reporter and the bailiff.

- an attorneys' conference room which could be shared by both courtrooms.
- a jury deliberation room accessible from and shared by both courtrooms.
- if the clerk's office of the district court and that of the present municipal court could not be combined, adequate office and records storage space would have to be found for the clerk's office associated with the second courtroom.

The second floor of the Muscatine County Courthouse is presently accommodating the following functions:

- a very large district court courtroom, approximately 2,100 square feet net area.
- a jury deliberation room behind and directly accessible from the courtroom. A single toilet is available for jurors, accessible from the jury room.
- adjoining the jury deliberation room and also behind the courtroom is the judge's chamber.
- adjoining the judge's chamber and accessible from the public central lobby is a large bailiff's office.
- adjoining this bailiff's office is a smaller court reporter's office.
- men and women's toilets adjacent to the court reporter's office are accessible from the public corridor.
- across the corridor from the toilets is the Assessor's Office.
- adjoining the Assessor's Office is the law library of the district court.
- next to the law library and along the horizontal axis of the public corridor is a large attorneys' lounge.
- adjoining the attorneys' lounge is an attorneys' conference/witness room.
- The room adjacent to this conference room is presently the Probation Office.

PLANNING AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

The Muscatine County Courthouse was dedicated in 1908 and completed around 1910. The three-story building with attic was constructed of load-bearing masonry walls. Nearly all original walls are of heavy masonry two to three feet in thickness, and attempts to remove these walls would involve very

high construction costs in providing structural support for the loads above that floor. On the second floor (the court floor), the only large non-load-bearing wall that could be removed is that between the Assessor's Office and the law library. As none of the rooms outside the existing courtroom is large enough individually to be planned as the second courtroom and since the only movable party wall is between these two rooms, it is reasonable to conclude that the second courtroom should be located at the present Assessor's Office and law library.

A visit to the attic showed that there are steel columns above the party wall concerned, and that these columns could also exist on the second floor in which case the second courtroom might have to be planned around structural columns in the center of the space. Observation from the first and second floors and attic indicates a structural beam above the party wall. It is assumed that the columns in the attic are supported on this beam. If this assumption is incorrect and columns do exist on the second floor, then a more substantial beam may have to be installed above the wall to support the attic columns and roof loads.

It is preferable to have the courtrooms and ancillary facilities located together on the same floor rather than on separate floors. The main reason is that court traffic could be limited to a single floor, thus minimizing the mixing of different types of traffic in the building. Another reason is that prisoner movement would also be restricted to one floor. Should there be need to improve security precautions to court facilities, such improvements could be made on one floor, thus avoiding the need to disrupt operations on other floors. By locating all court and related facilities on one floor, the public would have less difficulty in locating them.

Since district court facilities are already located on the second floor and as the second floor seems to have adequate space to accommodate both courtrooms and their ancillary facilities, it would seem logical and desirable to allocate the second floor entirely for court use. If it is necessary to locate some ancillary facilities on another floor, space available on an adjacent floor should be used.

PLANNING CONCEPTS

- The large district court courtroom should remain as the major courtroom. While this courtroom is larger than is normally needed, its reduction would change the character of the courtroom substantially and the renovation work would create some disruption to court operations.
- Should the size of this courtroom be reduced, the space made available behind the courtroom could be used either for a law library, the existing library being replaced by the second courtroom, or for the clerk's office if necessary and if direct public access to that space could be planned.
- While the number of jury trials does not indicate the need for a second jury deliberation room the present location of the jury room is only accessible from the major courtroom. For the jury from the second courtroom to use this room would necessitate jurors walking through the existing courtroom. By relocating the jury deliberation room to the present bailiff's office, the jury from either courtroom could gain access to the jury room without walking through the large courtroom.
- The consultants assume, because of the anticipated small number of jury trials (no more than 25 per year), that jury trials could be scheduled by both judges so that at no time would two jurors require two separate jury deliberation rooms at the same time.
- The existing jury deliberation room with a private toilet then could be used by the judge as his private chamber.
- The existing judge's chamber then could be partitioned, if necessary, into two offices, one for the court reporter and the other for the bailiff. A small area in the bailiff's office should be allowed for attorneys and visitors waiting to see the judge. A new door should be installed between this room and the adjoining proposed judge's chamber so that the judge does not need to go through the courtroom to reach his chamber.
- The present bailiff's office could be converted into a jury deliberation room which could also be used as a witness room or attorneys' conference room or lounge when not in use as a jury room. There is no private

- To reduce the size of the large courtroom and maintain a separate public entrance, it would be necessary to relocate the 12-man jury box to the opposite side of the courtroom. The wall behind the existing jury box could then be broken through and a double door installed for public access into the courtroom. A wall could be constructed in line with the center line of the existing double door so that the space excluded from the existing courtroom would have a separate access from the public lobby. This space could be used as an enlarged law library. Without this space, the law library may have to be relocated to another floor, and space would have to be found for this purpose.
- The attic floor above the courtroom floor in this building has several levels, making it quite impractical and expensive to renovate. The only access to the attic floor is via a narrow and steep stairway between the main public staircase and the existing courtroom. There is not an elevator in the building and a new elevator installed in the central light-well or a new stairway to the attic would spoil the architectural character of the building.
- The clerk's office presently occupies three large rooms on the first and ground floors. One room is used as the clerk's office, adjoining which is the upper clerk's vault in which reproduction equipment are kept and records stored. Below this vault is a lower vault of similar size used for record storage and occasionally by auditors. These two vaults, connected by a private staircase, are not properly planned. By devising a more economic and efficient method of record storage and by reorganizing the use of existing space, it could be possible to include the three clerks from the present municipal court clerk's office into the existing space. If this were not possible, a space on the second floor would have to be provided.
- In view of the consolidation of the trial court system under the Unified Trial Court Act, the consultant suggests that the present clerks' offices be consolidated. This would result in considerable space savings.

EXISTING SPACE USE: GROUND FLOOR PLAN

(diagrams are included only in original copy of report)

EXISTING SPACE USE: FIRST FLOOR PLAN

(diagrams are included only in original copy of report)

EXISTING WORK UNIT: SECOND FLOOR PLAN

(Diagram and include only in original copy 1 sheet)

PROPOSED SPACE USE: SECOND FLOOR PLAN

(diagrams are included only in original copy of report)

