CALIFORNIA

Facilities Standards

TRIAL COURT

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

California Trial Court Facilities Standards

Adopted by the Judicial Council November 8, 1991
Published by the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts

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By appointment of the Hon. Malcolm M. Lucas, Chief Justice, on May 11, 1989

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The committee extends its appreciation to all those individuals who donated their time, expertise, and support to this ambitious project.

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Preamble

The following guidelines have been developed for new court construction, although they are equally useful for remodeling or renovation projects.

The guidelines establish standards that are significant to all courthouses, in both urban and rural environments, in order to meet the expectations of users and the functional requirements of the judicial process.

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I

Developing Guidelines

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I Developing Guidelines

1. Rationale for Developing Guidelines

STANDARD

All courthouses and courtrooms* should be built in conformance with the standards presented in this document.

Comment

The court facilities standards have been developed to:

- help court and county officials and architects design new courthouses and courtrooms;
- provide facilities that function well, are dignified, are aesthetically pleasing, express concepts of justice, and incorporate the best ideas developed to date; and
- provide safety and security for witnesses, jurors, litigants, and court personnel.

These standards also contain criteria for determining area variations according to the size and needs of specific courts in rural or urban installations. The standards should be used in the renovation of existing facilities where appropriate.

The effect of a building on the public and on employees should be taken into consideration. Planners are also encouraged to incorporate innovative elements into future buildings.

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* See Appendix B, California Judicial System, page 103.

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2. Guidelines for Consultants

a. Experience in Courthouse Design

STANDARD

Architects and/or space planners involved in courthouse design should have prior courthouse design experience or enter into a joint venture with an architect(s) who has had such experience.

Comment

Local jurisdictions may prefer hiring architectural or space planning firms that have local experience, but in association with firms having prior courthouse design experience.

b. Use of Court-Employed Project Consultants

STANDARD

Each court should have its own project consultant who should be involved with the planning and construction from the inception of the plans to the end of the project.

Comment

Because the needs of the funding source and court can differ and the architect is answerable to the board of supervisors, the court should employ its own consultant to exercise the authority of the court as set forth in Government Code section 68073 (see Appendix A, page 93).

c. Project Security Coordinator/Other Project Consultants

STANDARD

Each court should designate a project security coordinator who should act as a courtroom and custodial area consultant. This coordinator should be the sheriff, marshal, or security officer designated by the court, whichever is applicable for that court. Acoustical and lighting engineers should also be consulted and their work coordinated by the project architect.

3. Judicial Responsibility

STANDARD

The court should exercise authority under Government Code section 68073 [see Appendix A, page 93] **to approve plans and specifications for courthouse facilities as well as subsequent material changes prior to the commencement of construction.**

Comment

This authority under Government Code section 68073 resides with the entire bench, not with the presiding judge. To oversee the actual construction stage, the court should delegate supervisory authority through the Standing Committee on Facilities (see Section II.1.).