

COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION

COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION FUNDING AND THE JUDICIARY COURTHOUSE PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

The federal courthouse construction program is administered jointly by the judiciary and the General Services Administration (GSA). The judiciary establishes priorities for courthouse construction projects and sets the housing requirements for each project to ensure that completed facilities meet the needs of the courts. GSA, as the holder of real property authority, secures the funding for courthouse construction, acquires the building site, and completes design and construction work on the facilities themselves.

The judiciary sets forth its priorities for courthouse construction funding on its *Federal Judiciary Courthouse Project Priorities (CPP)* list. The *CPP* is divided into two parts. Part I consists of the judiciary's highest courthouse construction funding priorities for the budget year. Part II identifies out-year courthouse construction priorities. As described in detail below, the most recent *CPP* includes the following project priorities for fiscal year (FY) 2025: San Juan, Puerto Rico; Hartford, Connecticut; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Bowling Green, Kentucky.

MANAGEMENT OF PRIOR YEAR COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

In FY 2016, Congress provided \$948 million to GSA for the construction of courthouses on the *CPP* list, as approved by the Judicial Conference in September 2015. This infusion of resources fully funded all four projects on Part I of the *CPP* at that time (Nashville, Tennessee; Toledo, Ohio; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Des Moines, Iowa), as well as the first four projects on Part II (Greenville, South Carolina; Anniston, Alabama; Savannah, Georgia; and San Antonio, Texas). A fifth project from Part II (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania) also received partial funding. In total, of the 11 projects on the September 2015 *CPP*, eight received full funding, and a ninth received partial funding. In addition, \$53 million was appropriated for new construction and acquisition of facilities that are joint U.S. courthouses and federal buildings in Greenville, Mississippi, and Rutland, Vermont. Joint federal building/courthouse projects are prioritized by GSA and do not appear on the judiciary's *CPP*. All of these courthouse projects have been authorized by both the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works.

In FY 2018, Congress provided the remainder of funding needed for the project in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (\$137.2 million), as well as complete construction funding for two additional projects: Huntsville, Alabama (\$110.0 million) and Fort Lauderdale, Florida (\$190.1 million). Both the Huntsville, Alabama, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, projects have received authorization and are underway.

Between FY 2021 and FY 2023, Congress provided partial funding of \$335.0 million for the Hartford, Connecticut courthouse, and partial funding of \$218.4 million for the Chattanooga, Tennessee courthouse, which represent the top two priorities on the current

CPP, as well as partial funding of \$22.5 million for the judicial space emergency in San Juan, Puerto Rico. All three projects await the remaining needed funding in FY 2025.

Since receiving funding in FY 2016, the Rutland, Vermont courthouse acquisition was completed in October 2018. The Charlotte, North Carolina Annex, Savannah, Georgia Annex and the Greenville, South Carolina new courthouse projects were completed in FY 2021. In FY 2022, an additional three new courthouses were completed in Nashville, Tennessee; San Antonio, Texas; and Anniston, Alabama. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, new courthouse project was completed in FY 2023, as well as the major renovation project at the Charles R. Jonas Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Charlotte, North Carolina. The new courthouses in Des Moines, Iowa, and Huntsville, Alabama, as well as the new annex in Toledo, Ohio are expected to be completed in FY 2024.

Each of the remaining funded or partially funded new construction projects (Greenville, Mississippi; Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; Hartford, Connecticut; and Chattanooga, Tennessee) and renovation and alteration projects (Toledo, Ohio; and Savannah, Georgia) is in a different stage of development. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) continues to engage with GSA, the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), and other Executive Branch stakeholders on portfolio management activities to ensure that additional milestones are reached and projects remain on track. These activities include regular coordination and project status meetings; development of a communications and program management plan; the operation of a National Courthouse Change Management Board to oversee changes impacting scope, schedule, and budget; and deployment of a program management dashboard to track progress. Ongoing coordination continues among judiciary stakeholders to address issues impacting the portfolio including risks, policies, and best practices.

UPDATES TO THE CPP

In September 2023, the Judicial Conference of the United States approved an updated *CPP* list for FY 2025. The FY 2025 *CPP* is the fourth to incorporate the requirement that any project considered for addition to Part I must have a completed GSA Phase II feasibility study. This requirement helps improve the quality of GSA cost estimates associated with Part I projects, for which funding is being sought.

The approved *CPP* for FY 2025 (see page 14.6) reflects the continuing judicial space emergency in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which makes that project the de facto top courthouse construction priority of the judiciary. Part I of the FY 2025 *CPP* continues to show Hartford, Connecticut, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Bowling Green, Kentucky. On Part II, there is the addition of a project in Rochester, New York, and a shift in the Urgency Evaluation (UE) rank order of two locations since the FY 2024 *CPP*. Specifically, the UE rating and ranking for McAllen, Texas increased and conversely, the UE rating and ranking for Norfolk, Virginia, decreased. Accordingly, the priority order of projects on Part II of the new *CPP* changed to reflect the addition of the project in Rochester, New York, and the updated 2023 UE scores by switching the order of McAllen and Norfolk.

Judicial Space Emergency

San Juan, Puerto Rico - \$20.0 million for design and \$295.5 million for construction (\$22.5 million was previously funded for site and design in FY 2022, site is federally owned)

The Clemente Ruiz-Nazario U.S. Courthouse and Federico Degetau Federal Building in San Juan, Puerto Rico were declared a judicial space emergency by the Judicial Conference in September 2020. In early 2018, the Puerto Rico District Court was informed that the Federico Degetau Federal Building was among eight courthouses found to be structurally deficient and at extremely high risk for seismic activity. GSA reported that the federal building did not meet the required performance level and that significant, and invasive, seismic remediation work was necessary. Recommended seismic upgrades to the Degetau Federal Building include reinforcing columns, new shear walls, concrete deck doweling and replacement, retrofitting the existing spandrels at the perimeter walls, and adding seismic bracing to the mechanical systems. In order to safely perform the necessary seismic work, a new annex needs to be constructed in advance to provide not only necessary permanent expansion space for the court but also temporary swing space for all tenants during the invasive seismic upgrade to the Degetau Federal Building.

GSA currently estimates that \$338.0 million is needed for construction of the annex. In FY 2022, the project received \$22.5 million for site and design. GSA's project estimate reflects changes resulting from annual escalation (FYs 2021 and 2022), projected annual escalation, a required project labor agreement, design fee increase, and maintenance and inspection (M&I) fee increases. The proposed new annex will meet the expansion needs of the district court with six district courtrooms and ten chambers, provide secure circulation for prisoner movement, and expand facilities for prisoner management to better accommodate the USMS.

Please note, because of the Degetau Federal Building's location in an area of high seismic activity, GSA commissioned studies to evaluate the building's performance under customary seismic events. Recent reports indicated that although the building can support typical occupancy live loads at full capacity, it does not meet the relevant seismic criteria. Accordingly, the judiciary vacated the Degetau building and all personnel for the United States District Court and the United States Probation and Pretrial Services Office for the District of Puerto Rico began work from alternate locations as of September 2023. As of February 1, 2024, GSA has not yet made a final determination regarding the continued occupancy of the Degetau Federal Building. When this determination is made, the judiciary will update Congress as appropriate.

The three projects on Part I of the FY 2025 *CPP* (which reflects the addition on one project) are described in detail below.

1. ***Hartford, Connecticut – \$128.1 million for construction (\$135.5 million previously funded in FY 2021 for site, design, and partial construction, \$138.0 funded in FY 2022 for partial construction, and \$61.5 million funded in FY 2023 for partial construction)***

The Abraham Ribicoff Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse (Ribicoff Federal Building) in Hartford, Connecticut, is number one on the judiciary's *CPP* list for FY 2025. GSA estimates a total of \$463.1 million is required for site acquisition, design, and construction of the new courthouse. In FY 2021, \$135.5 million was appropriated for full site and design and partial construction of the project. In FY 2022, an additional \$138.0 million was appropriated and in FY 2023 an additional \$61.5 million was appropriated for partial construction. The amount requested in FY 2025 is \$128.1 million to address the remaining balance required for project construction. GSA's cost estimate takes into account realized annual escalation (FYs 2020, 2021, and 2022), locality cost factor adjustment, projected annual escalation (FY 2023 and beyond), design and M & I fee increases, and estimated cost of implementing applicable Executive Orders for energy and sustainable design.

The Ribicoff Federal Building was constructed in 1963 and houses the district court, bankruptcy court, and court of appeals, among other tenants. The courthouse building currently houses 10 judges (three district judges, four senior district judges, two magistrate judges and one bankruptcy judge) and contains one hearing room and seven courtrooms (four district, two magistrate, and one bankruptcy), many of which do not meet *U.S. Courts Design Guide (USCDG)* size standards.

The Ribicoff Federal Building has considerable challenges related to prisoner movement, with no dedicated prisoner elevator and an undersized sally port, prohibiting separate public/prisoner/judge circulation. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office escorts 350-500 prisoners per month in this building. The annex to the Ribicoff Federal Building, constructed in 1991, has ongoing water intrusion, air quality, and HVAC issues. The annex also suffered extensive damage after a major storm in 2008.

2. ***Chattanooga, Tennessee – \$81.6 million for construction (\$94.5 million previously funded in FY 2021 for site, design, and partial construction, \$85.5 million in FY 2022 for partial construction, and \$38.4 million in FY 2023 for partial construction)***

The Chattanooga, Tennessee U.S. Courthouse is number two on the judiciary's *CPP* for FY2025. GSA currently estimates that a total of \$300.0 million is needed for site acquisition, design, and construction of the courthouse. GSA's update to its FY 2024 project estimate of \$294.7 million reflects changes resulting from annual escalation (FYs 2023), locality cost factor adjustment, a required project labor agreement, design and M&I fee increases, and estimated cost of implementing applicable Executive Orders for energy and sustainable design. In FY 2021, \$94.5 million was appropriated for the project for full site and design and partial construction. An additional \$85.5 million was appropriated in FY 2022 and \$38.4 million in FY 2023

for partial construction. The amount requested in FY 2025 is \$81.6 million to address the remaining balance required for project construction based on the updated GSA cost estimate. The existing courthouse was constructed in 1933 and houses the district court, among other court and non-court related tenants. The courthouse building houses five judges (two district judges, one senior district judge, and two magistrate judges) and contains three courtrooms (one district and two magistrate) and one hearing room. The bankruptcy court is currently housed in leased space (two bankruptcy judges using one bankruptcy judge courtroom and one hearing room). The courthouse building lacks adequate security, does not provide for future expansion, and does not meet *USCDG* standards. Because of inadequacies in the existing building's configuration and size, judges, prisoners, and the public must use the same public elevators and corridors. In addition, there are not enough courtroom holding cells and the prisoner access route to one of the magistrate judge courtrooms passes through the magistrate judge's chambers. Further, the building lacks a prisoner sally port, adequate setbacks, or perimeter barriers. The building has ongoing water infiltration issues, mold issues, and a major rat infestation throughout the building, as well as the presence of asbestos. None of the courtrooms meet the recommended size requirements of the *USCDG*, nor accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities.

3. ***Bowling Green, Kentucky –\$23.8 million for site and design; \$185.2 million for construction***

The Bowling Green, Kentucky U.S. Courthouse is number three on the judiciary's CPP for FY 2025. GSA estimates a total of \$209.0 million is required for site, design, and construction of the new courthouse. The existing courthouse was constructed in 1933 and houses the district court, among other court-related tenants. The building houses two resident judges (one district and one magistrate), but only contains one magistrate judge courtroom, one undersized magistrate judge hearing room, and one undersized bankruptcy judge courtroom. Further, the courthouse, which was constructed in 1933, lacks adequate security, does not provide for future expansion needs, and does not meet current *USCDG* standards. Because of inadequacies in the existing building's configuration and size, judges, prisoners, and the public must use the same public elevator and corridors. The building lacks a prisoner sallyport, restricted judges' parking, and adequate setbacks and perimeter barriers. None of the courtrooms meet accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. Additionally, there are considerable fire/life safety deficiencies, including lack of fire protection systems and inadequate egress capacities.

**FEDERAL JUDICIARY COURTHOUSE PROJECT PRIORITIES (CPP) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025
AS APPROVED BY THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES
September 2023**

The *Federal Judiciary Courthouse Project Priorities (CPP)* is the Judiciary’s list of courthouse construction funding priorities as approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States (Judicial Conference). The *CPP* was developed using the results of the Asset Management Planning (AMP) process. Approved by the Judicial Conference in 2008, AMP is a comprehensive facility planning tool designed to identify the Judiciary’s most urgent space needs, address cost-containment concerns, and incorporate applicable industry best practices.

Under the AMP process, each courthouse nationwide is assessed to determine current and future needs, identify preliminary housing solutions as needed, and calculate the relative urgency of need compared to other courts nationwide. Factors considered include building condition, building functionality, security, compliance with space standards, courtroom and chambers needs, and caseload and personnel growth. From this assessment, an Urgency Evaluation (UE) Results List that ranks space urgency by court location on a “worst first” basis is developed. Each location’s UE rating is updated annually until a project is placed on Part I of the *CPP*, at which time its rating is “frozen” for purposes of planning certainty.

The *CPP* is divided into two parts. Part I, provided below, consists of the Judiciary’s courthouse construction funding priorities for FY 2025. In addition, in September 2020, the Judicial Conference declared a judicial space emergency for the Nazario U.S. Courthouse and Degetau Federal Building in Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, due to unique circumstances resulting from GSA’s planned seismic retrofit of the Degetau Federal Building. These projects all have a completed GSA Phase II feasibility study or equivalent to establish cost estimates and housing solutions needed to address local court housing needs.

Judicial Space Emergency									
			FUNDING SUMMARY (\$M)						
District	City	Project Description	FY 2025 Funding Request		Previously Funded		Est.Total (Site/Design, Construction)	Site Acquired	Status (as of 9/2023)
			Site/Design	Construction	Site/Design	Construction			
District of Puerto Rico	San Juan	Courthouse Annex	20.020	295.532	22.476	0.000	338.028	Yes	GSA Feas. Study Completed

NOTES: Cost estimate based on GSA’s November 2022 new courthouse budget update; Degetau R&A design funding included with new annex construction to ensure Degetau project is coordinated with the two-phased annex construction. Follow-on R&A construction funding for Degetau will be requested by GSA in a future budget year. Site for Courthouse Annex federally owned.

Part I: Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Courthouse Construction Funding Priorities										
			FUNDING SUMMARY (\$M)							
Priority	District	City	Project Description	FY 2025 Funding Request		Previously Funded		Est.Total (Site/Design, Construction)	Site Acquired	Status (as of 9/2023)
				Site/Design	Construction	Site/Design	Construction			
1	District of Connecticut	Hartford	New Courthouse	0	128.069	69.340	265.660	463.069	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
2	Eastern District of Tennessee	Chattanooga	New Courthouse	0	81.639	42.085	176.315	300.039	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
3	Western District of Kentucky	Bowling Green	New Courthouse	23.799	185.147	0.000	0.000	208.946	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
TOTAL:				23.799	394.855	111.425	441.975	972.054		

NOTES: All projects have been assessed using the AMP process. Judiciary policies pertaining to courtroom sharing and the exclusion of projected judgeships have been applied to all projects.

Part II of the *CPP* identifies outyear courthouse construction priorities. All locations have been assessed under the AMP process and prioritized based on the project location’s UE rating. As projects in Part I are funded and constructed, projects in Part II may potentially move to Part I. A project location must have a completed GSA Phase II feasibility study before moving to Part I. In selecting which projects should begin a Phase II study, the Judicial Conference’s Committee on Space and Facilities will rely heavily on a location’s UE rating. Where multiple locations have similar scores, additional factors may be considered, including prisoner production figures during a given period of time, previous funding, and whether the current facility is owned by GSA. When a GSA Phase II feasibility study has been completed, that project will be elevated to Part I and placed behind any other locations already on Part I the next time the *CPP* is updated. Until a location is moved to Part I, its UE rating will be refreshed each year to capture changes in courtroom needs, chambers needs, and caseload growth, and as a result, its place in the prioritization of Part II projects may change.

Part II: CPP Outyear Courthouse Construction Priorities (Based on 2023 Urgency Evaluation Rating)				
District	City	2023 UE Rating	Site Acquired	Status (as of 9/2023)
Middle District of Georgia	Macon	54.878	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
District of Alaska	Anchorage	54.360	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed; GSA Ph II Feasibility Study In Progress
Middle District of North Carolina	Greensboro/W-S	45.459	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Southern District of Texas	McAllen	39.249	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed; GSA Ph II Feasibility Study Requested
Western District of New York	Rochester	35.821	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Eastern District of Virginia	Norfolk	35.335	Yes	GSA Feasibility Study Completed in 2010; needs refresh

NOTE: All projects have been assessed using the AMP process; Judiciary policies pertaining to courtroom sharing and the exclusion of projected judgeships have been applied to all projects

BACKGROUND:

Federal Judiciary Courthouse Project Priorities (CPP) List

The judiciary compiles a prioritized list of federal construction projects representing the courts’ most urgent courthouse construction needs. This prioritization is based on the judiciary’s long-range space planning methodology called the Asset Management Planning (AMP) process (as discussed below). Prior to FY 2016, this list was referred to as the *Five-Year Courthouse Project Plan (Five-Year Plan)*. In September 2015, the Judicial Conference recognized that the *Five-Year Plan* did not reflect an accurate funding timeline or articulate the relative urgency-of-need for projects on

the *Five-Year Plan* (particularly those that remained on the plan for long periods of time). To address these concerns, the Conference adopted a new planning instrument to detail the judiciary's priorities for new construction: the *Federal Judiciary CPP* list.

The *CPP* is a two-part, two-page document. Part I lists the judiciary's highest courthouse construction priorities – projects for which the judiciary will request federal funding in its annual budget submission – in numbered priority order. The priority order of all projects on Part I is maintained until a project has been fully funded, at which point the funded project is removed from Part I. Part II of the *CPP* consists of a separate table that includes the remaining projects. Prioritization of projects on Part II is reviewed and updated annually based on the location's Urgency Evaluation (UE) score.¹ New projects may be added to Part II of the *CPP* after the completion of a Phase I GSA feasibility study that recommends the construction of a new courthouse or annex. As of September 2020, projects must have a completed Phase II GSA feasibility study before they can be elevated to Part I of the plan.

AMP Process

The AMP process was approved by the Judicial Conference in March 2008. The AMP process incorporates rigorous facility assessments and consistently applied objective standards and guidelines to evaluate space needs in federal courthouses throughout the nation. Deliverables of the AMP process include a district-wide Long-Range Facilities Plan, a Facility Benefit Assessment (FBA) score for each courthouse, and a UE ranking for each city. Through these deliverables, the judiciary identifies courthouse space issues by location, preliminary housing solutions, and relative urgency-of-need compared to other courts nationwide.

The FBA score is based upon factors grouped into one of four weighted categories:

1. Building Condition – 30 percent
2. Space Functionality – 30 percent
3. Security – 25 percent
4. Space Standards – 15 percent

The UE ranking is used to determine which courthouses throughout the nation have the most urgent space needs, regardless of the size of the courthouse or type of housing solution. There are four weighted factors used to calculate a courthouse location's UE ranking:

1. FBA score – 40 percent
2. Judges without chambers – 30 percent

¹ When two or more projects have UE scores so similar as to make meaningful prioritization among those projects difficult, the Judicial Conference Committee on Space and Facilities has approved a list of additional factors that can be used to inform the prioritization process. These factors include: (1) whether a court is currently located in a leased building as opposed to a GSA-owned facility; (2) whether the United States Marshals Service (USMS) produces a high number of prisoners for court proceedings at that location; and (3) whether the location has received past congressional funding.

3. Judges without courtrooms based on courtroom sharing policies – 20 percent
4. Projected caseload growth – 10 percent

The annual UE Results List is published early each calendar year to reflect updates in a location's courtroom or chambers needs and caseload growth, and to update or add locations that have been evaluated under the AMP process since the issuance of the prior year's UE Results List. All 94 districts and 12 circuit headquarters throughout the country have been assessed under the AMP process.