

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 space 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, which is divided into two parts. Part I consists of the judiciary's highest courthouse construction funding priorities for the budget year. Part II identifies outyear courthouse construction priorities. As described in detail below, the most recent *CPP* includes the following project priorities for fiscal year (FY) 2026: San Juan, Puerto Rico; Hartford, Connecticut; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Bowling Green, Kentucky; and Anchorage, Alaska. The judiciary requests \$863.0 million in FY 2026 to fund these priority projects.¹

STATUS OF PRIOR YEAR FUNDED COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The table below provides the status of prior year funded *CPP* projects, excluding partially funded projects awaiting additional funding on the current *CPP*. Two additional projects not on the *CPP* were funded in FY 2016 – Rutland, Vermont and Greenville, Mississippi. The courthouse in Rutland, Vermont received \$6.4 million. It was acquired by GSA from the U.S. Postal Service in October 2018 and awaits funding for a follow-on renovation project. The Greenville, Mississippi, courthouse construction project received \$46.4 million; the estimated construction completion date is March 2025.

¹ The FY 2026 request assumes no allocated courthouse construction funding in FY 2025 from the GSA Federal Buildings Fund appropriation available for that purpose. If funds are allocated by GSA for one or more courthouse construction projects in FY 2025, the FY 2026 request will change.

Location	Project Description	Funding FY(s)	Project Status (as of January 2025)
Nashville, Tennessee	New Courthouse	2016	Construction Completed 2022
Toledo, Ohio	Courthouse Annex	2016	Construction Completed 2024
Charlotte, North Carolina	Courthouse Annex	2016	Construction Completed 2021
Des Moines Iowa	New Courthouse	2016	Construction Completed 2024
Greenville, South Carolina	New Courthouse	2016	Construction Completed 2021
Anniston, Alabama	New Courthouse	2016	Construction Completed 2022
Savannah, Georgia	Courthouse Annex	2016	Construction Completed 2021
San Antonio, Texas	New Courthouse	2016	Construction Completed 2021
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	New Courthouse	2016/2018	Construction Completed 2023
Huntsville, Alabama	New Courthouse	2018	Construction Completed 2024
Fort Lauderdale, Florida	New Courthouse	2018/2023	Estimated Completion November 2026

UPDATES TO THE *COURTHOUSE PROJECT PRIORITIES (CPP)* LIST FOR 2026 REQUEST

In September 2024, the Judicial Conference of the United States approved an updated *CPP* list for FY 2026. The FY 2026 *CPP* is the fifth 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.

Between FY 2021 and FY 2024, Congress provided partial funding for the top two priorities on the current *CPP*, including \$335.0 million for the Hartford, Connecticut courthouse and \$239.3 million for the Chattanooga, Tennessee courthouse. In addition, partial funding of \$50.8 million was provided for the judicial space emergency in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The judiciary requests a total of \$863.0 million in FY 2026 for new courthouse construction projects, as detailed further below. The approved *CPP* for FY 2026 (see page 14.7) 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 2026 *CPP* consists of Hartford, Connecticut; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Bowling Green, Kentucky; and Anchorage, Alaska. Anchorage was elevated from Part II to Part I of the *CPP* based on completion of its GSA Phase II feasibility study. On Part II of the FY 2026 *CPP*, projects in Dallas, Texas and Sherman/Plano, Texas were added and the projects in McAllen, Texas and Greensboro/Winston-Salem, North Carolina switched places due to changes in their Urgency Evaluation (UE) rankings compared to the FY 2025 *CPP*.

Judicial Space Emergency

San Juan, Puerto Rico – \$343.4 million is requested in FY 2026 for new annex construction

Prior funding: \$22.5 million in FY 2022 and \$3.0 million in FY 2024 for site and design; \$25.3 million in partial funding for construction was received in FY 2024; 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, constructing 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 \$343.4 million in additional funding is needed for construction of the annex. GSA's total estimated project cost is \$394.2 million. In FY 2022, the annex project received \$22.5 million for site and design. In FY 2024, \$3.0 million in additional site and design funding was received, as well as \$25.3 million for construction. GSA's project estimate reflects the inclusion of the Clerk's Office in the new annex. The Clerk's Office space requirement had originally been planned for the renovated Degetau Federal Building, but GSA and the judiciary determined that incorporating the Clerk's Office space into the annex is the most cost efficient and financially beneficial solution to the current staff housing situation.

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 U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). The project is currently in design.

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 U.S. District Court and the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office for the District of Puerto Rico began work from alternate locations as of September 2023.

Part 1: FY 2026 Courthouse Construction Funding Priorities

The four projects on Part I of the FY 2026 *CPP* (which reflects the addition of one project) and requested funding in FY 2026 are described in detail below.

1. Hartford, Connecticut – \$6.1 million for site and design and \$151.5 million for construction requested

Prior funding: \$135.5 million 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 first on the judiciary's *CPP* list for FY 2026. GSA estimates a total of \$492.6 million is required for site acquisition, design, and construction of the new courthouse. In FY 2021, \$135.5 million was appropriated for 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 2026 is \$157.6 million to address the remaining balance required for site and design and project construction. GSA's update to its FY 2025 project estimate of \$463.1 million reflects the need to revise the project schedule due to the delay of full funding. The project is currently in site selection phase.

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 (four district judges, three 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 – \$3.4 million for site and design and \$77.1 million for construction requested

Prior funding: \$94.5 million in FY 2021 for site, design, and partial construction, \$85.5 million in FY 2022 for partial construction, \$38.4 million in FY 2023 for partial construction, and \$20.9 million in FY 2024 for partial construction.

Chattanooga, Tennessee is second on the judiciary's *CPP* list for FY 2026. GSA currently estimates that a total of \$319.8 million is needed for site acquisition, design, and construction of the courthouse. GSA's update to its FY 2025 project estimate of \$300.0 million reflects the need to revise the project schedule due to the delay of full funding. In FY 2021, \$94.5 million was appropriated for the project for site and design and partial construction. Additional partial construction funding of \$85.5 million was appropriated in FY 2022, \$38.4 million in FY 2023, and \$20.9 million in FY 2024. The amount requested in FY 2026 is \$80.5 million to address the remaining balance required for site and design and 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 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 – \$26.0 million for site and design and \$193.5 million for construction requested

Bowling Green, Kentucky is third on the judiciary's *CPP* list for FY 2026. GSA estimates a total of \$219.4 million is required for site, design, and construction of the new courthouse. GSA's update to its FY 2025 project estimate of \$209.0 million reflects the need to revise the project schedule due to the delay of full funding. The existing courthouse was constructed in 1933 and houses the district court, among other court-related tenants. The building houses one district judge and one magistrate judge, but only contains one magistrate judge courtroom, one undersized magistrate judge hearing room, and one undersized bankruptcy judge courtroom. Further, the courthouse 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 elevator and corridors. The building lacks a prisoner sally port, 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.

4. Anchorage, Alaska – \$62.1 million for site and design requested

Anchorage, Alaska is fourth on the judiciary's *CPP* list for FY 2026. GSA estimates \$62.1 million is required for site and design. At this time, the judiciary is only requesting funding for site and design. This approach is in recognition of the number of projects above Anchorage still awaiting full funding and would allow the judiciary and GSA to further review and refine the construction cost estimate. Court operations are currently housed in two separate facilities – the James M. Fitzgerald U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building (Fitzgerald Courthouse) and the Anchorage Federal Building. The city serves as the district headquarters and houses 12 resident judges (one circuit, three district, four senior district, two magistrate, and two bankruptcy), but only has three district judge courtrooms, one magistrate judge courtroom, two undersized hearing rooms, and one bankruptcy judge courtroom. Further, the Fitzgerald Courthouse lacks adequate security, does not provide for future expansion needs due to column spacing and floor heights, and does not meet current *USCDG* standards. Because of inadequacies in the existing building's configuration and size, there is a lack of secure circulation for judges and prisoners and the restricted circulation for court personnel is severely limited.

FEDERAL JUDICIARY COURTHOUSE PROJECT PRIORITIES (CPP) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026
AS APPROVED BY THE JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES
September 2024

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 2026. In addition, in September 2020, the Judicial Conference declared a judicial space emergency for the Nazario U.S. Courthouse and Degetau Federal Building in San Juan, Puerto Rico, due to unique circumstances resulting from the Government Services Administration's (GSA) planned seismic retrofit of the Degetau Federal Building. Part I 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 2026 Funding Request		Previously Funded		Est. Total (Site/Design, Construction)	Site Acquired	Status (as of 3/2024)
			Site/Design	Construction	Site/Design	Construction			
District of Puerto Rico	San Juan	Courthouse Annex	0	343.385	25.496	25.270	394.151	Yes	GSA Feas. Study Completed
NOTES: (1) Site for Courthouse Annex is federally owned. (2) Funding for the repair and alteration (R&A) of the Degetau Federal Building is not included in the funding summary above. GSA will request follow-on R&A design and construction funding for the Degetau Federal Building in a future budget year. (3) Cost estimate provided by GSA; figures reflect escalation due to time, labor, market conditions (\$17.281 million) and increased square footage to include the District Clerk in the new annex (\$38.842 million).									

Part I: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Courthouse Construction Funding Priorities										
				FUNDING SUMMARY (\$M)						
Priority	District	City	Project Description	FY 2026 Funding Request		Previously Funded		Est. Total (Site/Design, Construction)	Site Acquired	Status (as of 11/2024)
				Site/Design	Construction	Site/Design	Construction			
1	District of Connecticut	Hartford	New Courthouse	6.096	151.491	69.340	265.660	492.587	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
2	Eastern District of Tennessee	Chattanooga	New Courthouse	3.408	77.058	42.085	197.217	319.768	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
3	Western District of Kentucky	Bowling Green	New Courthouse	25.969	193.454	0.000	0.000	219.423	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
4	District of Alaska	Anchorage	New Courthouse	62.115	TBD	0.000	0.000	TBD	No	GSA Ph II Feas. Study Completed
			TOTAL:	97.588	422.003	111.425	462.877	1,031.778		

NOTES: (1) All projects have been assessed using the AMP process. (2) All cost estimates provided by GSA; figures reflect escalation due to time, labor, and market conditions. (3) Judiciary policies pertaining to courtroom sharing and the exclusion of projected judgeships have been applied to all projects. (4) Construction cost estimates for Anchorage, Alaska, are not included at this time.

Part II of the *CPP* identifies outyear courthouse construction priorities. All project locations on Part II 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 be elevated 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 UE ratings, 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 elevated 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 2024 Urgency Evaluation Rating)

District	City	2024 UE Rating	Site Acquired	Status (as of 11/2024)
Middle District of Georgia	Macon	56.680	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Northern District of Texas	Dallas	56.588	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Eastern District of Texas	Sherman/Plano	50.751	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Southern District of Texas	McAllen	48.291	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed; GSA Ph II Feasibility Study Commenced
Middle District of North Carolina	Greensboro/W-S	44.648	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Western District of New York	Rochester	40.458	No	GSA Ph I Feasibility Study Completed
Eastern District of Virginia	Norfolk	26.540	Yes	GSA Feasibility Study Completed in 2010; needs refresh

NOTES: (1) All projects have been assessed using the AMP process. (2) Judiciary policies pertaining to courtroom sharing and the exclusion of projected judgeships have been applied to all projects.