



15th Judicial District Court & Police Facility Overview

Introduction:

After years of debate and exploration regarding the housing of the 15th Judicial District Court and Ann Arbor Police Services, in 2004 City Council was compelled to take action in dealing with this long-standing issue. In February 2006, the County informed the City that its 15th Judicial District Court's lease at the County Courthouse would not be extended beyond December 31, 2009.

City Council and staff reviewed dozens of possible Court and Police locations in and around the downtown, analyzed a multitude of proposed solutions, formed an independent task force to make a recommendation, listened to and sought out a variety of public input and spent countless hours investigating affordable building alternatives to address the space needs of the court while also creating much needed space for the Ann Arbor Police Services.

Years of public process and input resulted in the recommendation to build the proposed 15th Judicial District Court and Police Facility on the east side of the current City Hall located at 100 N. Fifth Ave.

The timeline below aims to explain the many years of consideration, exploration and action that have taken place to resolve this long-standing issue. The frequently asked questions answer a variety of inquiries that have arisen about this project.

Planning Timeline:

- ❑ On June 21, 2004, Council approved a professional services agreement with Plante & Moran CRESA, LLC for an operational review and space needs analysis of the 15th Judicial District Court.
- ❑ October 11, 2004, Plante & Moran CRESA, LLC issued a space analysis summary for the 15th District Court and Police Services stating that existing facilities are at or beyond capacity.
- ❑ On December 12, 2004, Council appointed an ad hoc committee to review Plante & Moran space needs analysis.
- ❑ In August 2005, the City issued a request for proposals for architectural services for a Court/Police facility.
- ❑ [December 5, 2005](#), City Council passed a resolution requesting that the County extend the 15th Judicial District Court County Courthouse lease, which was set to expire on December 31, 2008.

- ❑ [On February 1, 2006](#), the County granted an extension of the 15th Judicial District Court lease until December 31, 2009. Michigan State Law mandates the City of Ann Arbor to fund and house the 15th Judicial District Court.
- ❑ On February 21, 2006, the City Council formed a Community Security and Public Space Task Force made up of representatives from the Planning Commission, DDA, City Council, 15th District Court, the Ann Arbor District Library, city administration, and two at-large members.
- ❑ [On November 27, 2006](#), City Council held a public hearing regarding the Community Security and Public Space Task Force's recommendations.
- ❑ [On January 8, 2007](#), City Council approved a resolution directing City Administrator Roger Fraser to proceed with planning and design of a new building on the Larcom lot, the current site of City Hall, to house the 15th District Court and Ann Arbor Police Services.
- ❑ [On May 21, 2007](#), City Council approved a resolution for a professional services agreement with Quinn Evans/Architects for the planning and design of the 15th District Court-Ann Arbor Police Department Facility.
- ❑ In June 2007, the project was officially kicked off with a new advisory committee including representatives from City staff, including Police Services; City Council; DDA; Quinn Evans/Architects; and the 15th District Court.
- ❑ [On Oct. 22, 2007](#), Council approved the second phase of the contract with Quinn Evans/Architects to develop a final design and detailed plans for the Court-Police Facility project.
- ❑ The design development phase will be completed in spring 2008 after a series of public meetings to introduce the project and master plan and to gather feedback on the project's vision and phases of the building design. Public input meetings were held on [July 24, 2007](#), [September 25, 2007](#) and [April 30, 2008](#).
- ❑ The construction-bid process will be completed in the fall of 2008.
- ❑ Construction should begin in winter 2009 and continue for approximately 24 months.

Questions and Answers:

1. Why can't the 15th Judicial District Court stay in its current location?

Michigan State Law mandates the City of Ann Arbor to house the 15th District Court. The current 15th District Court lease with Washtenaw County expires on December 31, 2008. On December 5, 2005, City Council unanimously passed a resolution asking Washtenaw County to extend the City's lease for district court space at the County Courthouse. County Commissioners passed a resolution granting an extension of the 15th District Court lease to December 31, 2009.

In a letter to the City dated April 17, 2008, County Administrator Bob Guenzel indicated that the County needs the existing 15th Judicial District Court space to consolidate its own court operations and close outlying facilities in an effort to streamline court costs.

In addition to the County requiring the 15th Judicial District Court to relocate, the current court space is inadequate for the operation, safety and security of the court. The space does not separate the public from potentially violent offenders, it does not provide adequate security for prisoner transport nor does it allow for sufficient holding space during court proceedings. The proposed Court/Police facility also offers solutions for the current Police facility, which is described below.

2. If the County won't extend the lease, then why can't the 15th Judicial District Court be moved to the current City Hall building?

There are many reasons why the current Larcom City Hall building cannot accommodate the needs of the Municipal Courts:

- Constructed in the early 1960's, the Larcom building has been used primarily as the City Hall, Police Station and the 15th District Court. During the mid-1990's, the 15th District Court relocated to the Washtenaw County Courthouse due to space constraints and an experiment by the state to consolidate court operations. This experiment proved unsuccessful and the courts have operated separately and independently within the same facility for a number of years.
- The Court has specific space requirements to ensure proper safety procedures and practices are followed in order to protect the public and Court staff. The Courts also have increased space needs due to increased caseloads and traffic and video facility needs.
- All three judges and the magistrate could be hearing cases daily and/or conducting jury trials and therefore four separate courtrooms are needed. In addition, felony preliminary hearings are heard.

3. If the City is at the lowest staffing level in 20 years and the 15th Judicial District Court used to be located there, then why does the City need a new Court/Police Facility?

Despite City staffing at a 20-year low, the current Larcom City Hall building cannot accommodate the space needs of current City staff currently housed in the building plus the 15th District Court and its high volume of visitors.

When the 15th District Court was housed at the Larcom building it only had three judges, no magistrate and two courtrooms, plus Council Chambers as a third courtroom if needed. In addition, the Municipal Court's safety standards and space requirements are much different today than they were in 1963. A new facility can effectively address the Court's security issues through thoughtful design and planning.

4. What is the 15th Judicial District Court responsible for?

The court is presided over by three elected judges, and one appointed magistrate. The Court Administrator oversees daily court operations. The court is comprised of five divisions: Administration, Civil, Collections, Traffic/Criminal, and Probation. Administration is responsible for the administrative management of all non-judicial functions of the Court. The Civil Division maintains the court files for general civil, landlord-tenant, and small claims cases. The Collections Division is responsible for contacting and facilitating payment for those with delinquent amounts due. The Traffic/Criminal Division maintains the records for all traffic and criminal misdemeanors, civil infractions, ordinance violations, and University of Michigan Regents violations. The Probation Department is responsible for pre-sentence investigations, alcohol assessments, supervision, counseling, and referrals to outside assessment and treatment programs for those who are placed on probation.

The 15th Judicial District Court has jurisdiction over cases, which include but are not limited to:

- Civil Cases where the disputed amount is \$25,000 or less
- Small Claims cases where the disputed amount is \$3,000 or less
- Landlord/Tenant disputes
- Criminal and Traffic Misdemeanors punishable by less than one year in jail

- Arrest or Search Warrant Issuance
- Ann Arbor City Ordinance Violations
- Traffic and State Civil Infractions
- University of Michigan Regents Violations
- Felony preliminary hearings

5. Why does the City need new space for Police Services?

Located in the Larcom City Hall building since 1963, Police Services has outgrown current space availability and cannot continue to efficiently conduct police business and meet public safety needs. The need for new space has been discussed for many years. Tours may be arranged if citizens would like to better understand the extent of the facility's inadequacy, including:

- Police Services is located in an area of the Larcom City Hall building that is badly deteriorating and requires significant infrastructure updates. Oftentimes after it rains, the ceiling leaks. There are air quality issues and black mold in many areas of the Police facility. The current Police Services location in the Larcom building was originally designed for storage space.
- The current Police facility has maximized space availability and needs more room to provide personnel with sufficient interview, meeting and holding cell space. For example, there are only two holding cells and male and female detainees must be separated. This leaves no proper holding space for juvenile offenders, which is legally required.
- There is no dedicated meeting space for crime scene analysis by Detectives.
- There is no separate entrance and/or waiting room for victims. This means that victims oftentimes have to wait in the same area as offenders.
- Child victims do not have a child-friendly, dedicated space to be interviewed and helped.
- In 1963, there were no female Police Officers. The current space does not adequately allow room for an integrated police force. Female locker rooms were added when space was severely limited. They are cramped, inadequate and have only temporary walls.
- Extensive updates to the Police Facility in the Larcom City Hall building would not be cost effective. Most importantly, there is no space in the building to accommodate current needs. The most cost-effective solution is to build new space for police.

6. Why is a new Court/Police facility needed now?

The 15th Judicial District Court will have to be relocated as its lease expires with Washtenaw County on December 31, 2009. The County has informed City Council that this lease will not be extended. In a letter to the City dated April 17, 2008, County Administrator Bob Guenzel indicated that the County needs the existing 15th Judicial District Court space to consolidate its own court operations and close outlying facilities in an effort to streamline court costs. Michigan State Law mandates the City of Ann Arbor fund the 15th Judicial District Court.

As the above question outlines, Police Services have been located in the Larcom City Hall building since 1963. Police Services have outgrown current space availability and cannot continue to efficiently conduct police business and meet public safety needs. As there are many interactions that take place between Police Services and the 15th District Court, a joint facility could improve operation efficiencies. Also, by consolidating all City downtown staff into one location customer service to our citizens would be enhanced.

7. Why can't the City just rent more space for the Courts and Police?

The City needs permanent space for the 15th District Court. In the long run, renting is more expensive than owning space. In addition, building a facility at this time allows the City to take advantage of low interest rates and construction costs. Renting additional space also is complicated because there are many unique operating requirements of the 15th Judicial District Court and Police Services that a typical office building cannot easily accommodate, such as holding cells, interview rooms, secure court corridors that are sealed off from public access and 16-foot ceiling heights for courtrooms.

8. How much will this facility cost and how does the city plan to pay for it?

The Court/Police facility will cost \$47.4 million to construct.

Courthouse/Police Facility Funding Plan:

Municipal Center Fund: \$8,400,000

Risk Fund \$4,000,000

General Fund* \$4,800,000

Court Facility Fund \$1,100,000

Issuance of Debt** \$27,800,000

Earnings on Construction Funds \$1,300,000

* Previously, this amount was \$1.8 million and proceeds from land sale were listed separately in the amount of \$3 million.

**The final amount of debt issuance is dependent upon market interest rates on the day of the sale.

9. How much debt will be issued to help build the new facility?

On April 7, City Council gave public notice of the Council's intent to issue up to \$31 million in bonds. This debt amount anticipates an annual contribution from the DDA of \$520,000 (8.2 million total) and a contingency if the borrowing rates turn out lower than anticipated. The expected issuance of bonds supported by the General Funds, as presented to Council, is actually \$19.6 million (\$27.8 million less \$8.2 million).

10. If bonds are issued, how will the City repay this debt?

Debt payments will be a flat \$1.86 million per year for 30 years. While \$700,000 in lease payments will be avoided and applied to this debt, even more savings are realized in the future, as these lease payments would have increased.

Annual Debt Service Schedule

Discontinued leases

City Center Building	\$280,926
15 th District Court	\$400,000
Probation Office	\$54,570
Total discontinued leases =	\$735,496

DDA Commitment	\$520,000
Revenues from Antennae	\$374,180
(includes \$95,000 from DDA)	
15 th District Court ticket fees	\$225,000

Cash flow available for Debt Service = \$1,854,676

For more information, visit www.a2gov.org/court-police-facility

11. Why did Council not ask for a vote on issuing bonds to pay for this facility?

State law requires a vote of the citizens before taxes can be increased. It is not typical of Council to seek a public vote for a project, which the City can afford within its existing tax levies. Elected officials are elected to manage existing resources. Voter approval is only required if additional taxes need to be levied, which is not the situation in the case of the new Court/Police Facility.

12. Will the City raise taxes?

The direct and simple answer is **NO**. Some are alleging that the City is incapable of managing its finances in a way that would allow the construction of and payment for this new building while also maintaining the same level of City services. During the past six years, the City has reduced staffing by 20 percent while improving many City services. Fiscal prudence and responsibility has enabled the City to manage its financial resources so as to increase savings and bond ratings while also minimizing our costs to provide essential City services. That same approach will continue into the future.

13. Will other services have to be cut to pay for a Court/Police Facility?

The City does not anticipate any service reductions to pay for a Court/Police Facility. The building would be funded through the use of existing savings, debt issuance, participation by the Downtown Development Authority, and the elimination of rent being paid at other facilities in town to house a variety of service units such as the Customer Service Center, Public Services Administration, Human Resources, and the 15th District Court. As a result of this project, these units will all be housed at the Ann Arbor Municipal Center at Fifth and Huron.

While the financing plan for this project is self-contained and independent of the general fund-operating budget, Ann Arbor continues to face a state municipal revenue system, which is structurally broken. As in the past few years, the City will look at what revenue it will receive and prepare a budget with expenditures that fit within this revenue. To date the City has made many cost reductions without materially reducing services. Until the weak economic environment improves and the structural municipal revenue system is fixed, the City is likely to continue facing a challenging operating environment. The City has demonstrated its ability to manage within these fiscal constraints and will continue to do so in the future.

14. How long will it take to build the new Court/Police Facility?

The design development phase will be completed in spring 2008 after a series of public meetings to introduce the project, master plan and gather feedback on the project's vision and phases of the building design are completed. Public input meetings were held on July 24, 2007, September 25, 2007 and April 30, 2008. The construction-bid process will be completed in the fall of 2008. Construction should begin in winter 2009 and continue for approximately 24 months.

15. How will the city mitigate noise during the 24 months of construction for those living in surrounding neighborhoods?

The City will plan a construction schedule that will comply with the City's noise ordinance.

16. Why do all City departments have to be housed in one location? Washtenaw County has buildings on Platt Road, Hogback, Zeeb, N. Fourth, E. Huron, among others. Why don't separate locations work for the City?

It is difficult to make this comparison due to the fact that the County serves a much larger geographical area than the City, provides a different array of services, and therefore has a greater need for multiple locations. From the City's perspective, having multiple locations for doing business does not serve the best interest of the customer. For example, let's say a resident's car is impounded. Logically, this individual may think to visit the Larcom City Hall building where Police Services is located to pay the impound fee and retrieve the car. The individual visits City Hall and learns that he needs to go to the Customer Service Center located at the City Center Building. In addition, let's say the impound fines are too great for him to pay all at once and he needs to begin a payment plan. This individual then needs to go back to City Hall and visit the City Attorney Office. Another example would be someone who wanted to rent a Picnic Shelter for a birthday party. Parks and Recreation Services are located at City Hall. This person drives to City Hall and goes to the sixth floor to speak to someone in Parks and Recreation. This person learns that he needs to drive to the Veterans Memorial Park to rent a Picnic Shelter. In order to better serve customers, City services should be housed together instead of being scattered throughout the City at various leased office spaces.

17. How will the average citizen benefit from a new Court/Police Facility located next to City Hall?

The ideal City Hall would be a one-stop shop that would have all services located in a central location to better serve customer needs. Having multiple locations for doing business generates confusion, delays and inconvenience for our citizens. In addition, the current City Hall does not have adequate or sufficient space for public meetings. Ideally, City Hall should be a Civic Center that has adequate space for public meetings and discussion.

18. Were other options considered besides a new Court/Police Facility next to City Hall?

The inadequacies of the Larcom Building have been the subject of recurring studies. As early as the mid-1980's, architects were hired to consider improvements to the building. In 2000, the City Council authorized proceeding on a design by Hobbs and Black that would have added space to the west side of the Larcom Building. However, that project was not pursued. More recently, City Council has been considering affordable building alternatives to address the space needs of the court while also creating much-needed space for Ann Arbor Police Services. An appointed task force made the recommendation to Council in October 2006 to construct a new Court and Police Facility on either the "Library Lot" on Fifth Avenue or at the Larcom site. Following a public hearing in November 2006 where many residents and business owners voiced opinions, Council directed staff to proceed with a design for the Larcom site.

In January 2007, City Council approved a resolution authorizing the next phase of the Quinn/Evans architectural services contract and directing City Administrator Roger Fraser to proceed with planning and design of a new building on the Larcom lot, the current site of City Hall, to house the 15th District Court and Ann Arbor Police Services. Direction was given to:

- ❑ Give preference to locating the courts and police facility on the east side of the Larcom building.
- ❑ Utilize the Downtown Development Authority as an essential partner in maximizing available parking.
- ❑ Adequately provide for public involvement in the process.

19. Did Council appoint a task force to review locations and facility options?

On February 21, 2006, City Council established the Community Security and Public Space Task Force to consider the City's current office, police, and court space, as well as, security and public space needs. A recommendation was made to Council on November 27, 2006.

The Task Force was comprised of the following members: Roger Fraser (Chair) City Administrator; Margie Teall City Council Member; Rob Aldrich Downtown Development Authority Member; Roger Hewitt Downtown Development Authority Member; Sandi Smith Downtown Development Authority Member; Evan Pratt Member of Executive Committee of the City Planning Commission; Josie Parker Director of the Ann Arbor District Library; Hon. Julie Creal Goodridge 15th District Court; Carl Luckenbach Member At-large; Joe O'Neal Member At-large.

The Task Force held its first meeting on March 16, 2006, and met approximately every two weeks through August. Ad hoc committees met frequently between meetings, reflecting the hard work and commitment of the membership.

The complete [Community Security and Public Space Task Force Report](#) is available on the city's website.

20. What will happen to the current City Hall Larcom building?

The Larcom building will still be used as the main City Hall building. Phase 1A involves refurbishing the basement and first floor of the current Larcom building and phase 1B entails the Court/Police facility building. The basement will then accommodate new police locker rooms and meeting areas. The first floor will house the Customer Service Center, Information Technology Unit, Planning and Development Services Unit, Community Services Administration and a revised lobby area.

21. What is the building concept for the new Police and Courts Facility?

The proposed Court and Police facility will be a new five-story, 103,000-square-foot building on the east side of the current Larcom City Hall building, plus approximately 19 spaces for secure parking at grade. Above the parking are two floors for Police and two floors for the 15th District Court. The major public entry will be from the entry plaza off Huron Avenue and from the north entry court off Ann Street.

Official vehicular traffic also enters the building from Ann Street. The building is being designed to be consistent with benchmark green building practices and proposed design guidelines developed by the A2D2 task force.

The Larcom Building Phase Renovation includes the basement and first floors, addition of two new traction elevators, some foundation work to accept future stair additions, the public meeting room alternate and minor renovations to the sixth floor. The basement will house police lockers and storage, mechanical equipment and a small conference center, while the first floor is dedicated to public areas including expanded main lobby, restroom, customer service center and public services administration. Secure parking will remain at the existing police garage. The sixth floor will accommodate staff relocating back to the City Hall from leased space. The public meeting room would be included in phase one if, either the constructions bids are favorable, or sufficient other funding is identified to cover the costs.

22. Will the new Court and Police Facility be a “Green” building?

The City will seek Gold Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) certification by the Green Building Council. The building is being designed to be consistent with benchmark green building practices and proposed design guidelines developed by the A2D2 task force. The architectural design team has evaluated and made recommendations on sustainable design strategies such as a "green" or vegetated roof/plaza design; energy efficient building envelope design; day lighting/building shading design; natural ventilation design; selection and specification of materials with recycled content; design and specification of energy saving building systems controls; environmental site planning and landscape design; and innovative storm water design to minimize runoff and meet requirements.