

08

New Building Concepts

Introduction

The design of the new criminal courts building must address the central purpose of the court system to do justice in American society. This new courthouse must symbolize that mission and contribute to its realization, goals, and challenges. The judiciary hopes to strike a balance, maintaining a cohesive and common purpose that focuses upon the compelling ideals of an orderly society: equal justice under law and the peaceful resolution of disputes. Giving symbolic expression to this mission through architectural design is essential to the public and civic nature of any courthouse, and particularly one in the context of the Baltimore judicial center. The new building in Baltimore should reflect the characteristics expected from the court system, including creating the basis of perceptions of stability and gravitas, reserve and reason. It follows that a public building of this importance should be dignified, its scale should be appropriate to its setting and context, and it should be readable to the public as a civic monument.. The proposed design, building massing, and selection of exterior materials are all aspects of a building that position it as a significant place within a local and wider community.

Image

The City of Baltimore thus should have a central role in the concept for the new courthouse. Baltimore is a historically significant, diverse, and vibrant city, and the new building should reflect the tenor of its surroundings. The new design has the potential to lead Baltimore into the next 100 years, as did the Mitchell Courthouse at the turn of the 20th century. This new criminal courts building, together with the renovated Mitchell and Courthouse Easts should inspire citizens as an embodiment of the goal of the justice system to dispense justice with fairness and humanity. One of the hallmarks of the American legal system is the free and open access provided to the public to participate and observe court proceedings. Contemporary security requirements have impacted, but not reduced, this public access. The new criminal courts building should facilitate that ideal and provide a transparent environment, both in material qualities and in atmosphere. The design's use of glass effectively symbolizes this goal of transparency and open access for many types of users of the court. From the interior, the glass curtain walls along public corridors and court waiting areas provides unfettered views of the plaza, landscape design, and also the context of greater Baltimore City. For those users of the building dealing with difficult and stressful matters, access to natural light and such vistas may bring a welcome relief from the tasks at hand.

Public spaces should be easily accessible and should provide clear way-finding through the building to allow users to feel respected and valued. Courtrooms must be a place of solemnity and deliberation, a sanctuary where the spoken word of written law has powerful impact. Just as the idealized scales of justice balance, the interior architecture should reflect a sense of symmetry, balance, and proportion. Courtroom design should clearly express these principles.

Urban Conditions

The proposed sites yield special and distinct opportunities for the new courts building for Baltimore City. The two options for land acquisition, North Site and South Site, are each situated on city blocks adjacent to Courthouse East. The close proximity of each site will allow the City to achieve its hope to create a judicial complex, integrating the Mitchell, Courthouse Easts with a new entity: the new courthouse for the criminal courts. A new courthouse on either site will expand upon the government core and add viable support to the downtown area. Both sites are easily accessible from Interstate 83, Metro Subway, and many bus routes. Private vehicles can be accommodated by a several neighboring public parking facilities.

The North Site is bounded by Lexington, Saratoga and Davis Streets and Guilford Avenue. The site is approximately 370 ft. by 180 ft. in size, which roughly corresponds to 67,000 SF. The South Site is bounded by Baltimore, Fayette and Calvert Streets and Guilford Avenue. Its dimensions roughly measure 40,000 SF.

On the North Site, it is envisioned that the new building will create momentum in revitalizing downtown Baltimore. Interstate 83 and Guilford Avenue are essential arteries that provide access to and from the north. The Guilford Avenue approach will be redeveloped into a “green thoroughfare” to enhance connectivity as well as mark a visitor’s arrival into downtown. The proposed new building will be designed to be a significant destination along the greenway and it will be visually prominent from the highway.

On the South Site, the new building is envisioned to strengthen continuity between the already visual link of early 20th century classicism between the Mitchell and Courthouse Easts. Calvert Street is a vital thoroughfare that currently bisects the two existing courthouses and holds the Battle Monument (Maximilian Godefroy, architect; 1815-1825) and provides access to and from the south into the city’s government core. Entry into the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings also occurs off Calvert Street. The proposed building will be designed to be a significant place for this important location.

AECOM generated many site concepts but only three were prepared for this report, as outlined further in Chapter 6, Option A for the South Site and Options B and C for the North Site. Options A and B offered proposals for 4-courtroom per floor were for each site. Option C presented a proposal for 8-courtrooms per floor for the just North Site because of its larger size. (The South Site was too small to accommodate such a scheme.) Further, on the North Site, while AECOM studied a 6-courtroom per floor layout, the Executive Committee agreed that the proposals for 4- and 8-courtrooms per floor would give a minimum and maximum analysis of how the site could accommodate the current needs of the Circuit Courts. These configurations also could provide the low and high range of project costs for the North Site.

Option A
South Site: 4-Court Scheme**Site Organization**

Option A for the South Site proposed 4 courtrooms per floor (Figures 8-1 and 8-2). Its design included an 18-story building with mechanical penthouse and four additional levels below grade, which would include areas for criminal holding, parking and building support. The site is situated at the northern edge of the business district of Baltimore. AECOM proposed that the building's lobby entrance be located at the intersection of East Baltimore and South Calvert Streets. The design provides axial orientation of the street promenade relating to the core of the building lobby and atrium. This public gallery is centralized and serves as a focal point for the building's programmatic elements around it. The limited footprint of the site results in a tall, symmetrical massing. At street level, the plaza extends out toward the Battle Monument, and thus directly acknowledges one of the city's oldest memorials. Service and parking access to the building can be located along Guilford Avenue.

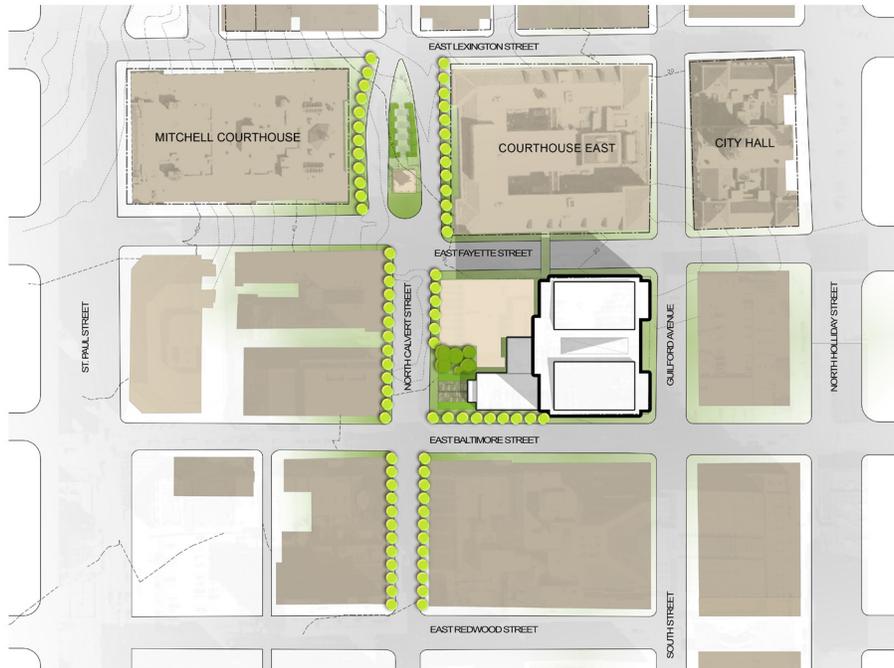


Figure 8-1
Option A: South Site - Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor

Views/Orientation

The floors of Option A: South Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor are organized around a central atrium. The public corridor allows internal views within this space and external views to the east. Upper levels, including the courtroom floors and judicial chambers, will have extensive views of the city.

Program Organization

For general consistency, AECOM consolidated most program requirements into blocks of space to formulate occupancy scenarios. The scenarios illustrate usable square footage for an entire department or group of functions.

The building program is organized as follows:

- Basement Levels—Baltimore City Sheriff’s Office, Criminal Holding, Loading and Building Support
- Lobby Level—Entry Lobby, Security Screening, Retail and Building Support
- 2nd Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 3rd Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 4th Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 5th Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court (including high-volume court)
- 6th Floor—Other Agencies
- 7th Floor—Office of the State’s Attorney
- 8th Floor—Office of the State’s Attorney
- 9th Floor—Office of the State’s Attorney
- 10th Floor—Office of the State’s Attorney
- 11th Floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courts/floor)
- 12th Floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courts per floor)
- 13th Floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 14th floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 15th floor—Judicial Chamber Suites
- 16th Floor—Judicial Chamber Suites
- 17th Floor—Judicial Chamber Suites
- 18th Floor—Judicial Chamber Suites
- Penthouse Level—Maintenance and Mechanical Room

Circulation

Option A: Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor is designed with one central circulation system for the public and two separate corridors for judicial staff. The new entrance lobby and corridors in the atrium space are designed to be publically accessible. Circulation routes for the judiciary and their staffs occur on the north and south sides of the proposed building and are parallel to the public circulation, enabling access to the courtrooms, offices and chambers directly from private vertical circulation routes and corridors within their departments. An enclosed pedestrian bridge will connect the New Courts Tower to Courthouse East on the third and fourth levels due to the topographical elevations changes. This design would place the main public circulation routes on a floor in Courthouse East that is not consistent with the current primary public circulation for this building, which is on the 1st and 2nd floors. Multiple enclosed pedestrian bridges would be necessary to separate the staff and public for security purposes.



Figure 8-2
Option A: South Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor: typical courtroom floor plan.

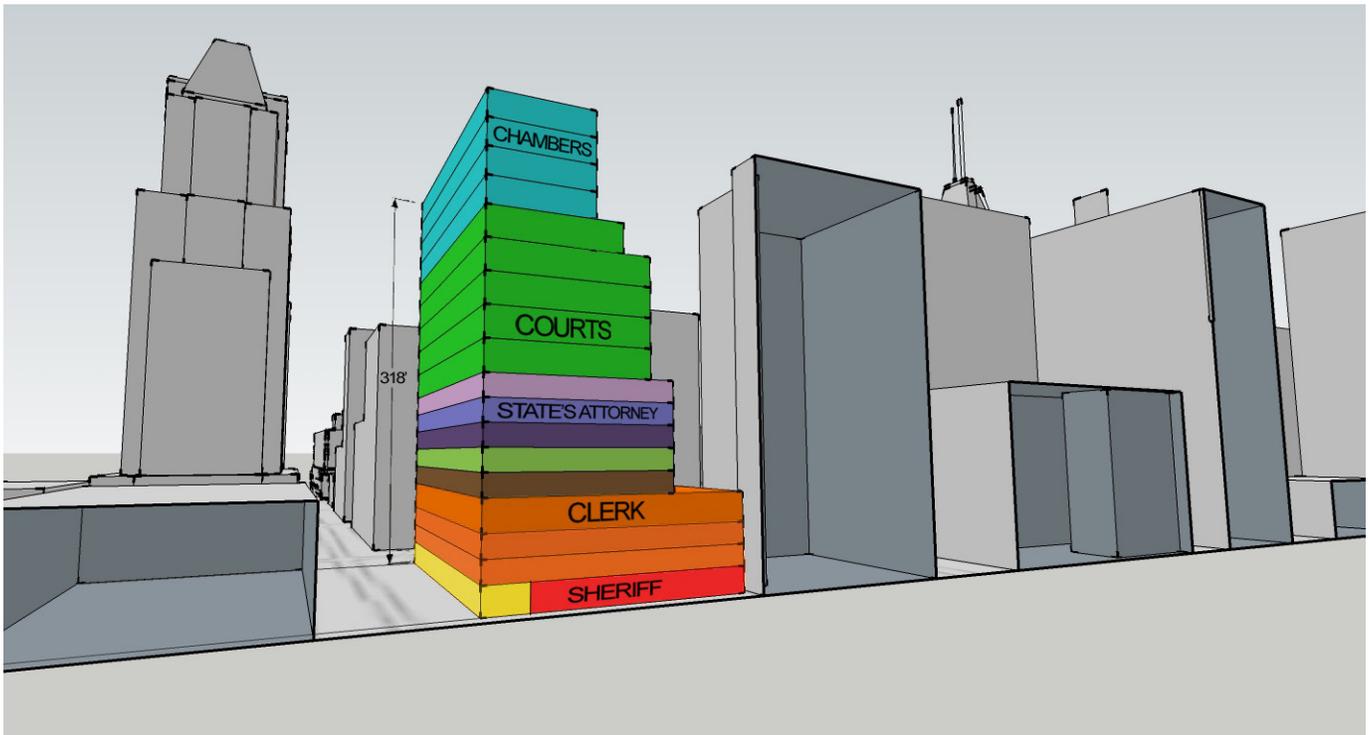


Figure 8-3
Stacking Diagram for Option A



Figure 8-4
Aerial View for Option A

Option B North Site: 4-Court Scheme

Site Organization

Option B: North Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor (Figures 8-5 and 8-6) is a design for a 13-story building with mechanical penthouse and four additional levels below grade, including areas for criminal holding, parking and building support. The entrance lobby is located mid-block along Guilford Avenue. The symmetrical layout focuses upon a centralized entry with communal plaza and green space. The plaza and greenscape will be an integral node to the “green thoroughfare.” Service and parking access to the building can be located along Davis Street.



Figure 8-5
Option B: North Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor

Views/Orientation

Option B: North Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor offers a scheme that is organized around a central atrium space that is the prominent feature that anchors the public circulation corridor. The atrium allows views into a new civic plaza and community green space below, with views north and south along Guilford Avenue and directly east.

Program Organization

For general consistency, AECOM consolidated most program requirements into blocks of space to formulate occupancy scenarios. The scenarios illustrate usable square footage for an entire department or group of functions.

The building program is organized as follows:

- Basement Levels – Baltimore City Sheriff’s Office, Criminal Holding, Loading and Building Support
- Lobby Level – Entry Lobby, Security Screening, Retail and Building Support, Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 2nd Floor–Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 3rd Floor–Clerk of the Circuit Court (including high-volume court) and other agencies
- 4th Floor–Office of the State’s Attorney
- 5th Floor–Office of the State’s Attorney
- 6th Floor–Office of the State’s Attorney
- 7th Floor–Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 8th Floor–Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 9th Floor–Standard Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 10th Floor–Standard Criminal Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Criminal Courtroom (4 courtrooms per floor)
- 11th Floor–Judicial Chamber Suites
- 12th Floor–Judicial Chamber Suites
- 13th Floor–Judicial Chamber Suites
- Penthouse Level–Maintenance and Mechanical Room

Circulation

Option B: North Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor presents a design with two separate circulation systems for the public and the judicial staff. The new entrance lobby and corridors overlooking the green space are designed to be publically accessible. Judges and judicial staff are offered the option to access courtrooms, offices and chambers directly from private vertical circulation routes and horizontal corridors within their respective departments. A double-story pedestrian bridge connects the new criminal courts building to Courthouse East on the 2nd and 3rd floors. This connection is more favorable than that of Option A because it provides the opportunity to place the public on a primary public corridor system on the 2nd floor of Courthouse East. Multiple enclosed pedestrian bridges would be needed to separate staff and the public for security purposes.

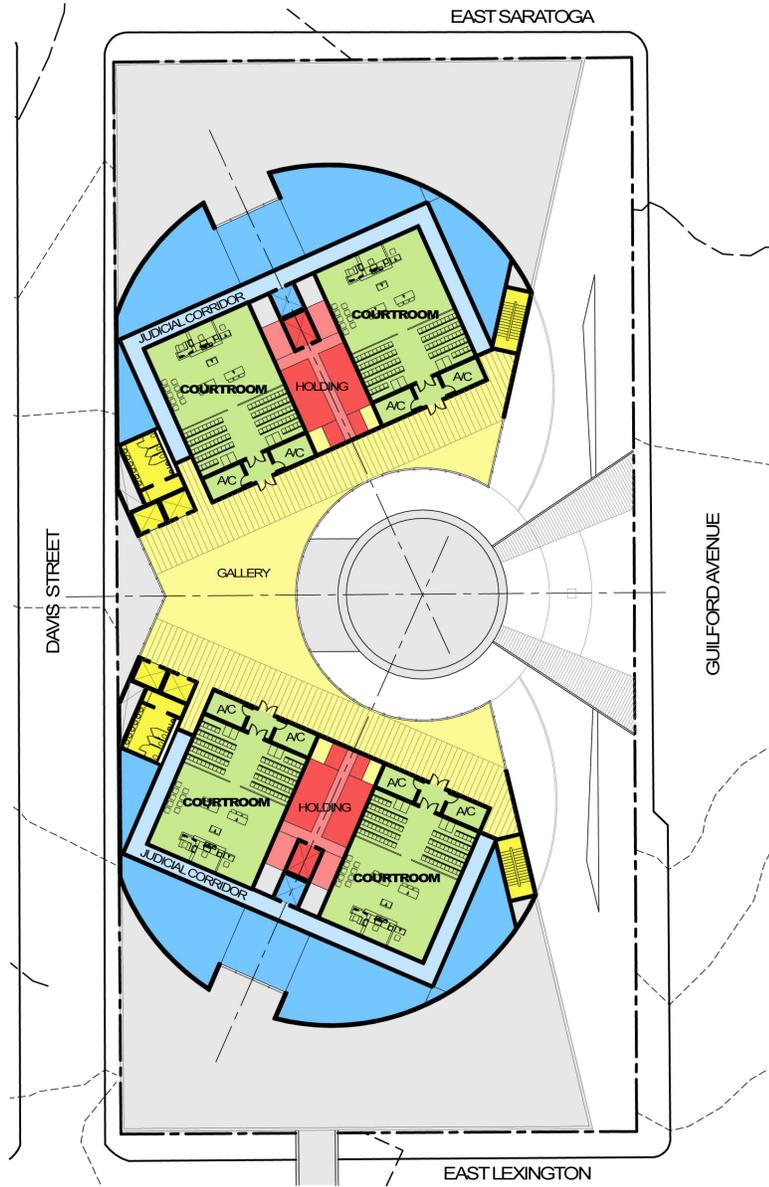


Figure 8-6
Option B: North Site—Proposal for 4 courtrooms per floor: typical floor plan.

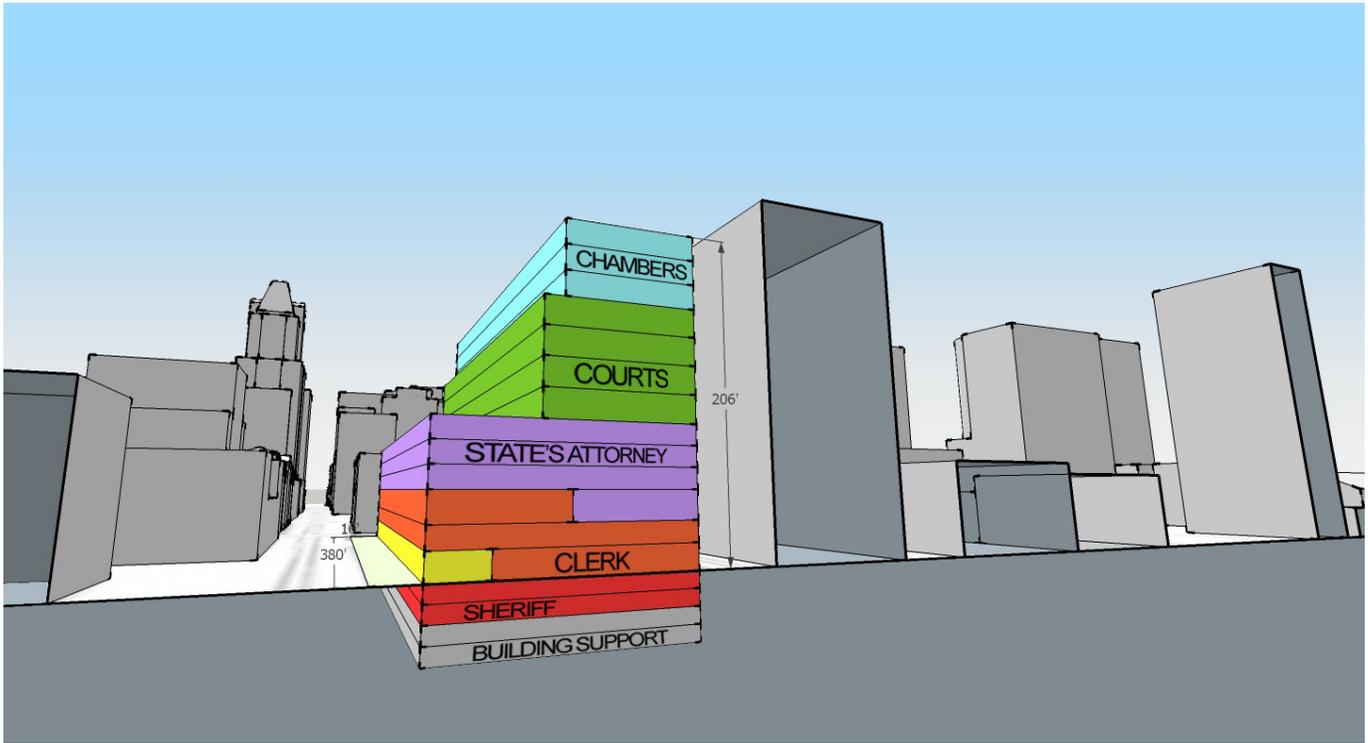


Figure 8-7
Stacking Diagram for Option B.

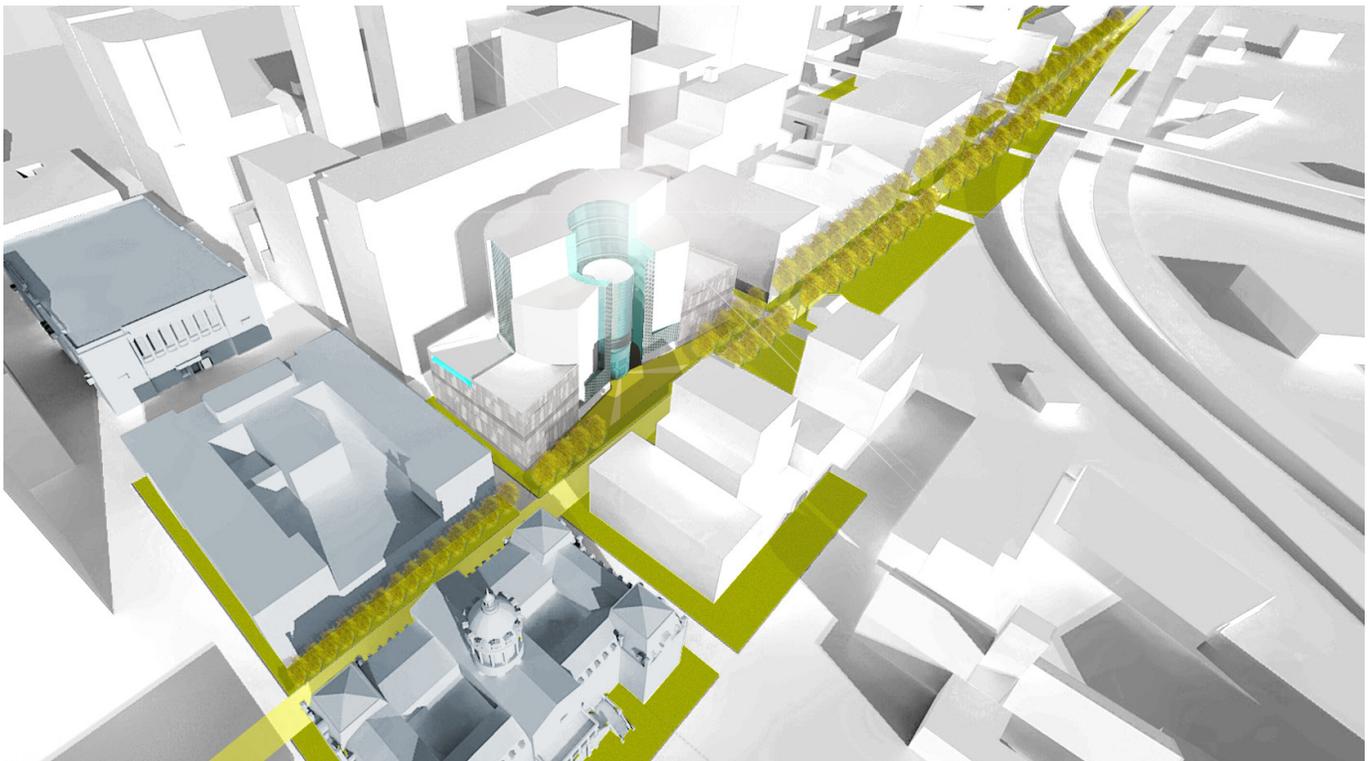


Figure 8-8
Aerial View for Option B.



Figure 8-9
Exterior Rendering for Option B



Figure 8-10
Interior Rendering for Option B

Option C North Site: 8-Court Scheme

Site Organization

Option C: North Site—Proposal for 8 courtrooms per floor (Figures 8-11 and 8-12) proposes a 9-story building with mechanical penthouse and three additional levels below grade, including criminal holding, parking and building support. The entrance lobby is located at the intersection of East Saratoga Street and Guilford Avenue. Internally, the lobby introduces a corridor that becomes a public “boulevard” within the proposed building. This grand atrium is clasped between two linear masses that house the programmatic elements of the project, and it is emphasized by a communal plaza and green space at each end. The North Plaza connects to a “green thoroughfare” along Guilford Avenue and the South Plaza creates a visual relationship with the Battle Monument hardscape and North Calvert Street. Service and parking access to the building can be located along Davis Street.



Figure 8-11.
Option C: North Site—Proposal for 8 courtrooms per floor.

Views/Orientation

Option C: North Site—Proposal for 8 courtrooms per floor is organized linearly, like two elongated, bent bars that create a public pocket of space between them. This space, on the lower floors, marks the entrance area. The public corridor allows internal views within the large atrium that opens onto opposite ends to the new civic plazas and community green spaces described below.

Program Organization

For general consistency, AECOM consolidated most program requirements into blocks of space to formulate occupancy scenarios. The scenarios illustrate usable square footage for an entire department or group of functions.

The building program is organized as follows:

- Basement Levels – Baltimore City Sheriff’s Office, Criminal Holding, Loading and Building Support
- Lobby Level—Entry Lobby, Security Screening, Retail and Building Support, Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 2nd Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court
- 3rd Floor—Clerk of the Circuit Court (including High Volume Court), Office of the State’s Attorney
- 4th Floor— Office of the State’s Attorney
- 5th Floor—Office of the State’s Attorney
- 6th Floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom (8 courts/floor)
- 7th Floor—Standard Criminal Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Courtroom, Large Multi-Capability Criminal Courtroom (8 courts/floor)
- 8th Floor— Judicial Chamber Suites
- 9th Floor— Judicial Chamber Suites
- Penthouse Level – Maintenance and Mechanical Room

Circulation

Option C : North Site—Proposal for 8 courtrooms per floor is designed with one central circulation system for the public and two separate corridors for judicial staff. Public access occurs at the new entrance lobby and corridors adjoining the green spaces. Circulation for the judges and judicial staff occurs on the east and west sides of the proposed building and will be parallel to the public circulation, enabling access to the courtrooms, offices and chambers directly from private vertical circulation and corridors within their departments. A pedestrian bridge will connect the New Courts Tower to Courthouse East on the 2nd floor. Multiple enclosed pedestrian bridges may be needed to separate staff and the public for security purposes.



Figure 8-12
Option C: North Site—Proposal for 8 courtrooms per floor: typical courtroom floor plan.

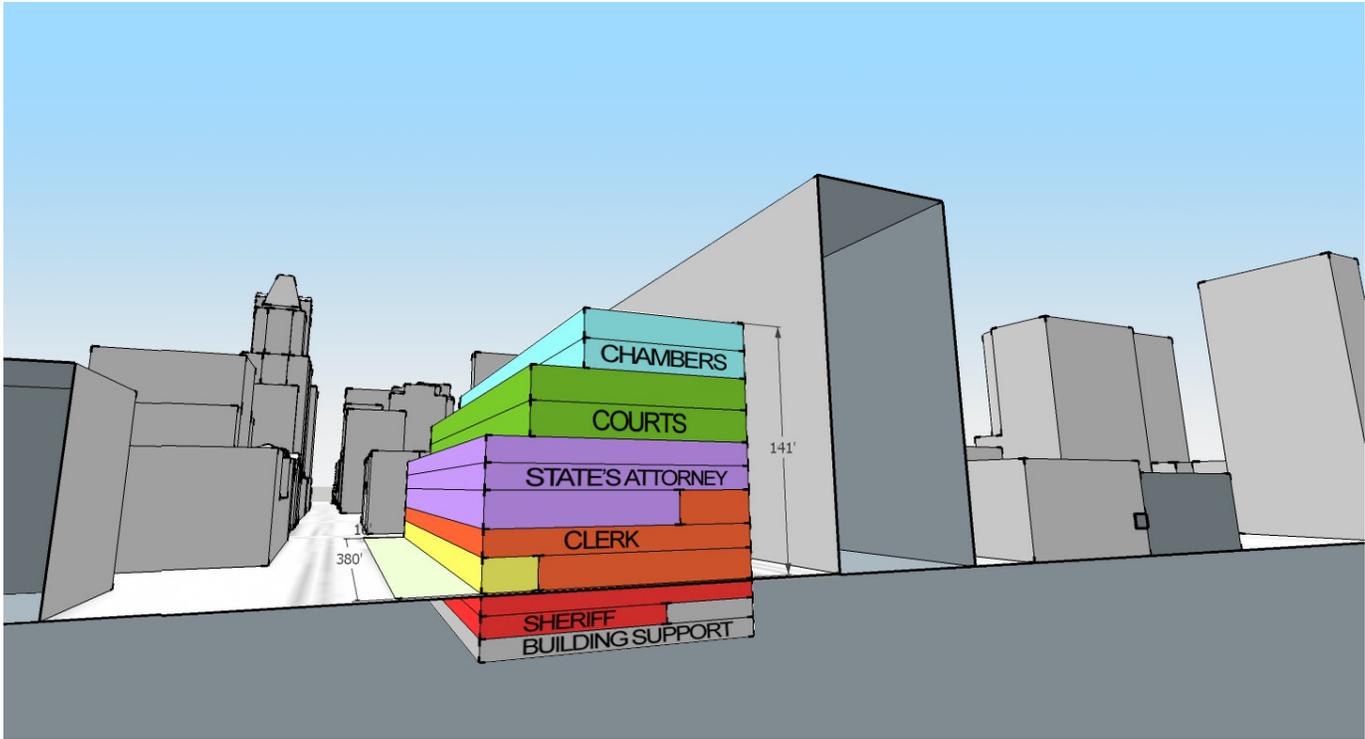


Figure 8-13
Stacking Diagram for Option C.

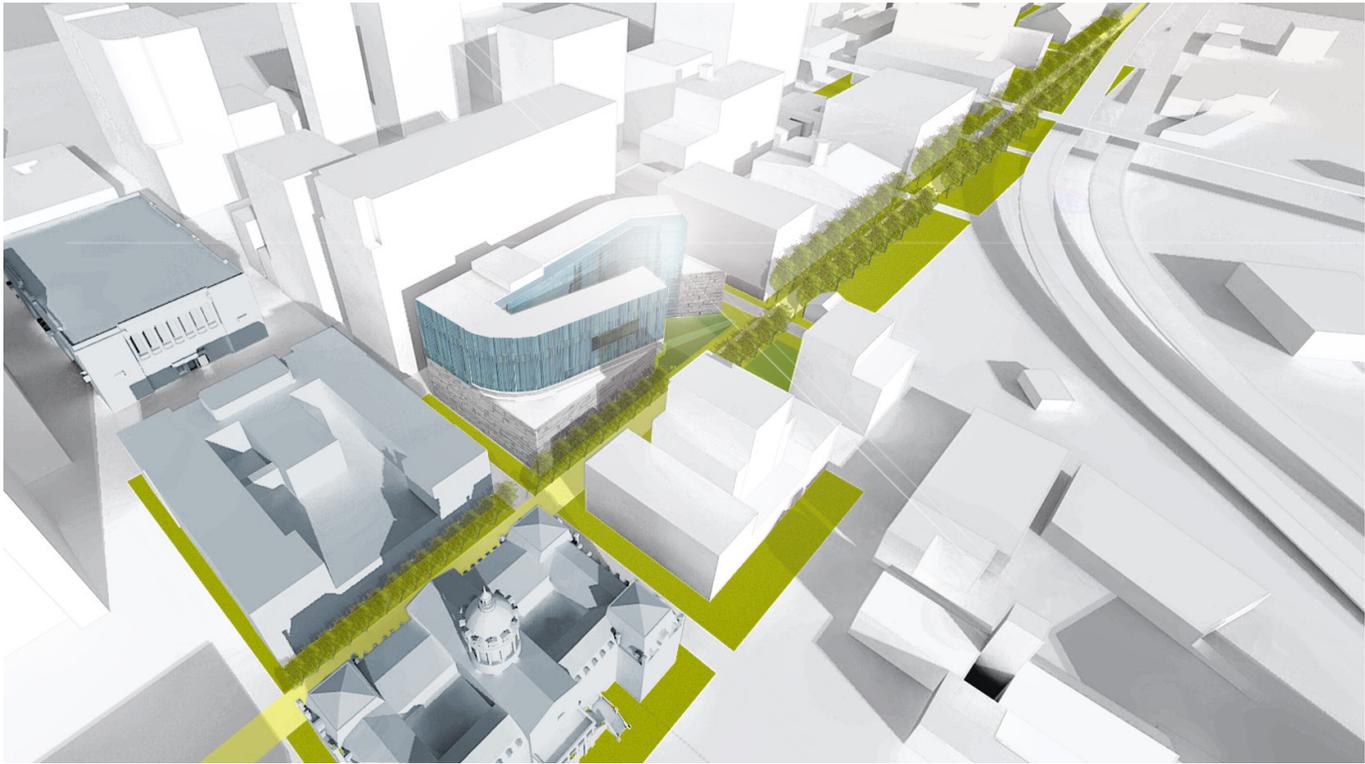


Figure 8-14
Aerial View for Option C.



Figure 8-15
Exterior Rendering for Option C.



Figure 8-16
Interior Rendering for Option C.