

07

Mitchell and Courthouse East Reuse

Executive Summary

Renovations over the course of recent years to the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings have done little to alleviate the shortage of space and to house adequately, functionally, and safely all the agencies in the judicial system in the two existing facilities. In 2003, a Space-Needs Study and preliminary housing plans; and cost estimates were developed for these buildings in accord with expected future needs that had been identified. When a new juvenile justice center was completed in that same year, the juvenile court system was able to move out of the areas that they had occupied in the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings, which freed up space for other agencies to expand. This development, however, caused a bifurcation in operations such that Family and Juvenile divisions became disenfranchised from the existing physical plant and its court services. It also resulted in a duplication of resources, not to mention causing confusion for the public and other users of that agency.

Scope of Study

As a response to discussions about the size and configuration of the new courthouse building and its role in the judicial complex, AECOM prepared several housing plans for the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings that would address these problems. This planning, or “test-fit” study, was developed after clarification of long-term needs of the circuit court and after the update of a report about building conditions of the two existing courthouses. The purpose of this chapter is to prepare, analyze, and recommend a feasible housing plan for continued use of the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings for certain functions of the Baltimore City Circuit Court system. The study develops an analysis of both renovations in order to facilitate an informed decision by the Circuit Court and Baltimore City to locate the necessary functions of the court.

The housing and restacking courts study focuses on six (6) goals:

- To test the ability of the Mitchell Courthouse to house the Family and Juvenile divisions
- To develop a housing plan that takes advantage of a historically significant resource for Baltimore City
- To prepare a concept that addresses the functional requirements that enhances the operation of the judiciary
- To respond to updated programmatic needs of the Circuit Court system
- To phase the project without severe disruption to the operation of the courts
- To provide the best value to the taxpayers of Baltimore City.

The analysis and evaluation of these goals form the basis of the subsequent discussion. The Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings are two valuable resources that should be reused by Baltimore City and the Circuit Court for their long-term needs. Though designed in the era prior to modern courthouse planning, which includes such requirements as separate circulation routes, a minimum number of points for public access, barrier-free accessibility, and flexibility for configuring office suites depending on operational needs, the Beaux-Arts classicism of the two buildings provides a grandly-scaled and articulated architectural statement for the judicial system and a valuable physical resource. Further, by using innovative planning techniques, modern needs can be addressed within the classical envelope of each building.

One determining factor of the feasibility of adaptive reuse is the two buildings' ability to accommodate additional courtrooms that will be both functional and safe. This requirement includes the need to provide direct secure delivery of defendants to courtrooms and clear, open spaces for courtrooms. Further, each floor must be able to provide multiple circulation zones in order to separate in-custody defendants from the public and judicial officers in accordance with modern courthouse planning guidelines.

Courtrooms

Although each existing courthouse has distinctive qualities, associated challenges exist with reusing the buildings in a new way. The buildings originally were not designed to have three separate circulation routes. The Mitchell Courthouse offers a planning layout based upon providing courtrooms with natural light. As a result, courtrooms are scattered throughout the building without any sense of orientation or relationship to one another. Courthouse East, as has been noted in earlier chapters, served as both courthouse and U.S. Post Office. It originally provided three courtrooms all located on the fifth floor. These spaces are still used as courtrooms today. After the building was purchased by Baltimore City however, the building was modified and renovated to accommodate additional courtrooms for the Family Division, Orphans Court and Criminal and Civil Divisions. With the exception of the five courtrooms that were added ten years ago on the 2nd floor and the three courtrooms on the 5th floor, the other courtrooms in the Courthouse East do not provide any potential for continued use. The non-usable courtrooms are ill-proportioned and small in size.

The proposed solution is to expand the number of secure and functional courtrooms in the Mitchell Courthouse by adding three new secure elevators in the building. These new elevators can be placed strategically close to existing or new courtrooms. They can also provide a direct and secure connection from a new central holding area to be designed on the basement level.

The creation of additional courtrooms in the two existing buildings may be accommodated by using areas where the floor above was added as part of an earlier expansion program (as in the Mitchell Courthouse) or using areas where columns or load-bearing walls will not impede the sight lines within those spaces (as in the Courthouse East). The revised blocking/stacking diagrams illustrate how new courtrooms and hearing rooms might be constructed on various floors.

The sizes of the new courtrooms in the Mitchell Courthouse do not approximate the areas delineated by the space-needs study because of the limitation of the building's load-bearing walls. These spaces, however, based on scheduling and utilization rates, along with anticipated public capacity, may easily function and serve the needs of the court. By contrast, the courtrooms in the Courthouse East meet the requirements identified by the space-needs study since they can be placed within the building's structural grid without significant visual impediment for the users of those spaces.

New and additional courtrooms are proposed in the restacking of spaces in the Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings. In total, 20 additional courtrooms and hearing rooms will be stacked on top of 24 preserved and/or restored courtrooms. The following table shows the distribution per floor of new courtrooms throughout the two buildings:

Mitchell Courthouse					Courthouse East			
Level	Existing	Vacate	New	Total	Existing	Vacate	New	Total
1	0	0	4	4	6	6	3	3
2	5	0	3	8	6	1	0	5
3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
4	9	3	3	9	0	0	1	1
5	0	0	0	0	5	2	3	6
6	1	0	6	7	0	0	0	0
Total	15	3	16	28	19	11	7	15

Note: Courtroom on 4th floor of Courthouse East for Orphans Court

Table 7-1
Courtroom distribution

Housing Plans

The primary objective of the restacking plan for Mitchell and Courthouse East buildings is to address the following goals for the project:

- To develop a housing plan that meets the current guidelines for the judiciary
- To provide an appropriate and inspiring image for the judiciary
- To accommodate all program functions within the housing plan
- To minimize the impact of construction on the operations of the judiciary
- To phase construction in parts in order to mitigate the number of agency moves and to maintain effective court operations in all divisions.

This plan meets the 20-year projection of needs for the judiciary. In the wide view, this housing plan achieves these goals.

In the Mitchell Courthouse, the following changes are proposed:

- Renovation of the basement level for housing a new secure holding area for respondents who are brought from the juvenile detention center to the courthouse. From the basement, respondents may be securely escorted up to various courtrooms in the western half of the building.
- Relocation of the Jury Assembly area from the 2nd and 3rd floors in the Mitchell Courthouse to the 2nd floor in the Courthouse East.
- Renovation of the 3rd and 5th floors to house all the judiciary and referees with a control point off the main public elevators.
- Reopening of the light wells from the 2nd floor to the roof to bring more natural daylight into interior spaces.
- Retainment of the jury boxes in Courtrooms 400 and 600 for special proceedings.
- Creation of three new secure elevators to be located on the west side to serve the courtrooms for the juvenile division.

In the Courthouse East, these changes are proposed:

- Renovation of the entry level off South Calvert Street and internal expansion to provide a) a larger queuing area for security screening and b) sufficient space for non-court users to use the south elevator banks for access to rentable tenant spaces.

- Location of Jury Assembly on the 2nd floor with access to two new escalators from the main lobby on the 1st floor. If the north site is selected, this location also would provide direct access to the new pedestrian bridge, leading to the new courthouse.
- Addition of five new courtrooms on the 1st floor.
- Addition of a new secure elevator to serve the first two floors and the courtrooms for special civil cases where a defendant's presence is required. Addition of a new small, but secure, vehicular sally port on the "B" level by cordoning off part of the loading dock area.

These functional changes and modern enhancements to each of the existing courthouses would create the spaces desperately needed by the judicial system for the effective, safe, and respectful dispensing of justice. It is useful now to turn to the process that led to these two courthouses' housing plans, both of which have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Mitchell Courthouse

AECOM's study of the adaptive reuse potential of the Mitchell Courthouse focused upon the building's ability to house securely the necessary components and functions of the Juvenile and Family Divisions. Currently, the Juvenile Courtrooms are located in the Juvenile Justice Center, about one mile east of the Mitchell Courthouse. The goal, however, is to reunite these two judicial components that work together for the good of families whose cases, in certain circumstances, may be heard by both courts. By locating these judicial components in the same building, the two courts can collaborate more effectively. Such a plan may also eliminate confusion and reduce the stress and fatigue of families who would have to travel between two buildings if the components were housed separately.

Under the new proposal, the Juvenile and Family Divisions use 15 of the existing courtrooms in the Mitchell Courthouse. These spaces will continue to be used as courtrooms or hearing rooms. Since these courtrooms are limited by either the building's structural system or their two-story height, finding other uses for them would be difficult. Further, most of these courtrooms, when fully renovated, can continue to operate effectively for the judicial system. The project budget, as presented in a later chapter, provides an allowance for complete restoration and rehabilitation of these courtrooms and the appropriate incorporation of new technology to serve the judiciary's needs. Two of the courtrooms, Courtrooms 400 and 600 (Figures 7-1 and 7-2), are striking architectural jewels that have been rehabilitated in the last ten years and thus would not require further attention in the overall renovation efforts of the building.



Figure 7-1

Courtroom 400



Figure 7-2

Courtroom 600

Other courtrooms will be added to the interior plan of the Mitchell Courthouse by taking advantage of areas where a higher-than-normal ceiling can be created. For example, such areas include the top floor, where the roof can be opened up to create a higher ceiling or floors where the floor was slipped into the existing framework because of prior renovations. Moreover, since the proposal calls for the existing law library (Figure 7-3) to be relocated to the Courthouse East on a lower floor to better serve the public, this handsome space on the 6th floor may be able to be transformed into two new courtrooms.



Figure 7-3

Law Library

The need to provide secure transport and movement of respondents to the courtrooms is an important planning objective in the new facility. In order to achieve this degree of needed security, new elevators would be required to move in-custody respondents in a secure manner from the central holding area at the basement level to temporary holding areas adjacent to each courtroom(s). Additional planning objectives include the need to provide Juvenile and Family Courts the projected number of total courtrooms with contiguous spaces for supporting administrative agencies (clerk of court, Family Administration, etc.) so that the judges and staff of this division can effectively work together.

AECOM presented to the Executive Committee the following three options:

- Option 1: Locate the juvenile courtrooms in the western half of the building and the family courtrooms in the eastern half. Locate and distribute judicial and referee offices in adjacent spaces, in the best possible manner, to adjoining courtrooms and hearing rooms.
- Option 2: Locate juvenile and family courtrooms on separate floors and collocate judicial and referee floors accordingly. One scenario is to place juvenile division on the 1st and 2nd floors, family division on the 4th and 6th floors, and all judicial and referee offices on the 3rd and 5th floors.
- Option 3: Locate juvenile courtrooms in the western half of the building and family courtrooms in the eastern half, similar to the arrangement proposed in Option 1. Collocate judicial and referee offices on the 3rd and 5th floors, similar to the proposal in Option 2.

To handle the transport of in-custody respondents to juvenile courtrooms, three secure elevators would be added strategically on the western side of the building close to the courtrooms. These elevators would serve the basement level, where a new central holding area would be developed. Adjacent to each courtroom would be a series of single holding cells where in-custody respondents could be held until the start of their court trials.

Another important planning objective considered was the reopening of light wells that originally were part of the building's design when it opened in 1900. Approximately 60 years ago, these light wells were enclosed when space needs increased and this planning measure proved to be a cost-effective way to handle this growth. Reopening them would provide an important benefit since natural light has been proven to help alleviate psychological tension and stress for those about to be involved in difficult situations, such as attending courtroom proceedings. In Family Division, where opposing parties in divorce and/or child custody cases can create a volatile situation, diffusing tension is especially important.

The Executive Committee reviewed all three options and unanimously approved Option 3.

The following listing (Table 7-2) summarizes various components and their usable area that are proposed for the renovated Mitchell Courthouse housing plan. Schematic floor plans (Figure 7-4) depict the proposed block locations of each of these components according to Option 3.

Mitchell Courthouse	DGSF	Comment
Circuit Court	139,829	
Std Family Trial Courtroom	30,864	6 courtrooms
Family Master Hearing Room	15,828	6 hearing rooms
Std Juvenile Trial Courtroom	25,188	5 courtrooms
Juvenile Master Hearing Room	32,274	11 hearing rooms
Family-Domestic Div Jud Chamber Suite	6,840	
Fam-Juv Div Jud Chamber Suite	5,700	
Masters Chamber Area	8,168	
Family Court Admin Center	3,063	
Children's Room - Family Div Only	6,099	
FC Mediation Center	5,805	
Public Defender	14,089	
Juvenile	9,807	
Child in Need of Assistance	4,282	
Clerk of the Circuit Court	11,742	
Family	3,422	
Paternity	2,087	
Juvenile	4,707	
Team Core Support Units	590	
Cluster Core Support Units	936	
Baltimore City Sheriff's Office	7,162	
Juvenile Court Security Division	4,700	
Domestic Violence	613	
Child Support Process Service	1,849	
Office of State's Attorney	16,381	
Felony Family Violence	4,477	
Juvenile Court Division	6,393	
Juvenile Intake Unit	1,005	
Team Core Support Units	2,668	
Cluster Core Support Units	1,838	
Beachhead Offices	1,250	
Juvenile Justice Center	500	
Department of Juvenile Justice	500	
Self-Help Assistance Area	250	
Juvenile Justice Center	5,241	
CINA	500	
Partnership for Learning	1,199	
Court Medical Evaluation Team	2,097	
Juvenile Court Early Intervention Program	1,036	
Court Appointed Special Advocates	140	
Court Support Services	269	
Department of Juvenile Justice	940	
Court Liaison	940	
Building Support	2,500	
Entry Screening and Lobby	2,500	
Total Departmental Gross Square Footage	185,046	

Table 7-2
Occupancy Scenario for Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse

Figure 7-4

Block plan for recommended Reuse of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse

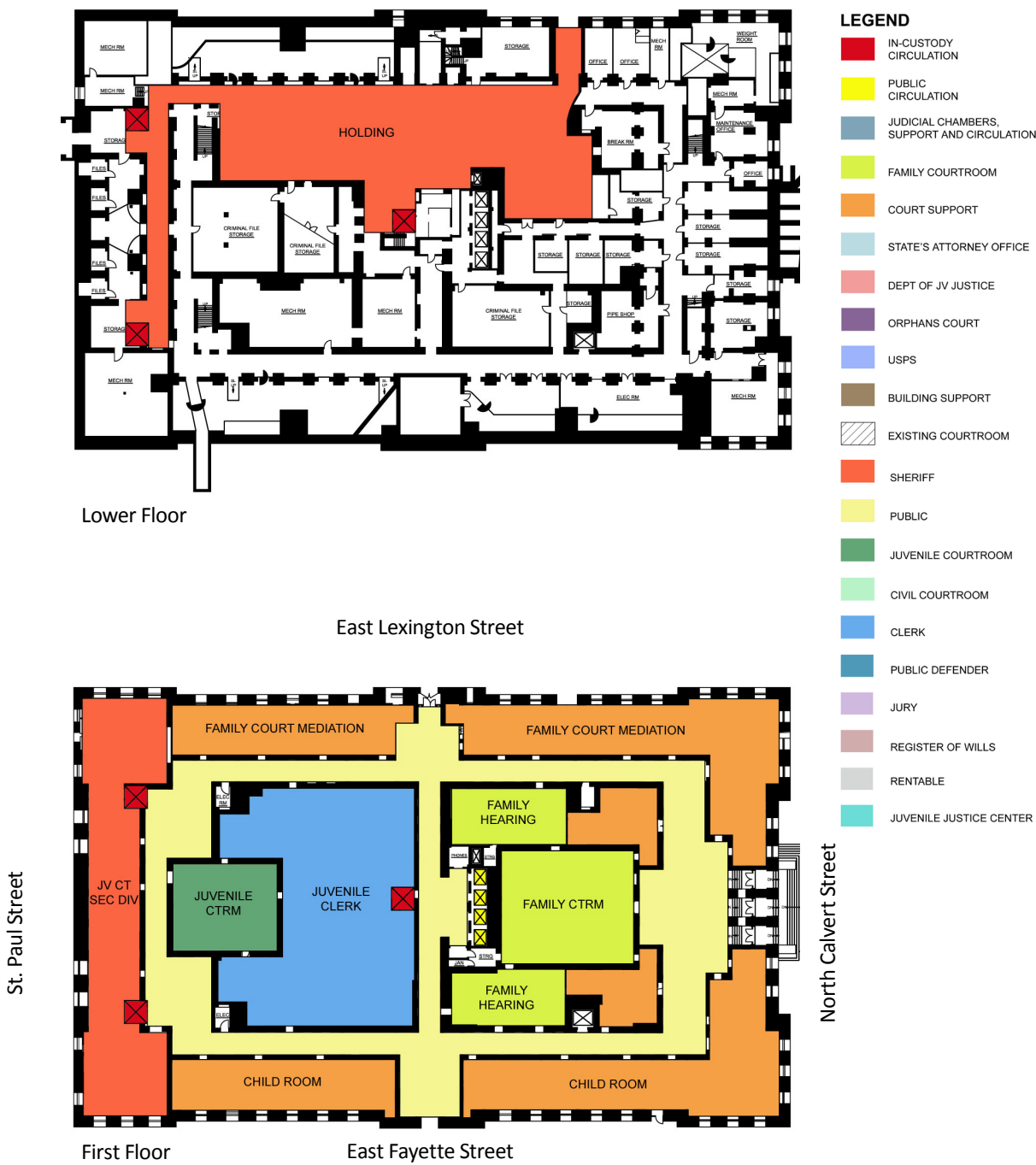
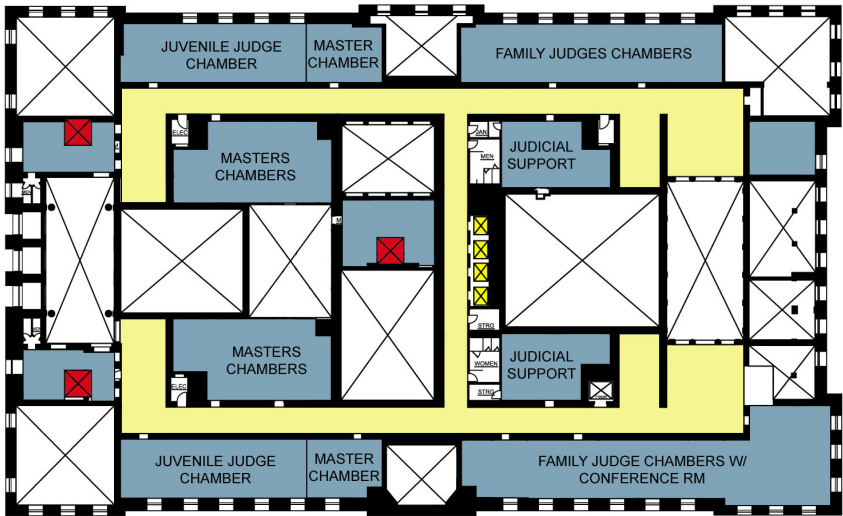


Figure 7-4 continued

Block plan for recommended Reuse of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse



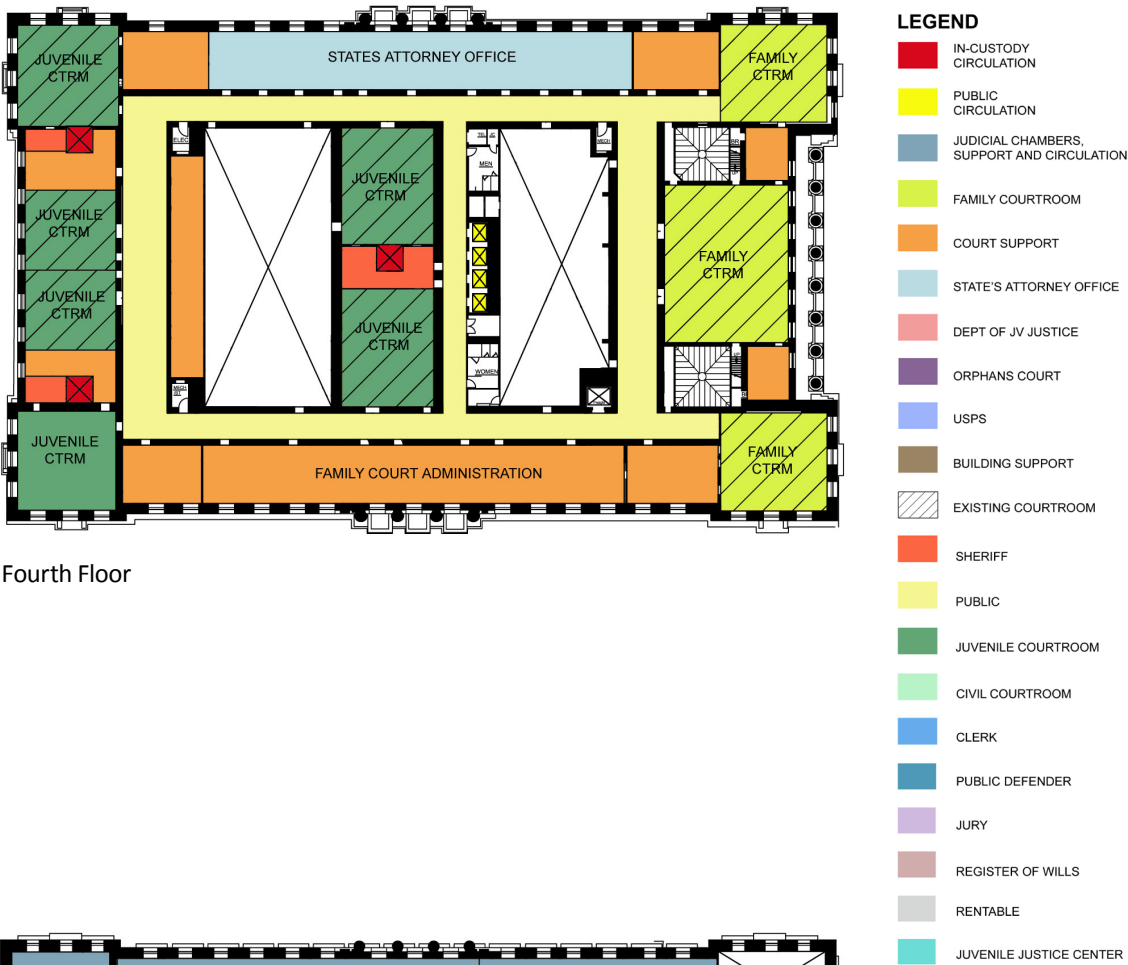
Second Floor



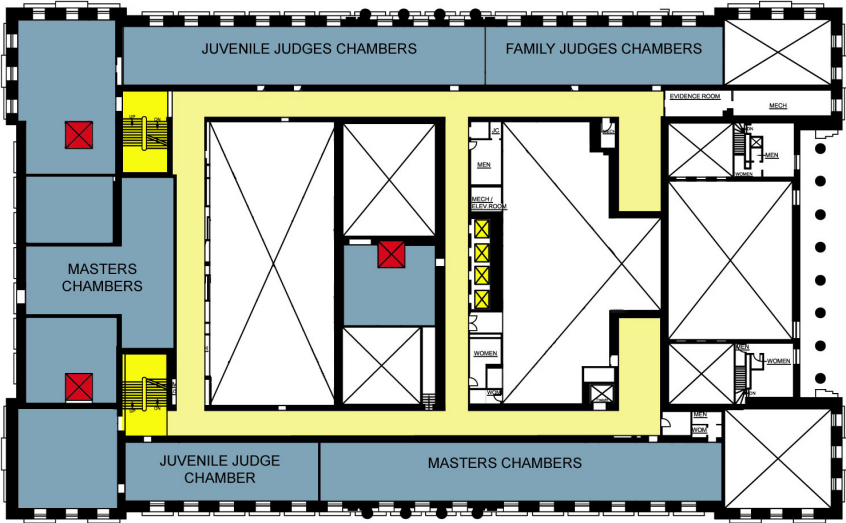
Third Floor

Figure 7-4 continued

Block plan for recommended Reuse of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse



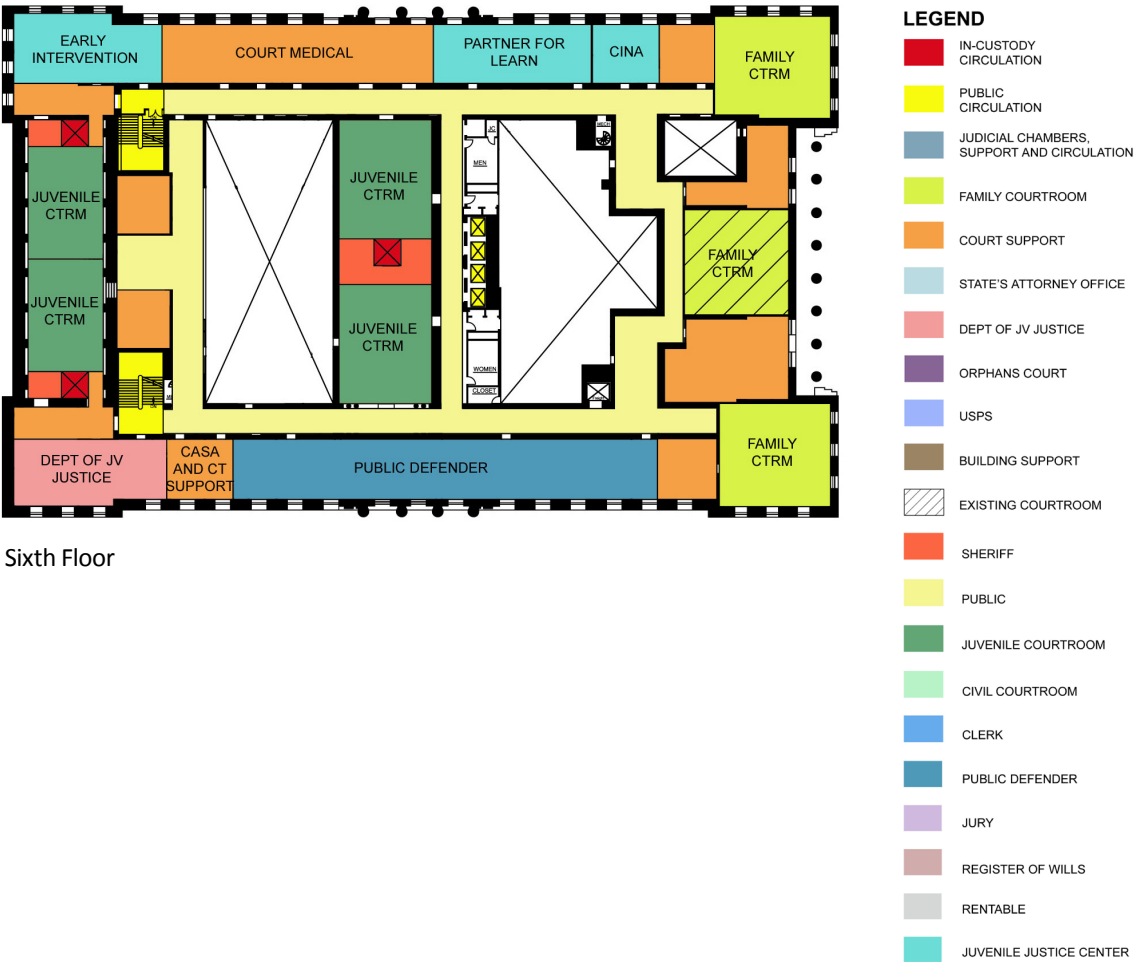
Fourth Floor



Fifth Floor

Figure 7-4 continued

Block plan for recommended Reuse of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse



Sixth Floor

Courthouse East

In configuring the internal spaces of the Courthouse East, the Executive Committee requested that AECOM study the prospect that this building accommodate the Civil Court, Orphans Court, and Register of Wills. The need to maintain a percentage of rentable area for outside city and/or state tenants as a means to generate revenue to help offset construction costs for the project also was discussed.

AECOM explored several options and the following were presented to the Executive Committee showing variations on how some of the planning elements could be configured. These variations are described below.

In each case, Courthouse East was considered to be a strategic focal point in the court system in the downtown government center. Its location between the two suggested sites for the new courthouse allows for the development of an enclosed pedestrian bridge connecting it to the new facility. This bridge will allow safe passage for judges between their chambers in the new facility and their courtrooms in the Courthouse East.

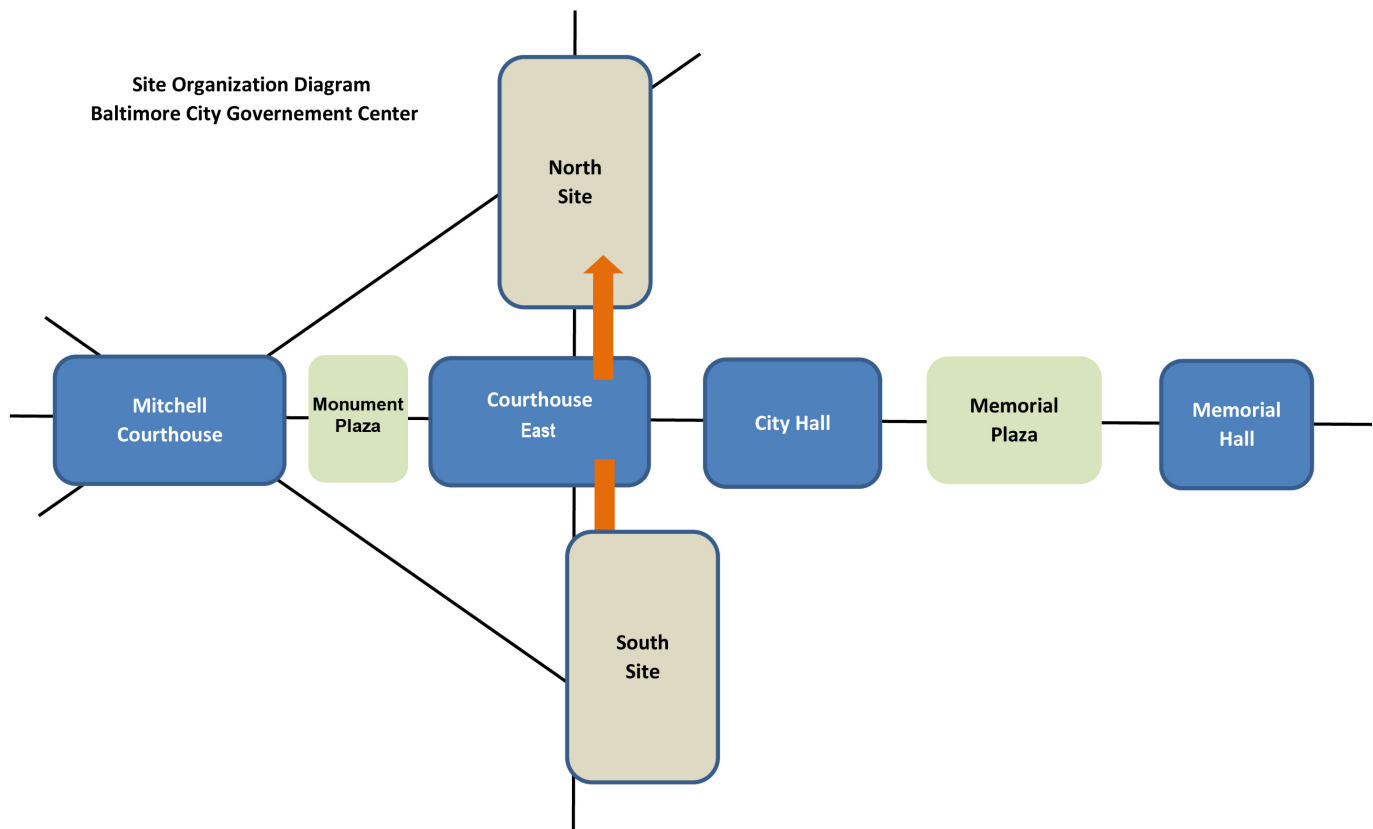


Figure 7-5
Circuit Court Concept Organization

To accommodate a high volume of traffic, particularly since jury assembly is slated to be located in the Courthouse East, the entry will be expanded internally to provide enhanced security screening with a more generous lobby space for the building. This design alteration would be possible if part of the 2nd floor is removed to create a two-story high space that could accommodate escalators that could provide quick and efficient public access to the 2nd floor, where the jury assembly would be located. From that space, jurors could easily be escorted across the pedestrian bridge to the new courthouse.

The judiciary also requested that several civil courtrooms be designed to handle the transport of in-custody defendants. To achieve this goal on the basement level,