



SESSION CT-01

NOVEMBER 3, 2011 | 8:00 AM

# DESIGNING THE CONTEMPORARY COURTROOM

**POETIC  
PRAGMATISM**

NOVEMBER 2-4, 2011  
LOS ANGELES, CA

**2011 Academy of Architecture Justice National Conference**  
CELEBRATING CREATIVE, COST EFFECTIVE, AND FUNCTIONAL DESIGN FOR JUSTICE FACILITIES



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# Introductions

**S. Ernest Swickard, AIA**

AOC Assistant Director, Burbank

**Frank Greene, FAIA**

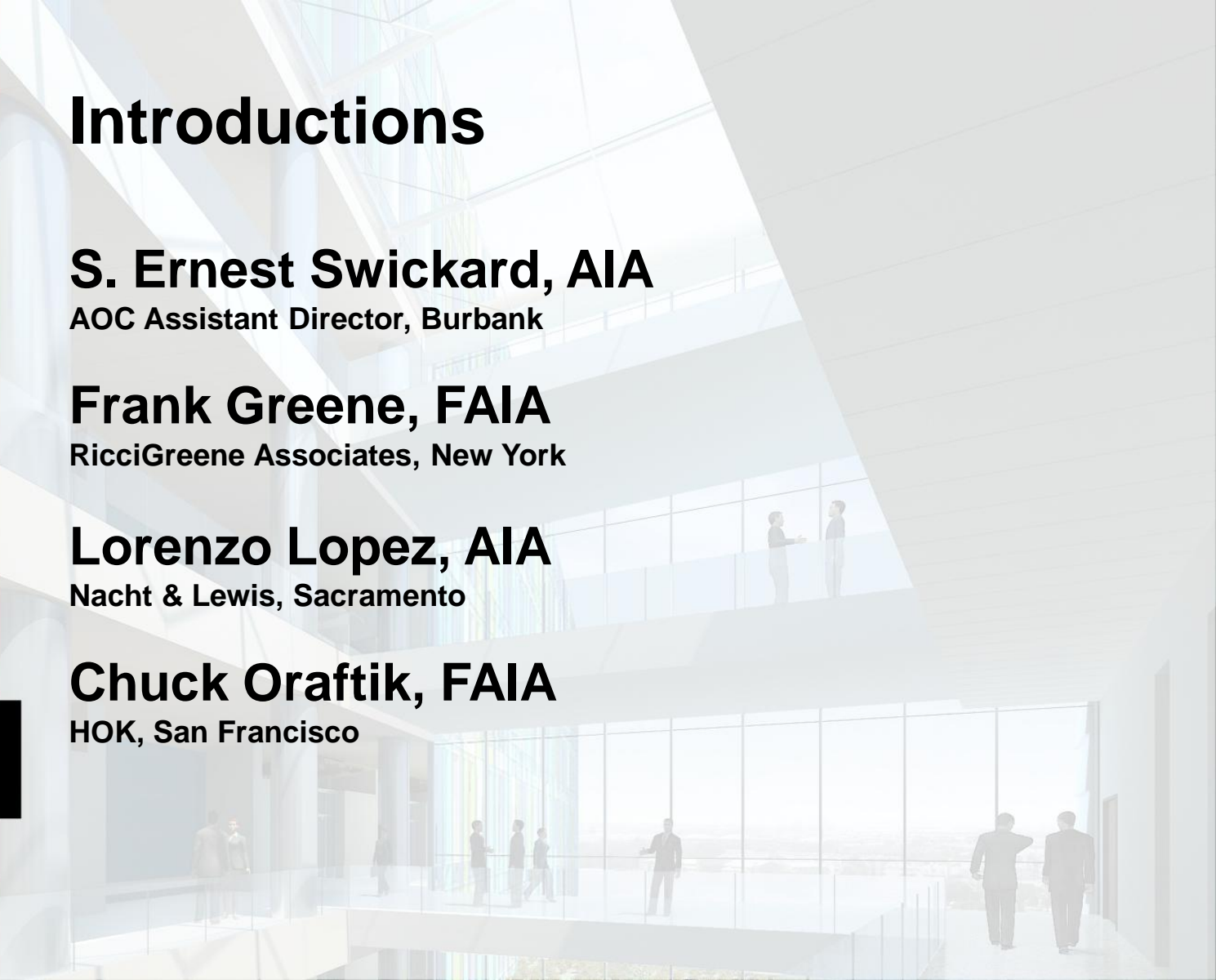
RicciGreene Associates, New York

**Lorenzo Lopez, AIA**

Nacht & Lewis, Sacramento

**Chuck Oraftik, FAIA**

HOK, San Francisco



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# Format

**S. Ernest Swickard, AIA**

Client

**Lorenzo Lopez, AIA**

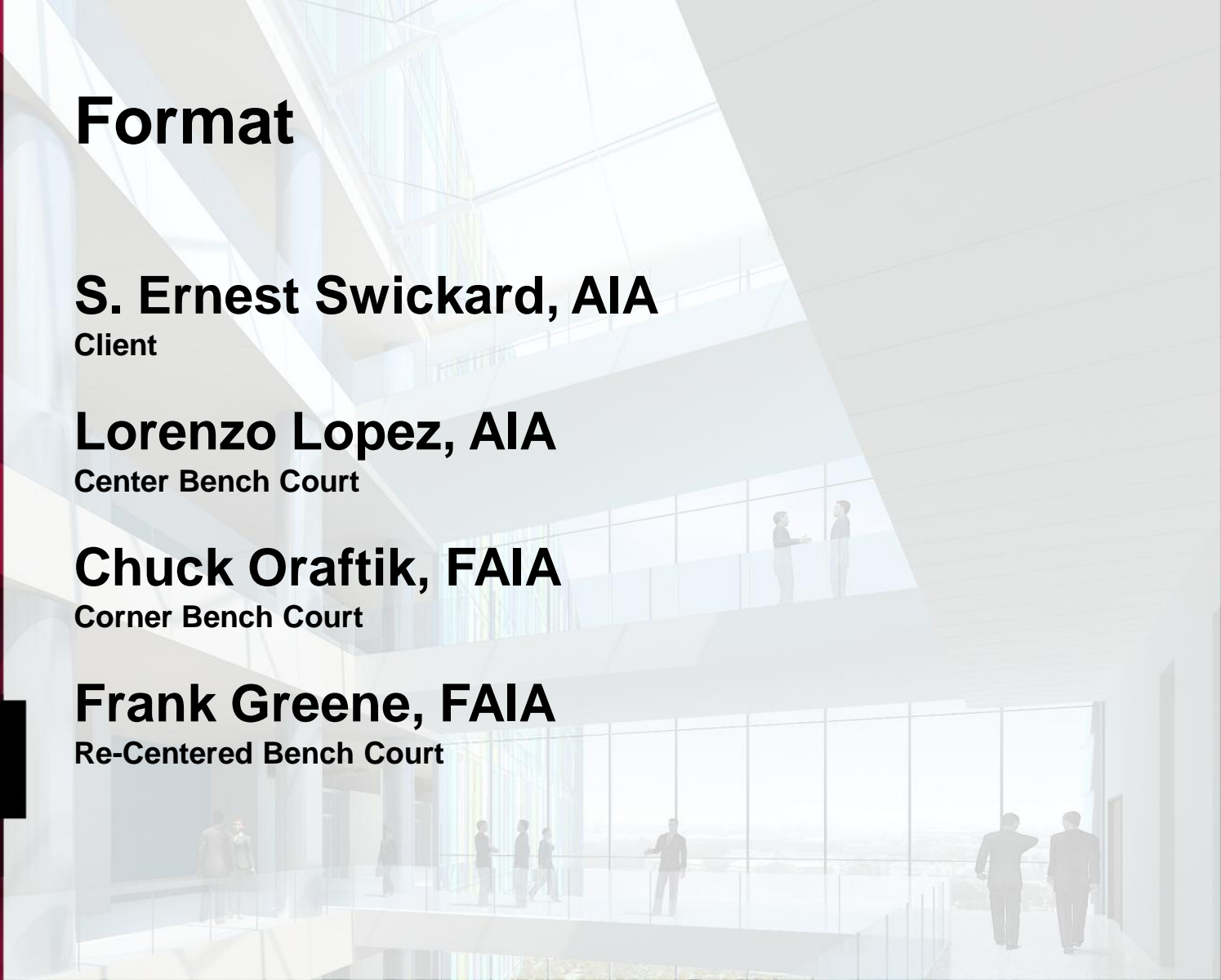
Center Bench Court

**Chuck Oraftik, FAIA**

Corner Bench Court

**Frank Greene, FAIA**

Re-Centered Bench Court



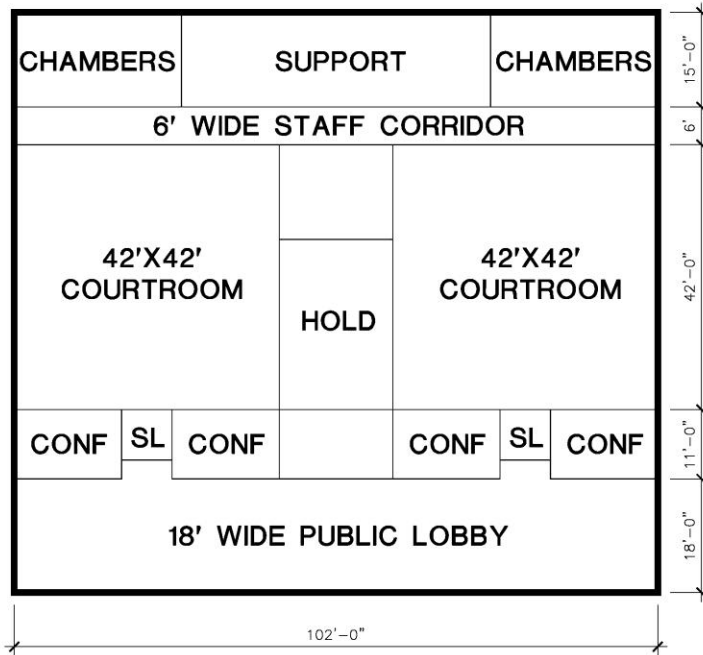
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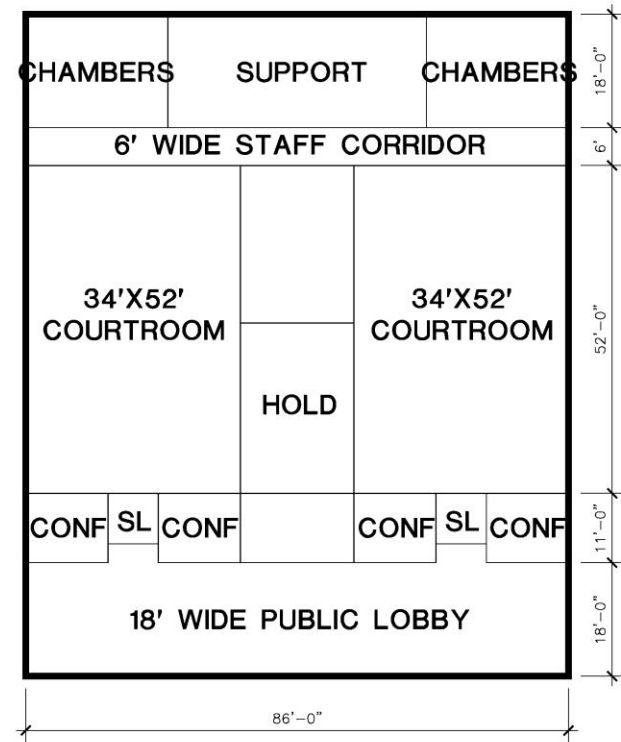
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9,384 SF PER PAIR OF  
COURTROOMS



9,030 SF PER PAIR OF  
COURTROOMS

Narrow courtrooms are typically more efficient than wide courtrooms  
as a building block



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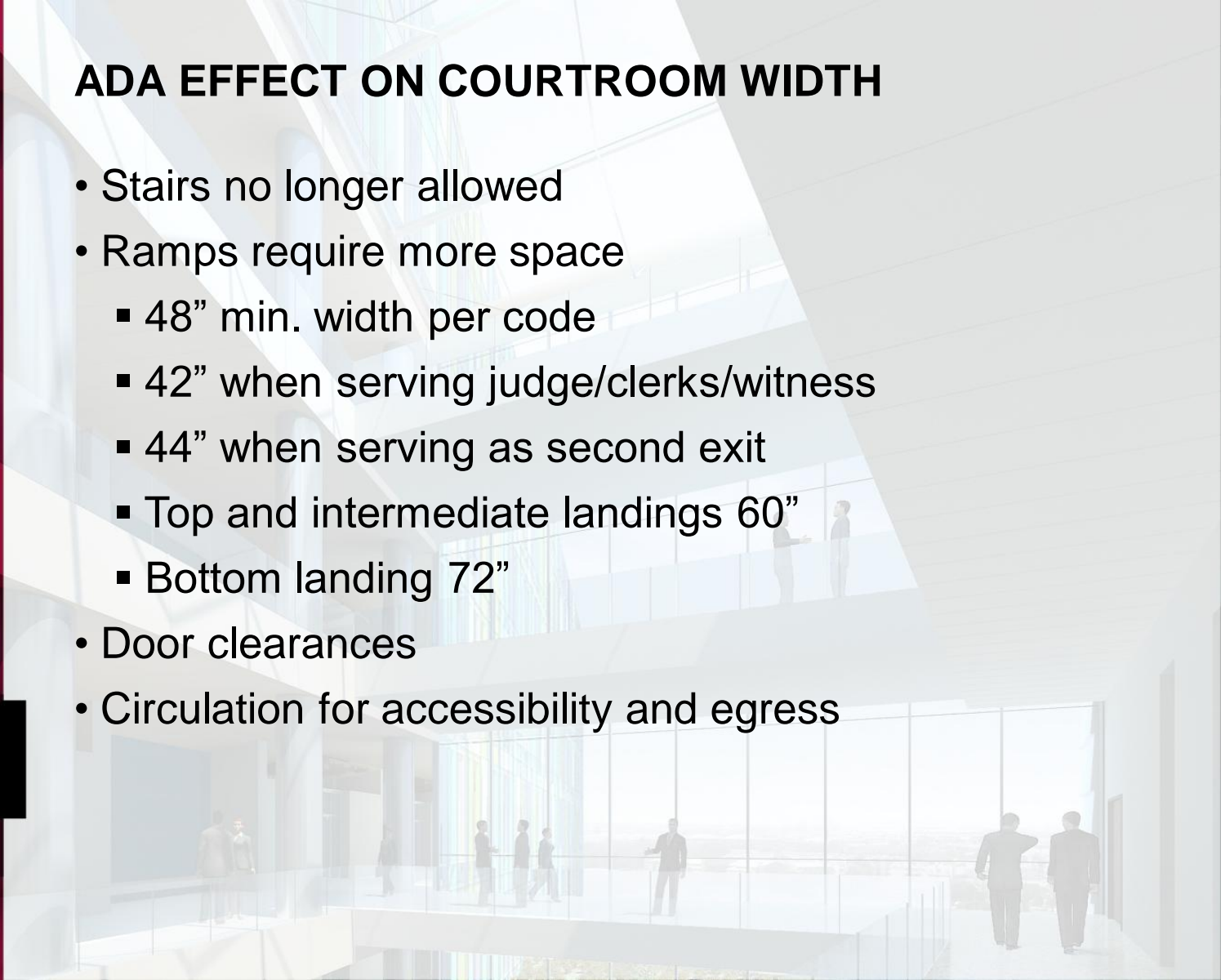
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## ADA EFFECT ON COURTROOM WIDTH

- Stairs no longer allowed
- Ramps require more space
  - 48" min. width per code
  - 42" when serving judge/clerks/witness
  - 44" when serving as second exit
  - Top and intermediate landings 60"
  - Bottom landing 72"
- Door clearances
- Circulation for accessibility and egress



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# CENTER COURTROOMS



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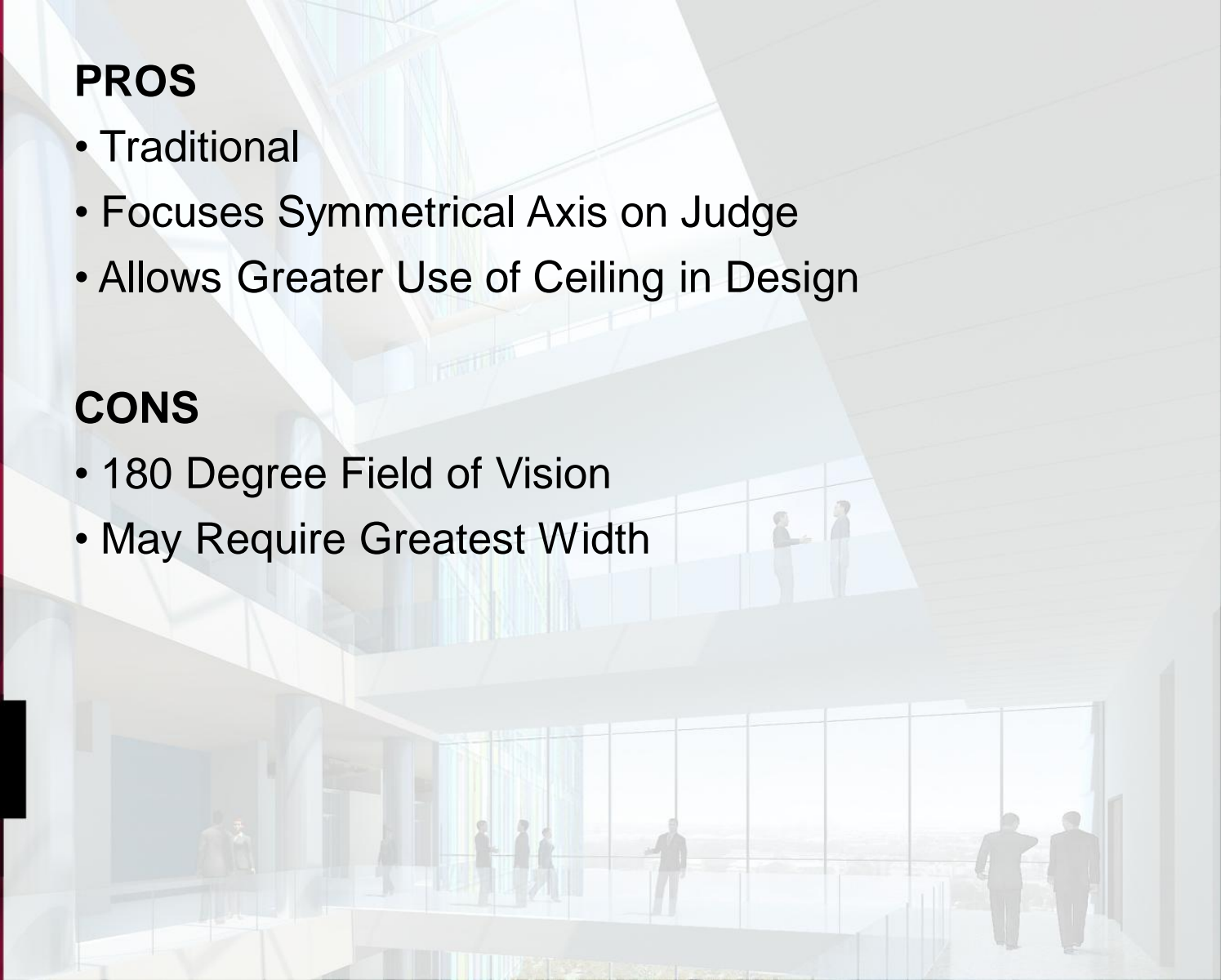


### PROS

- Traditional
- Focuses Symmetrical Axis on Judge
- Allows Greater Use of Ceiling in Design

### CONS

- 180 Degree Field of Vision
- May Require Greatest Width



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U.S. Supreme Court- Washington D.C.



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Hartford, CT Courtroom-1930's



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Worcester, MA-U.S. Federal Courthouse



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Sacramento, CA- U.S. Federal Courthouse  
46' wide

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Boston , MA- U.S. Federal Courthouse  
42'+ Wide



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Islip, NY- U.S. Federal Courthouse  
40' Wide

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Phoenix, AZ- U.S. Federal Courthouse





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Australia- Supreme Court of Victoria- Melbourne

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Israel Supreme Court





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Bordeaux Courthouse - France

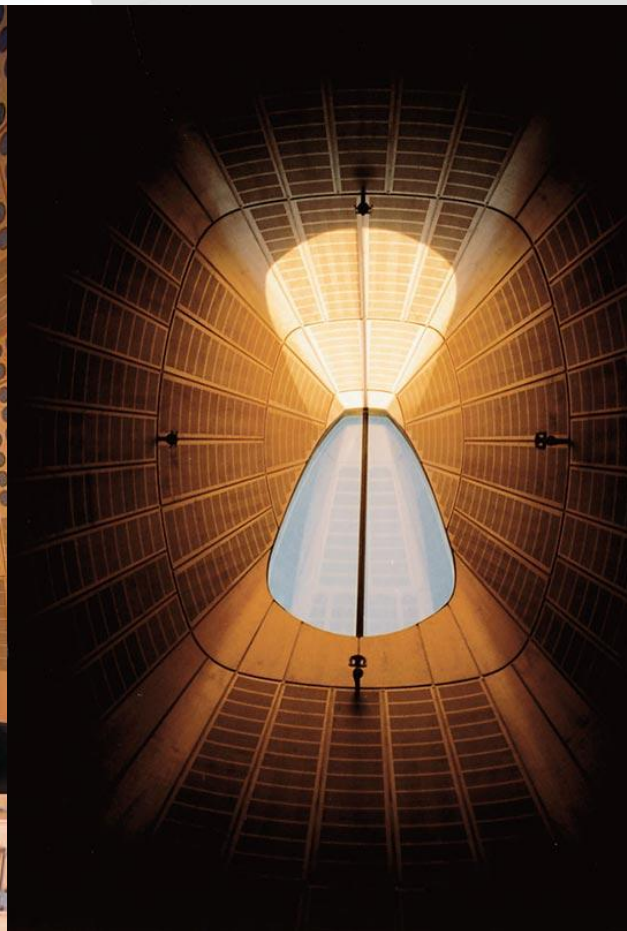
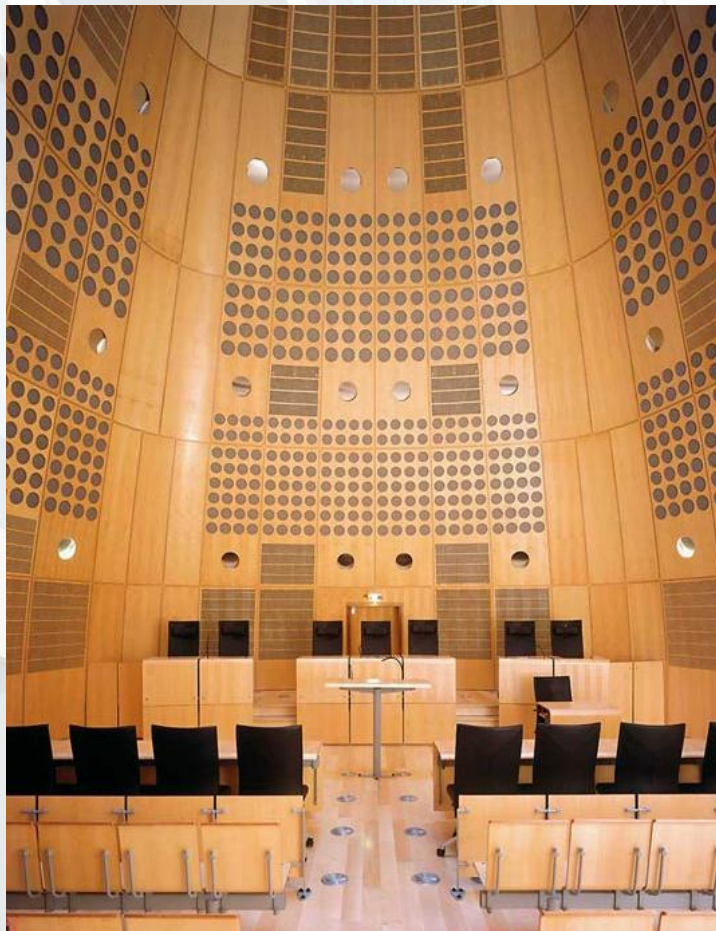
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Bordeaux Courthouse - France



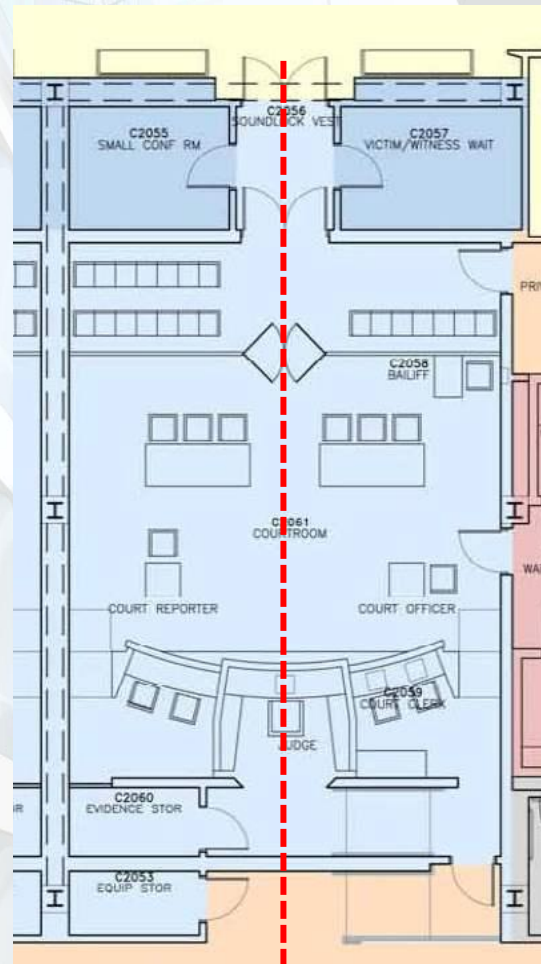
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Efficient Non-Jury Center Bench Court



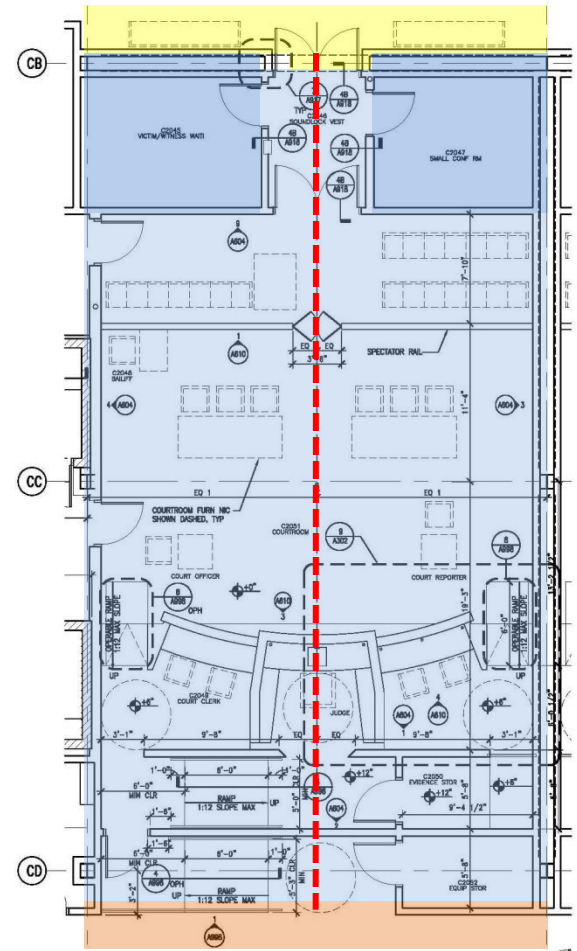
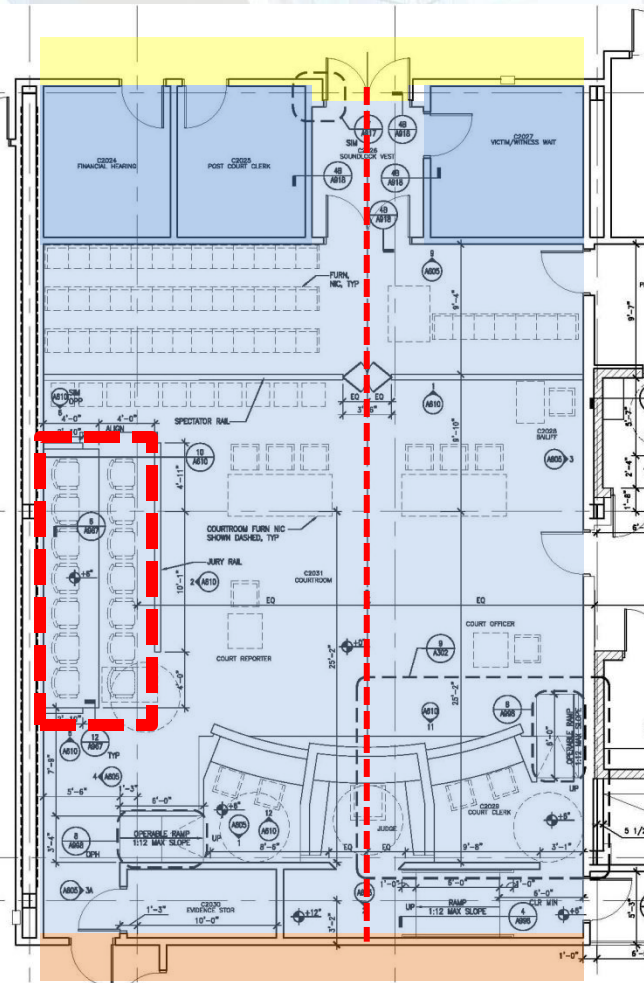
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Jury box either leads to off-center bench, or wider-than  
necessary courtroom

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## **CENTER BENCH CASE STUDY:**

Superior Court of California, Plumas-Sierra  
Portola California

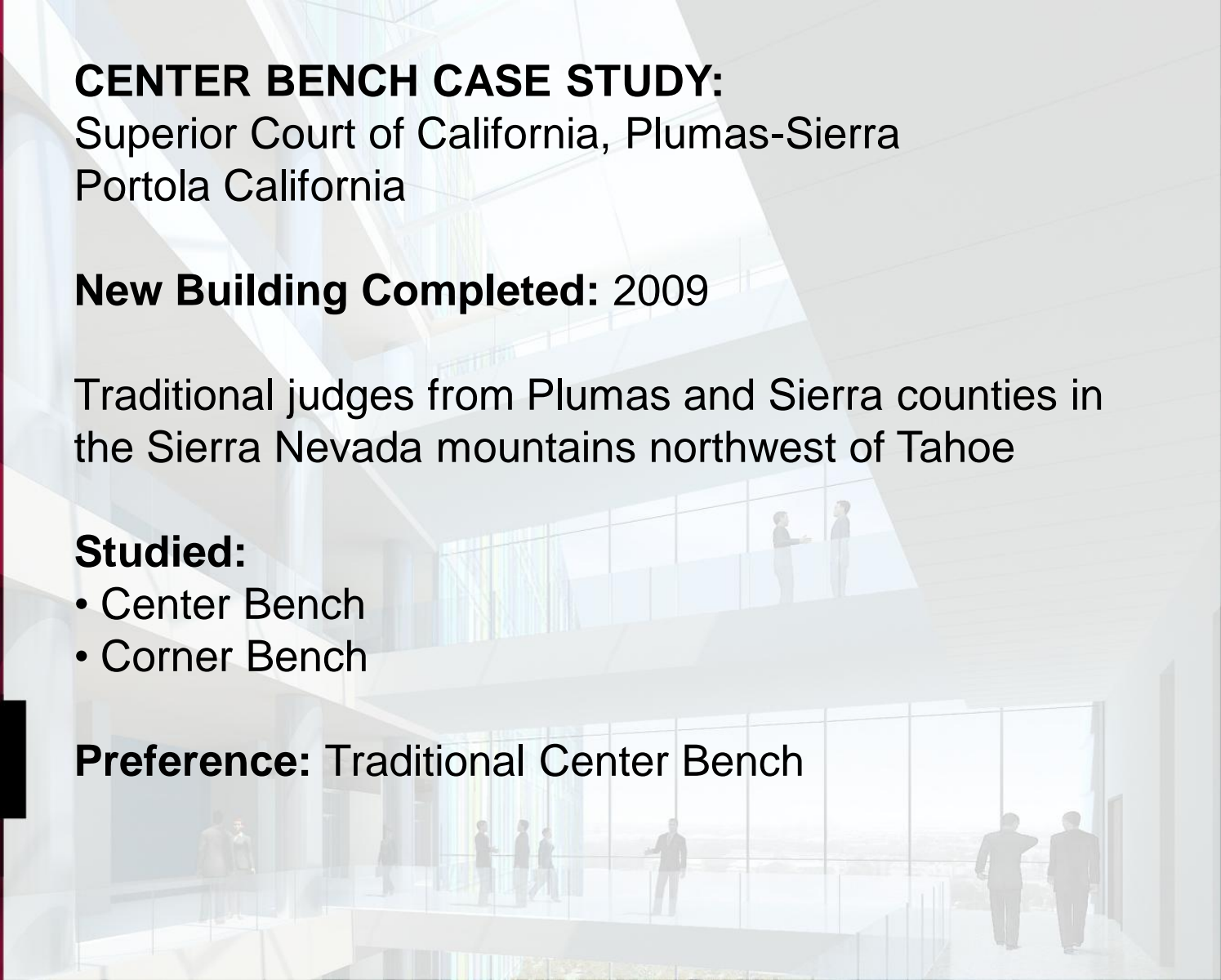
**New Building Completed: 2009**

Traditional judges from Plumas and Sierra counties in  
the Sierra Nevada mountains northwest of Tahoe

### **Studied:**

- Center Bench
- Corner Bench

**Preference: Traditional Center Bench**



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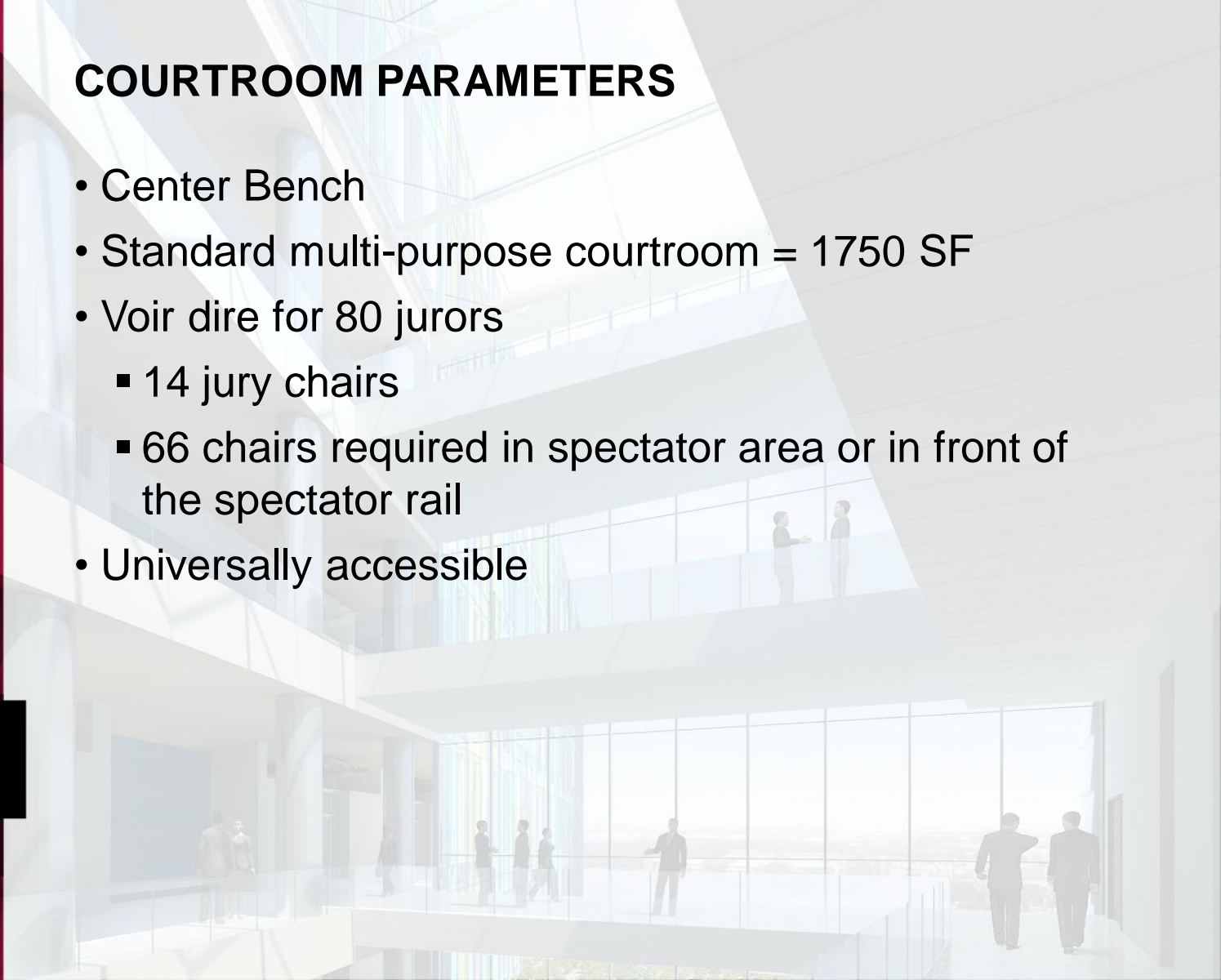
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## COURTROOM PARAMETERS

- Center Bench
- Standard multi-purpose courtroom = 1750 SF
- Voir dire for 80 jurors
  - 14 jury chairs
  - 66 chairs required in spectator area or in front of the spectator rail
- Universally accessible



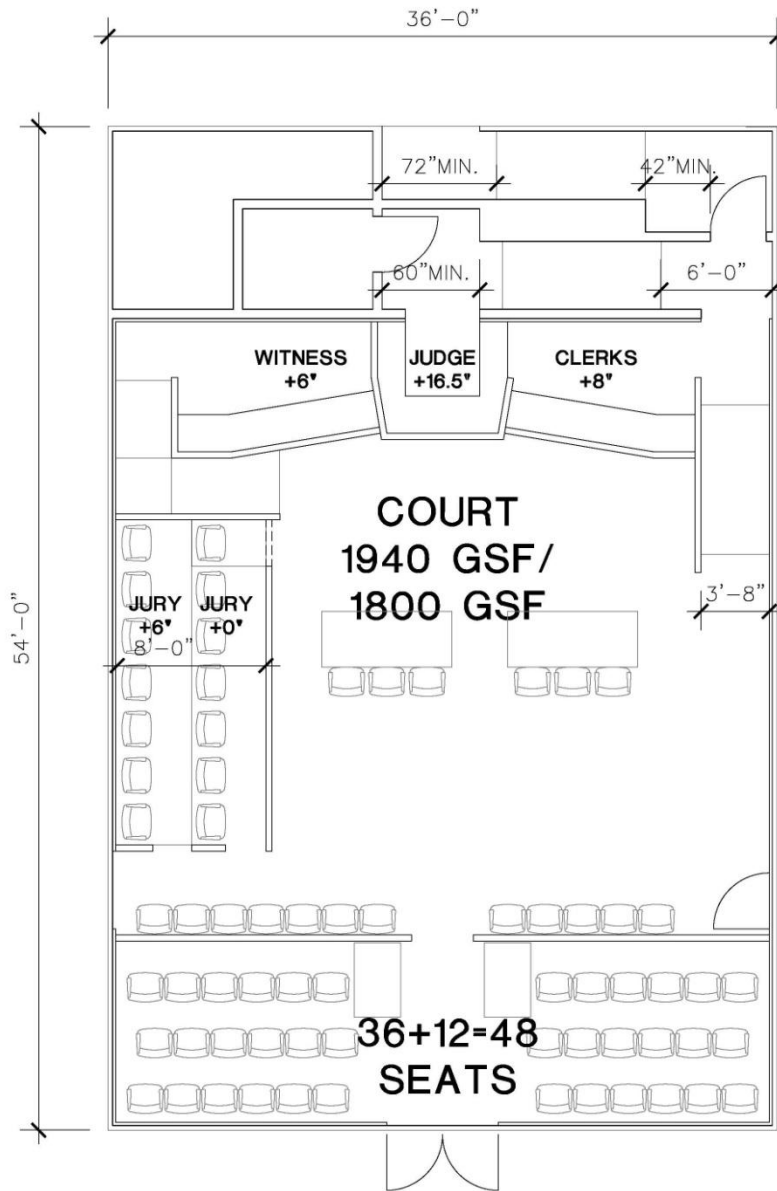
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## LAYOUT 1 STATISTICS

Dimensions: 36'x54'

Target area: 1750 sf

Actual area: 1800 sf

Or 1940 sf

50sf-190sf over area

Target seating: 66

Actual seating: 48

18 seats short

- Jury far from witness
- Witness larger than necessary
- Front row of jury at floor level
- Counsel tables off center



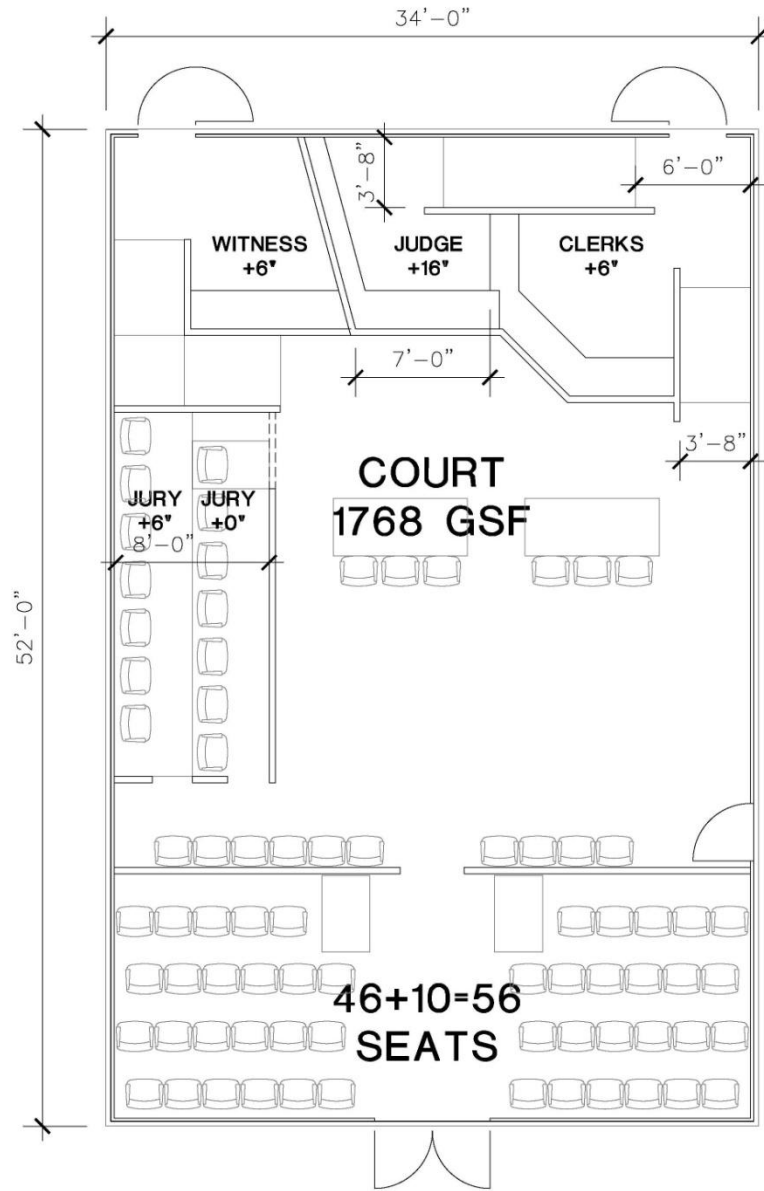
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## LAYOUT 2 STATISTICS

Dimensions: 34'x52'

Target area: 1750 sf

Actual area: 1768 sf

Within target area

Target seating: 66

Actual seating: 56

10 seats short

- Jury Far From Witness
- Clerk Forward Of Judge
- Front Row Of Jury At Floor Level
- Counsel Tables Off Center



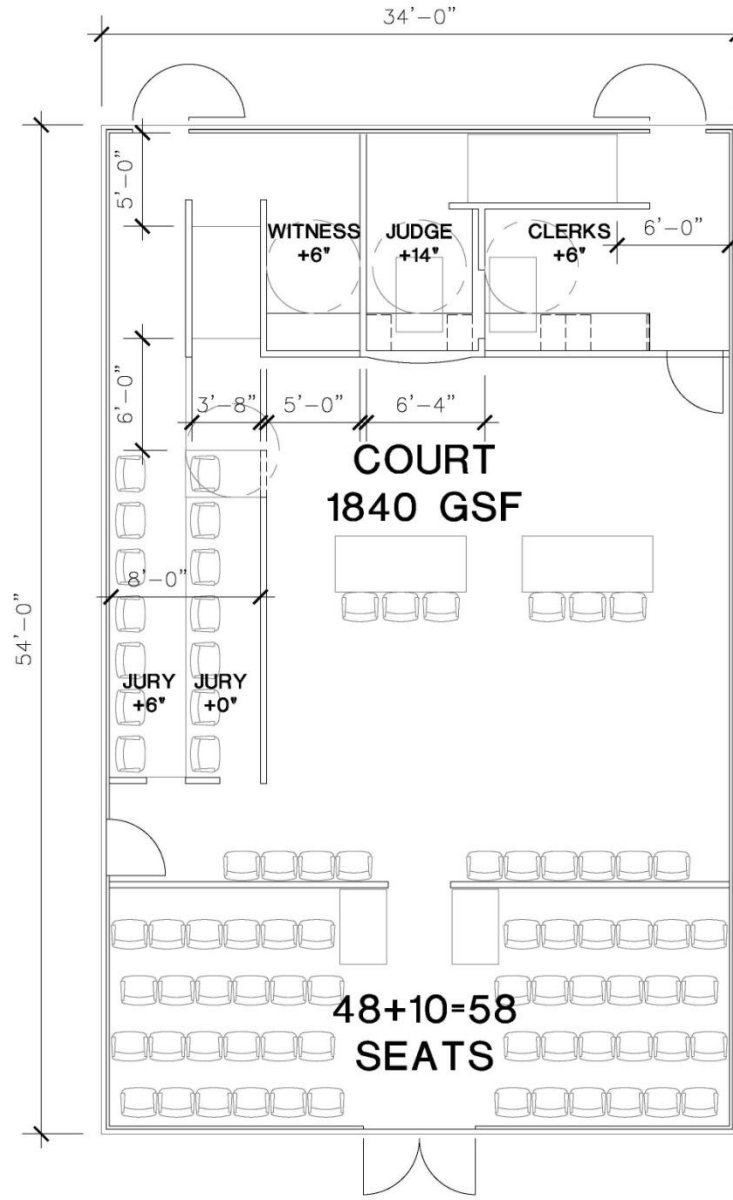
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## LAYOUT 3 STATISTICS

Dimensions: 34'x52'

Target area: 1750 sf

Actual area: 1840 sf

90sf over area

Target seating: 66

Actual seating: 58

8 seats short

- Jury far from witness
- Front row of jury at floor level
- Counsel tables off center

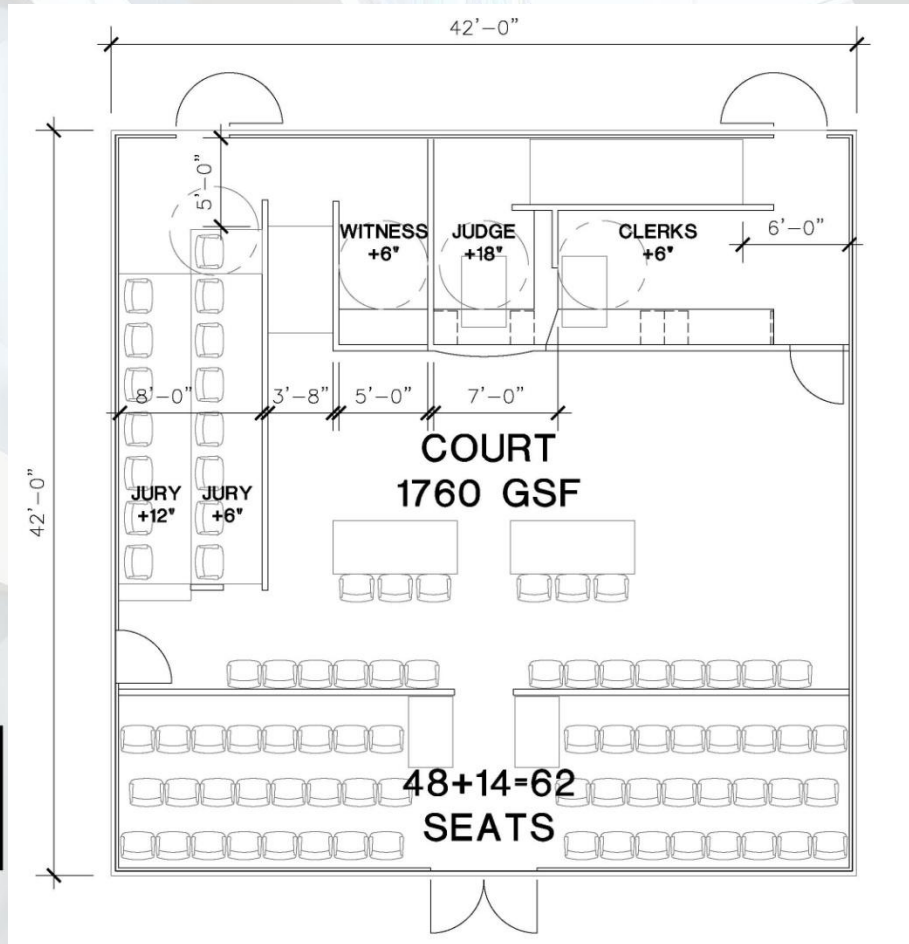
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## LAYOUT 4 STATISTICS

Dimensions: 42'x42'

Target area: 1750 sf

Actual area: 1760 sf

Within target area

Target seating: 66

Actual seating: 62

4 seats short

- Jury has good views to witness
- Counsel tables are centered
- 42' may be an inefficient planning module

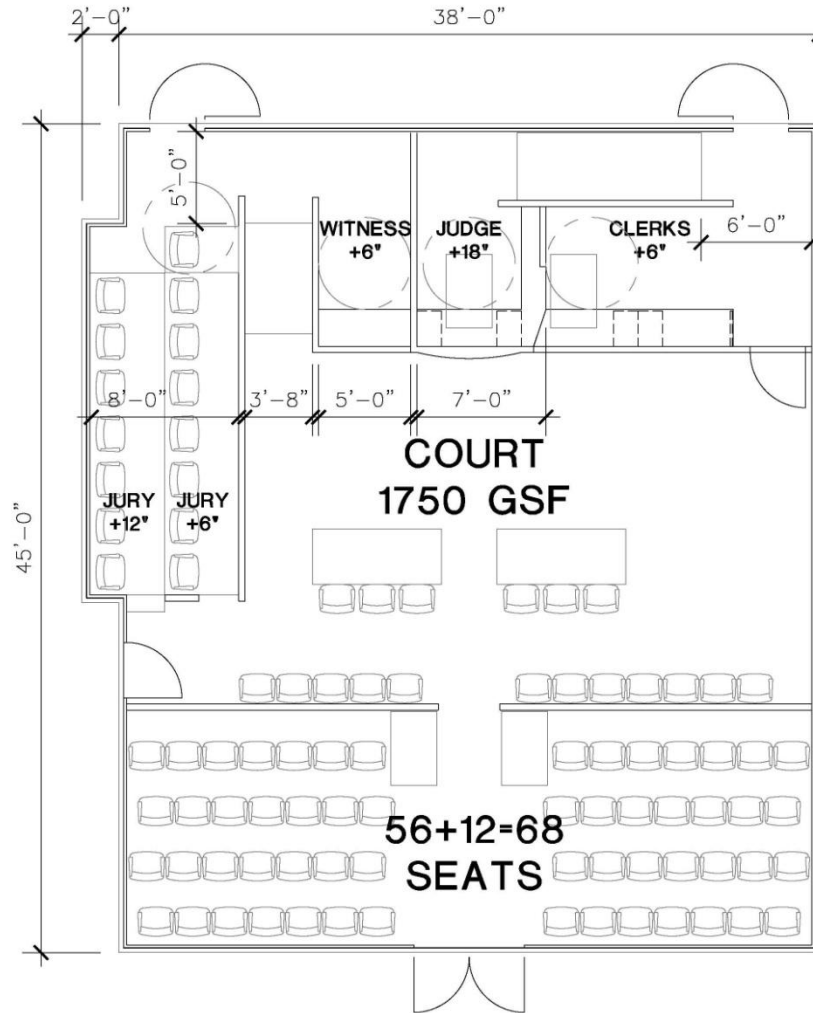
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## LAYOUT 5 STATISTICS

Dimensions: 38' x45'\*

Target area: 1750 sf

Actual area: 1750 sf

Within target area

Target seating: 66

Actual seating: 68

2 seats over

- Jury has good views to witness
- Counsel tables are centered
- 38' is an efficient module \* jury is pushed out 2'.

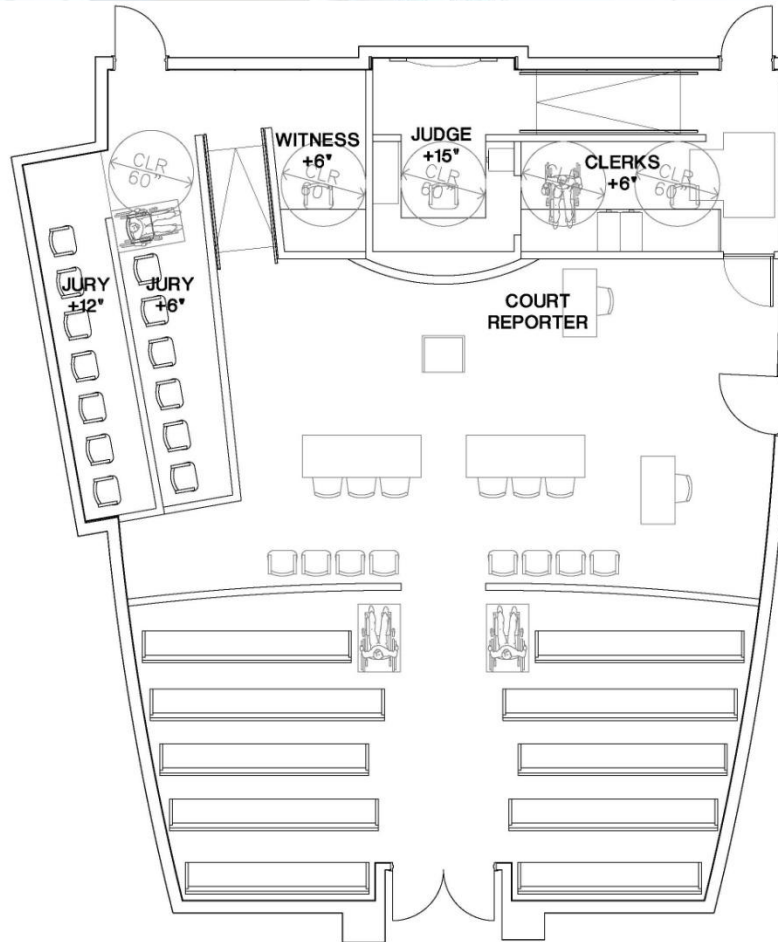
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## FINAL STATISTICS

Courtroom changed to  
large courtroom

Dimensions: 38' x49'

Target area: 2000 sf  
Actual area: 1950 sf  
Within target area

Target seating: 90  
Actual seating: 90

- Jury box tilted for better sightlines
- Jury box offers 60" clearance
- Curves/tilted jury box reinforce axis



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## CEILING:

- Low spectator ceiling and high litigation well ceiling
- Soffit continues curve of walls over judge

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**CEILING:**  
Ceiling element begins in lobby



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## CEILING:

Ceiling elements continue through spectators and towards the judge



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**CEILING:**  
Ceiling element terminates over judge under light monitor

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**JURY BOX:**

Pushed out of the courtroom volume and tilted



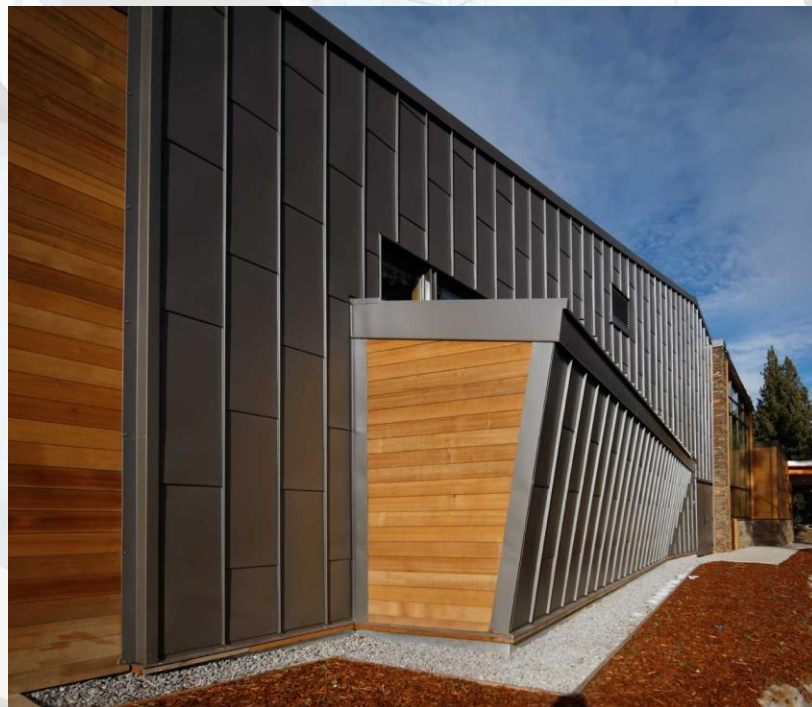
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**JURY BOX:**  
Expressed on the exterior





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**COURTROOM:**  
Expressed volumetrically on the exterior



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## JURY BOX:

Light shelf bounces light and define jury box  
All casework and wall finishes carefully detailed

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**JUDGE'S ALCOVE:**  
Location for court seal and flags



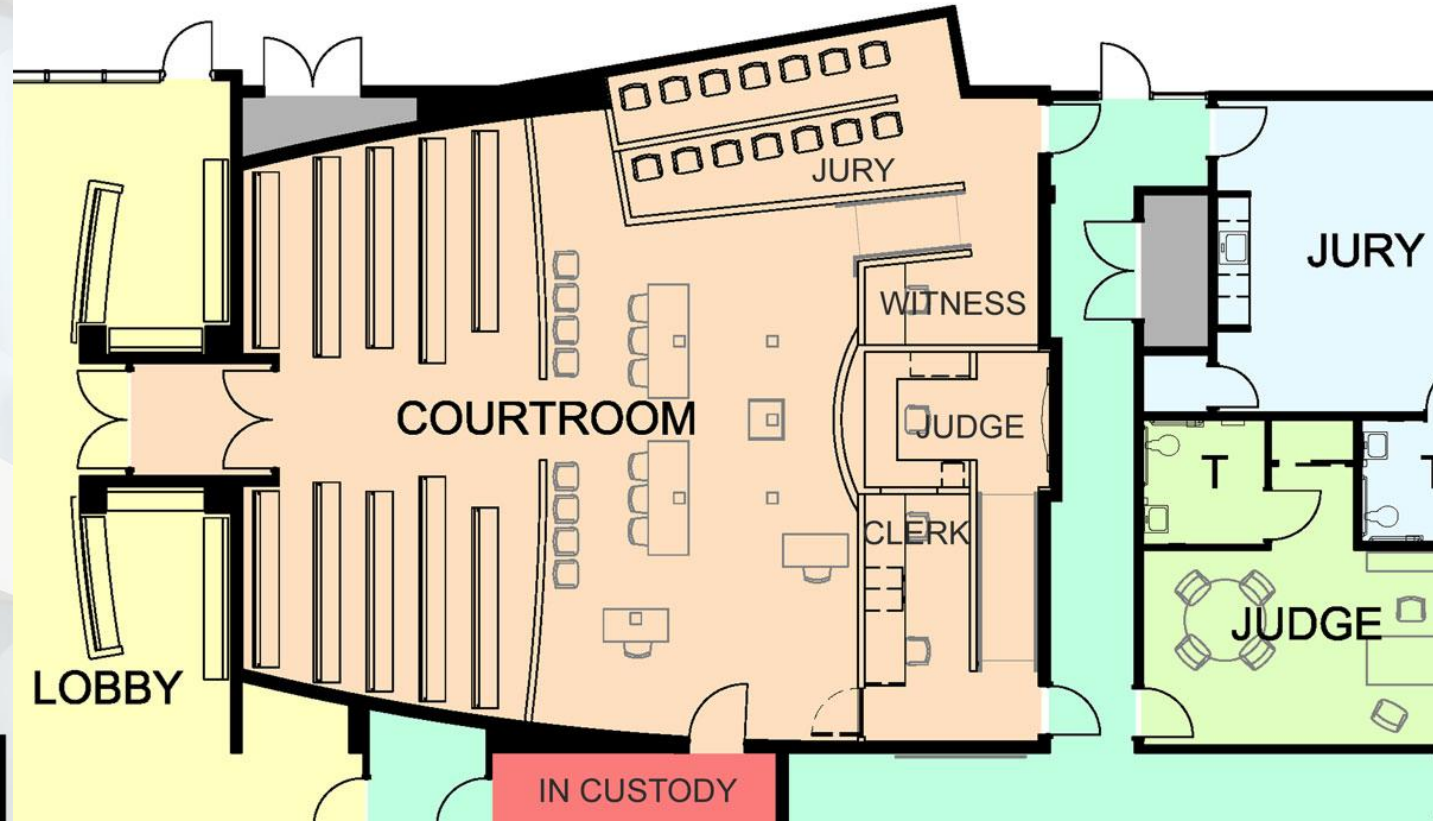
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**CENTER BENCH DESIGN**



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## HYBRID CENTER BENCH CASE STUDY:

Superior Court of California, Solano  
Fairfield California

### Renovation Project Completed: 2011

Judges desired center bench design with bench  
elevated 12" minimum off the floor

#### Studied:

- Center Bench
- Corner Bench
- Hybrid

#### Preference:

Traditional Center Bench-but accepted a Hybrid

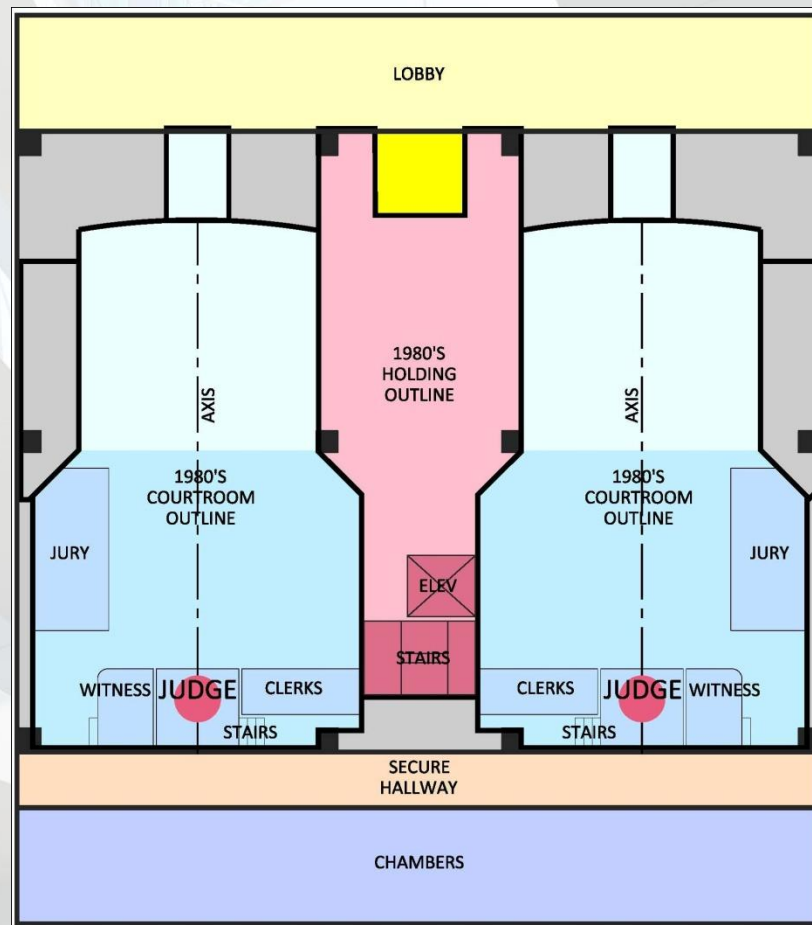
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Original design meeting 1980's requirements



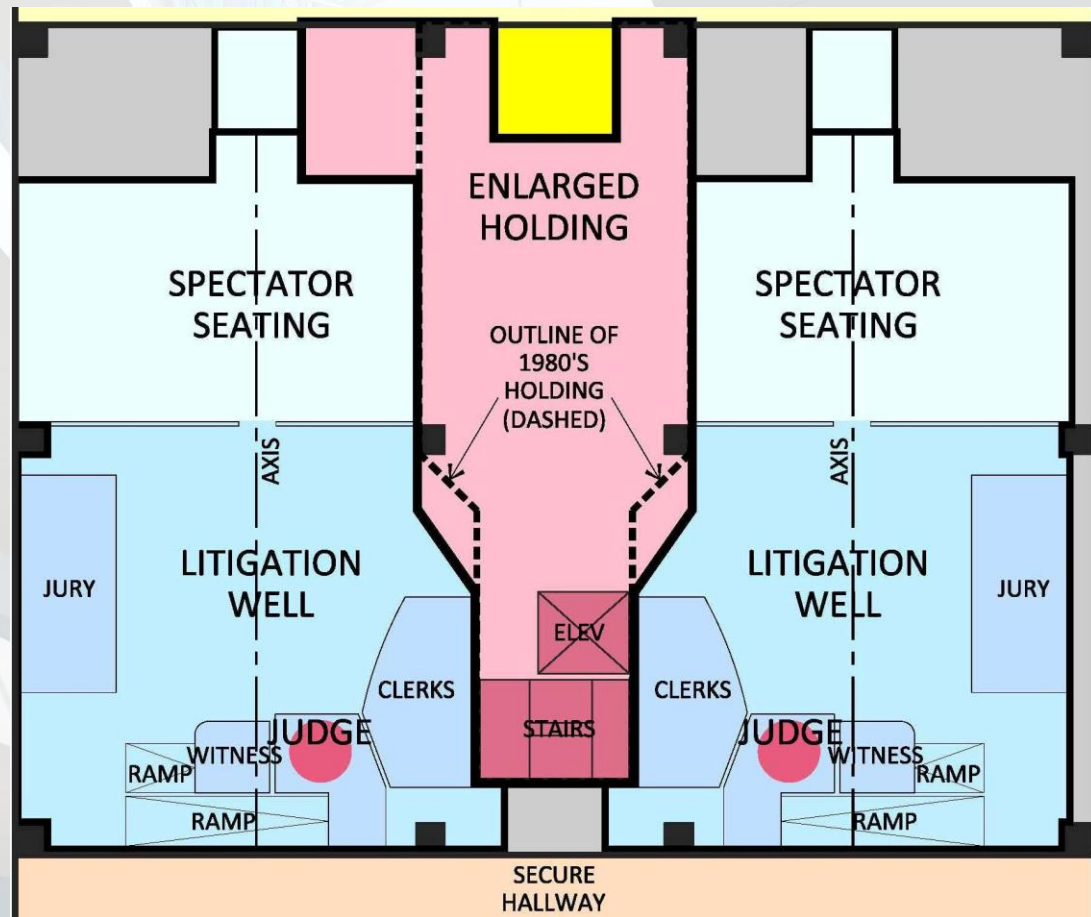
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Accessibility requirements required more floor area dedicated for ramping-forcing bench off axis

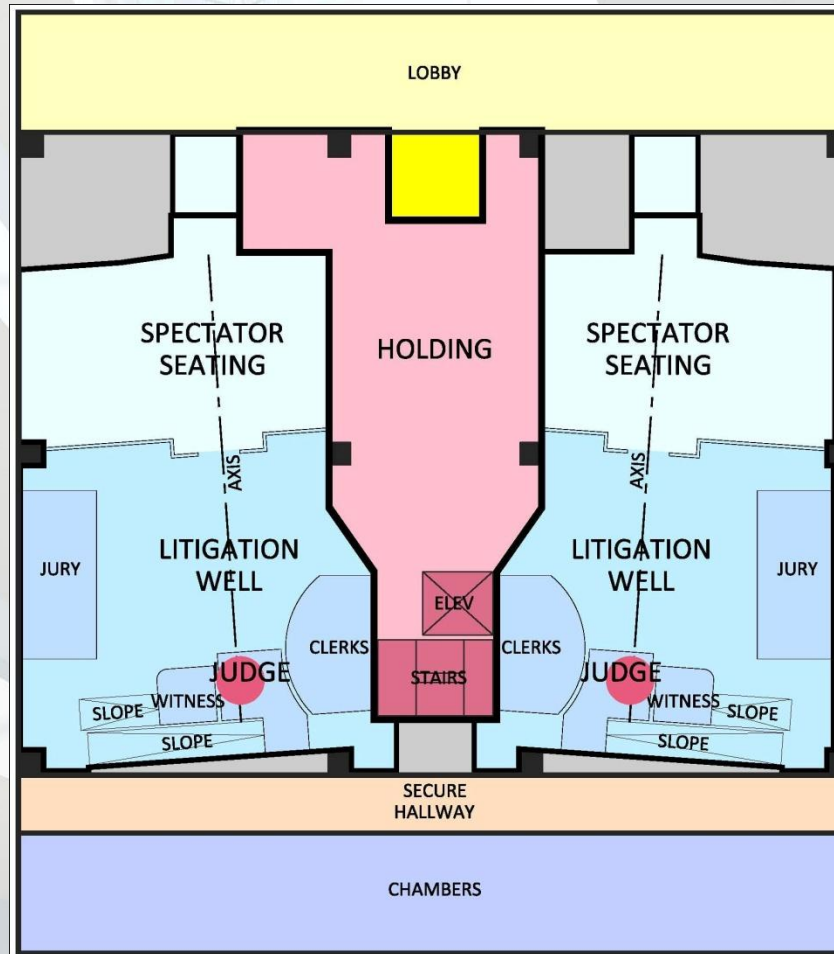
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Courtroom was tilted to focus axis on off-center judge

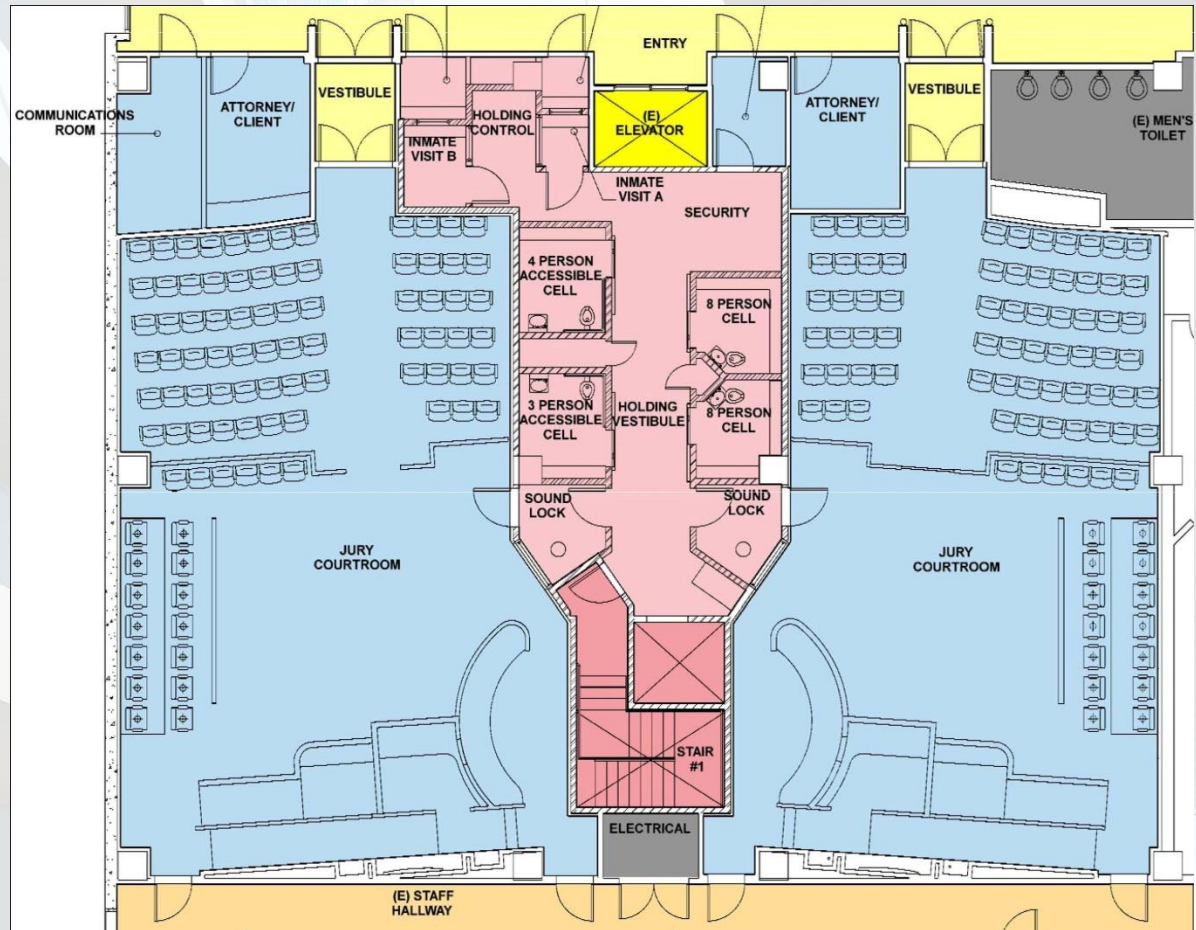
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Resulting in a re-centered courtroom



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Computer Visualization

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NOVEMBER 2-4, 2011  
LOS ANGELES, CA

CELEBRATING CREATIVE, COST EFFECTIVE, AND  
FUNCTIONAL DESIGN FOR JUSTICE FACILITIES



Center court appearance





# DESIGNING THE CONTEMPORARY COURTROOM

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Reinforce axis with ceiling





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Reinforce axis with back drop



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Clerk counter designed to accommodate accessible clearances,  
maximize counter space, accentuate judge



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Designed to create the formality of a traditional center courtroom



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# THE CASE FOR THE CORNER BENCH



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## HISTORICAL REFERENCES

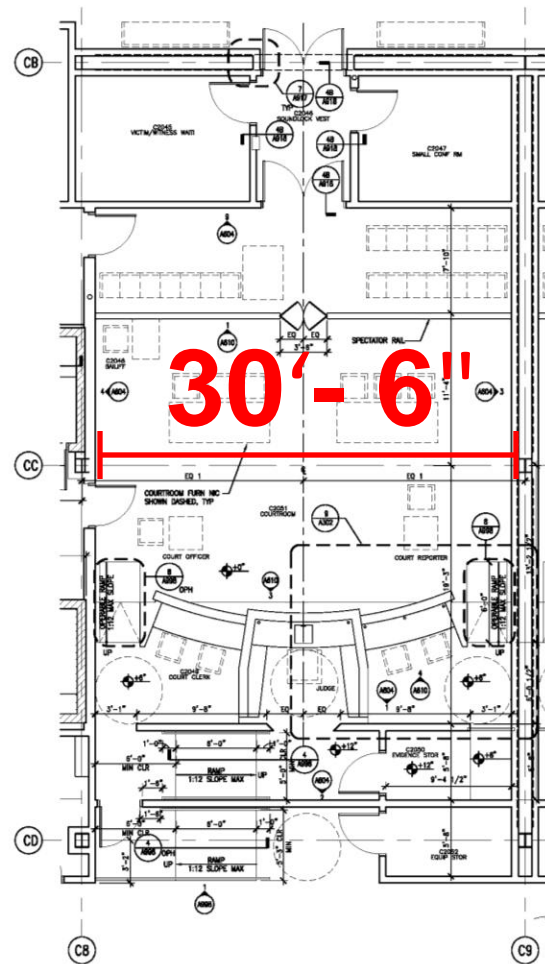
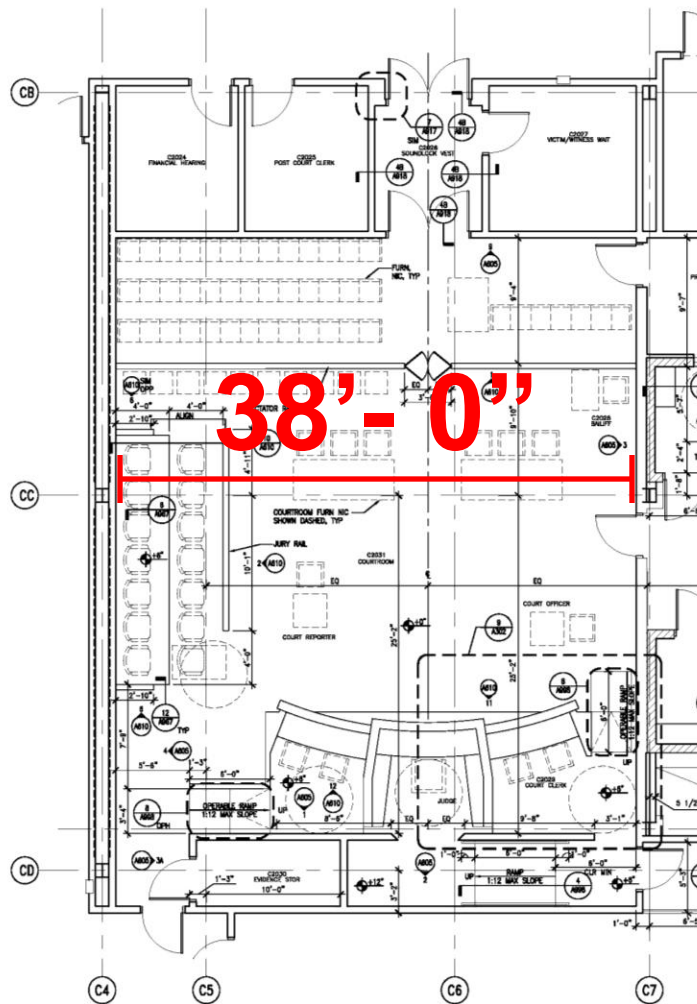


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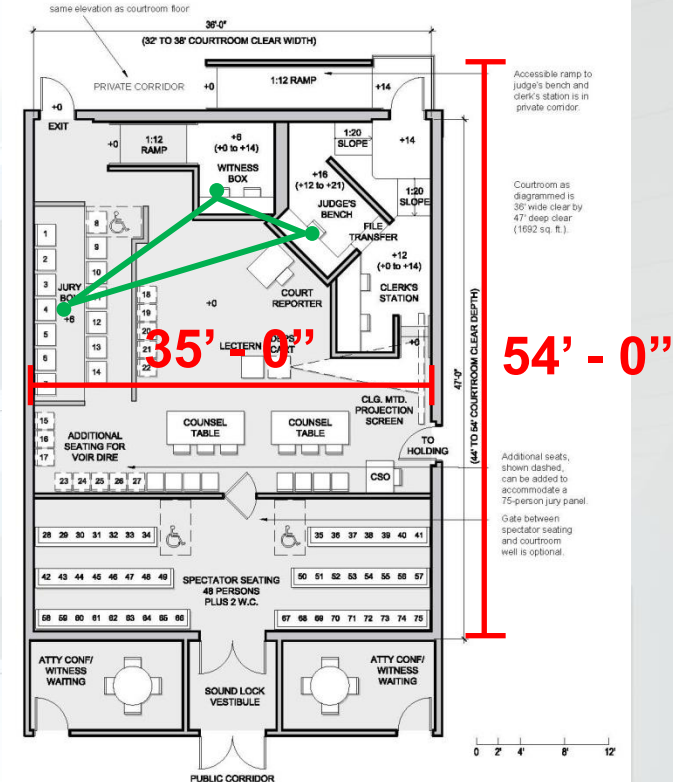
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## Corner Bench Advantages

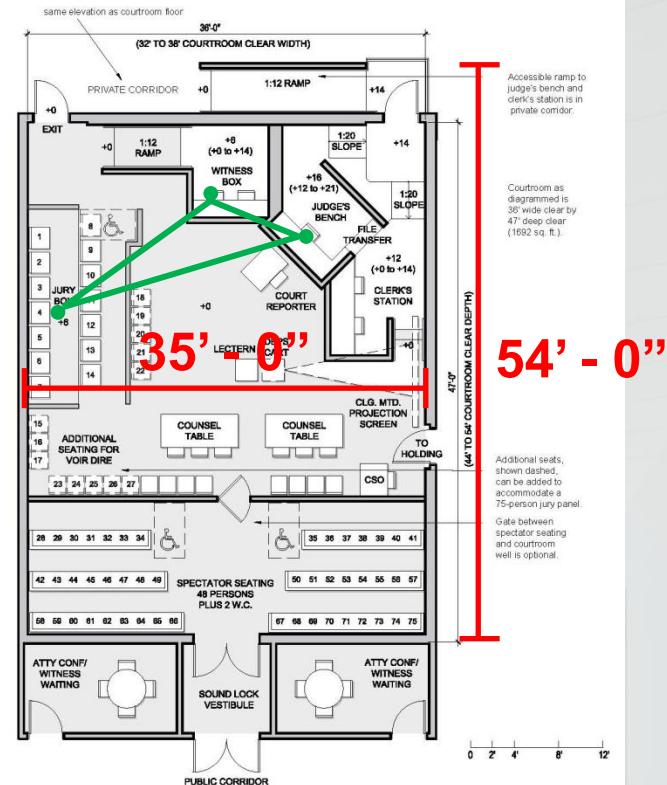
- Cost:
  - 9% - 12% less area required
  - Eliminates ramp “switchback” area
- Sightlines:
  - Judge/witness/jury/ clerk/bailiff view angles
  - Improved judicial vision field/command
  - Participants closer



1,680 SF  
1,890 SF with ramp

## Corner Bench Advantages

- Improved Operations:
  - Larger clerk work areas
  - Easier judge/clerk transfer & communications
  - Shorter judge escape route
  - Accessible storage area behind judge
- Other:
  - Changes courtroom dynamic
  - Less “pressure” on judge
  - Facilitates proceedings in non-criminal trial cases



1,680 SF  
1,890 SF with ramp



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## Corner Bench Disadvantages

- Less formal and authoritative
- Psychological/symbolic authority of judge diminished
- Successful implementation can be challenging



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## CASE STUDY: R. E. ARNASON JUSTICE CENTER





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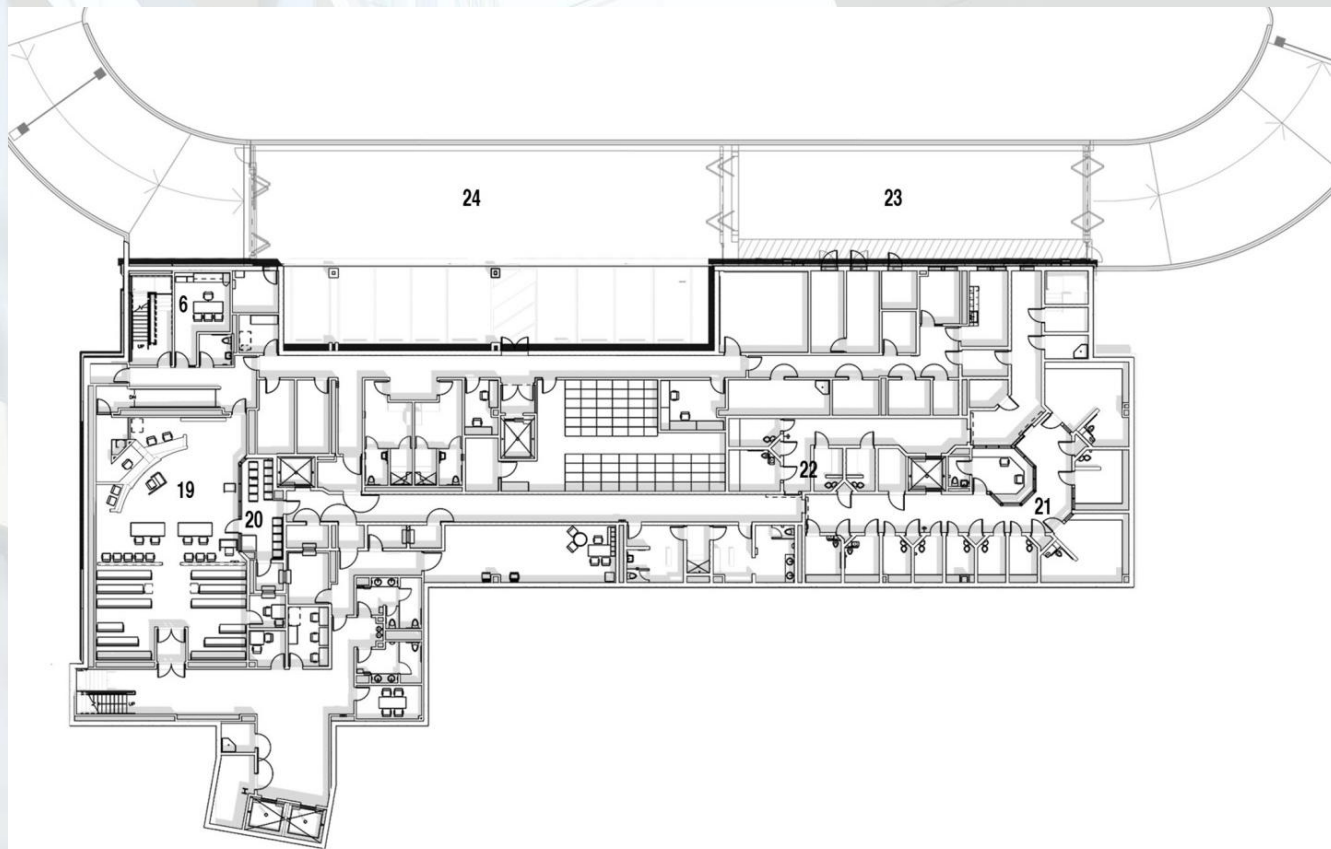
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## CASE STUDY: R. E. ARNASON JUSTICE CENTER



- 1 Security Lobby
- 2 Jury Assembly
- 3 Public Windows
- 4 Traffic Courtroom
- 5 Family Courtroom
- 6 Chamber
- 7 Clerks
- 8 Office
- 9 Break
- 10 Conference
- 11 Mediation, Workshop
- 12 Secure Core
- 13 Jury Deliberation
- 14 Court Reporters
- 15 Justice Partner Offices
- 16 Cafe
- 17 Living Roof
- 18 Criminal Courtroom
- 19 Arraignment Courtroom
- 20 Arraignment Dock
- 21 Holding
- 22 Juvenile Holding
- 23 Sally Port
- 24 Judicial Secure Parking

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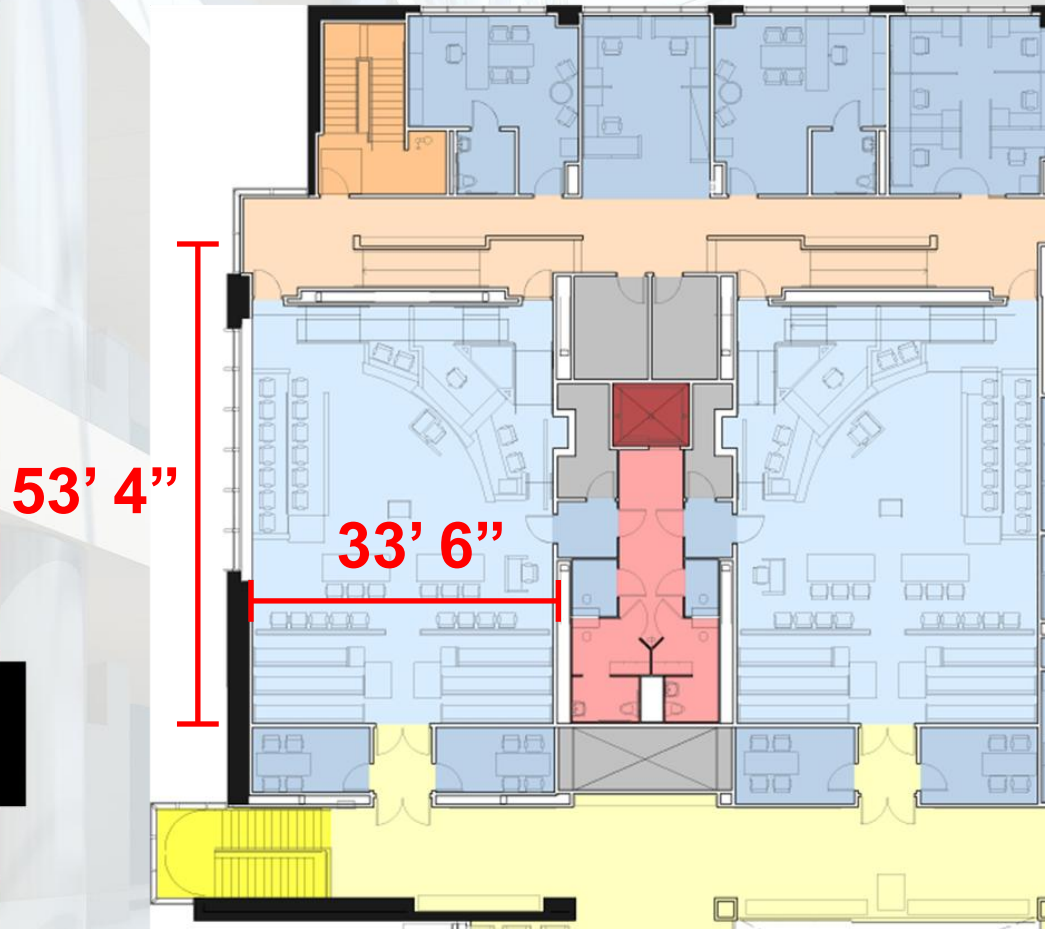
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## CASE STUDY: R. E. ARNASON JUSTICE CENTER



1578 SF  
1780 SF with ramp

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## RICHARD E. ARNASON JUSTICE CENTER





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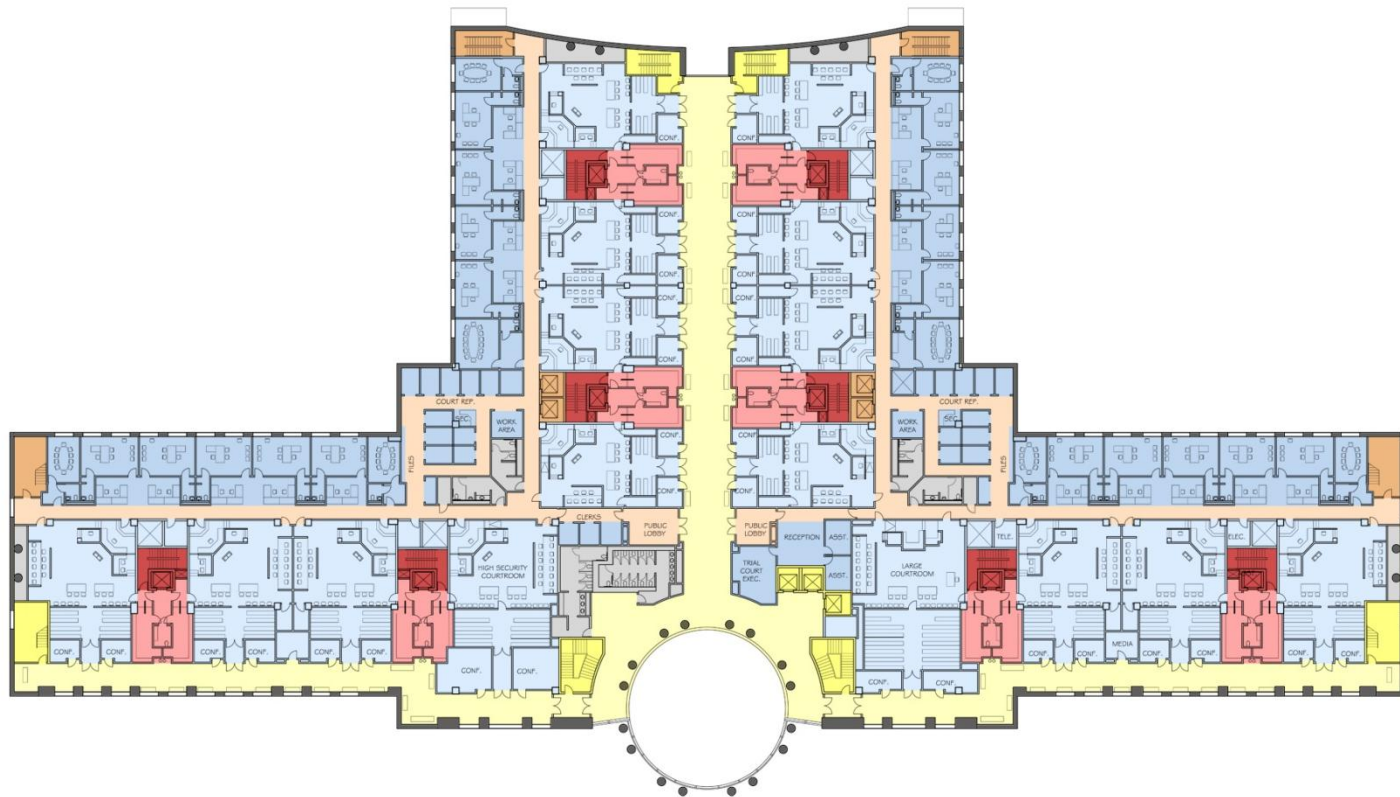
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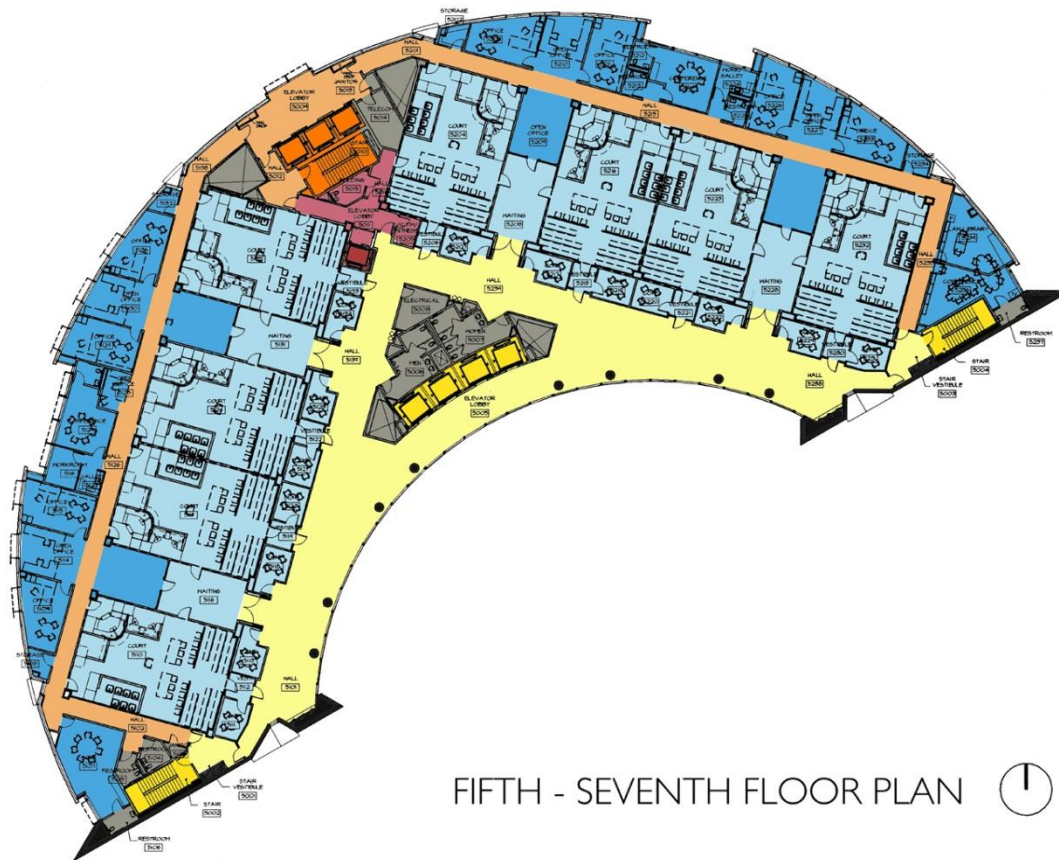
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## PHOENIX, AZ



FIFTH - SEVENTH FLOOR PLAN





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## KENT COUNTY, MI

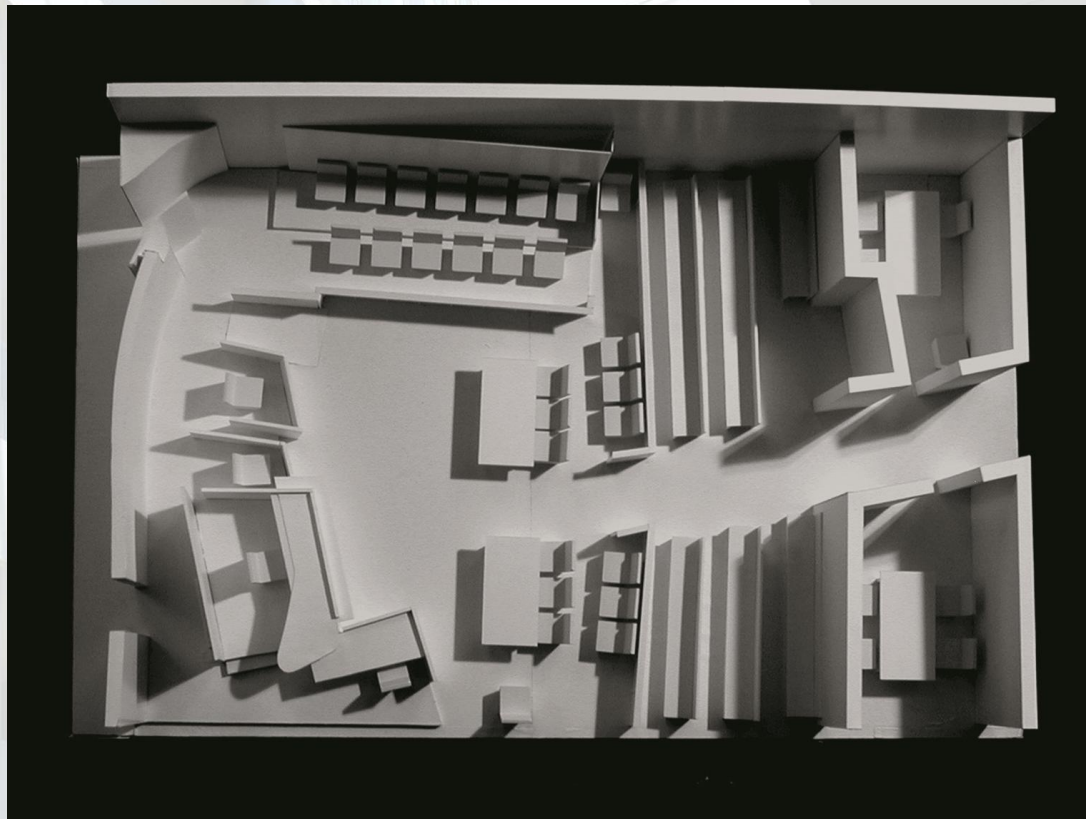




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## KENT COUNTY, MI



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## KENT COUNTY, MI





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## LORAIN COUNTY, OH



SEVENTH FLOOR

0 10 20 30 50



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# LORAIN COUNTY, OH





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## HIALEAH, FL



LEVEL TWO FLOOR PLAN

0 6 12 24 FT

1. COURTROOMS
2. PUBLIC WAITING
3. MEDIATION
4. HEARING ROOMS
5. FUTURE COURTROOM



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## MAMMOTH LAKES, CA



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## MAMMOTH LKES, CA





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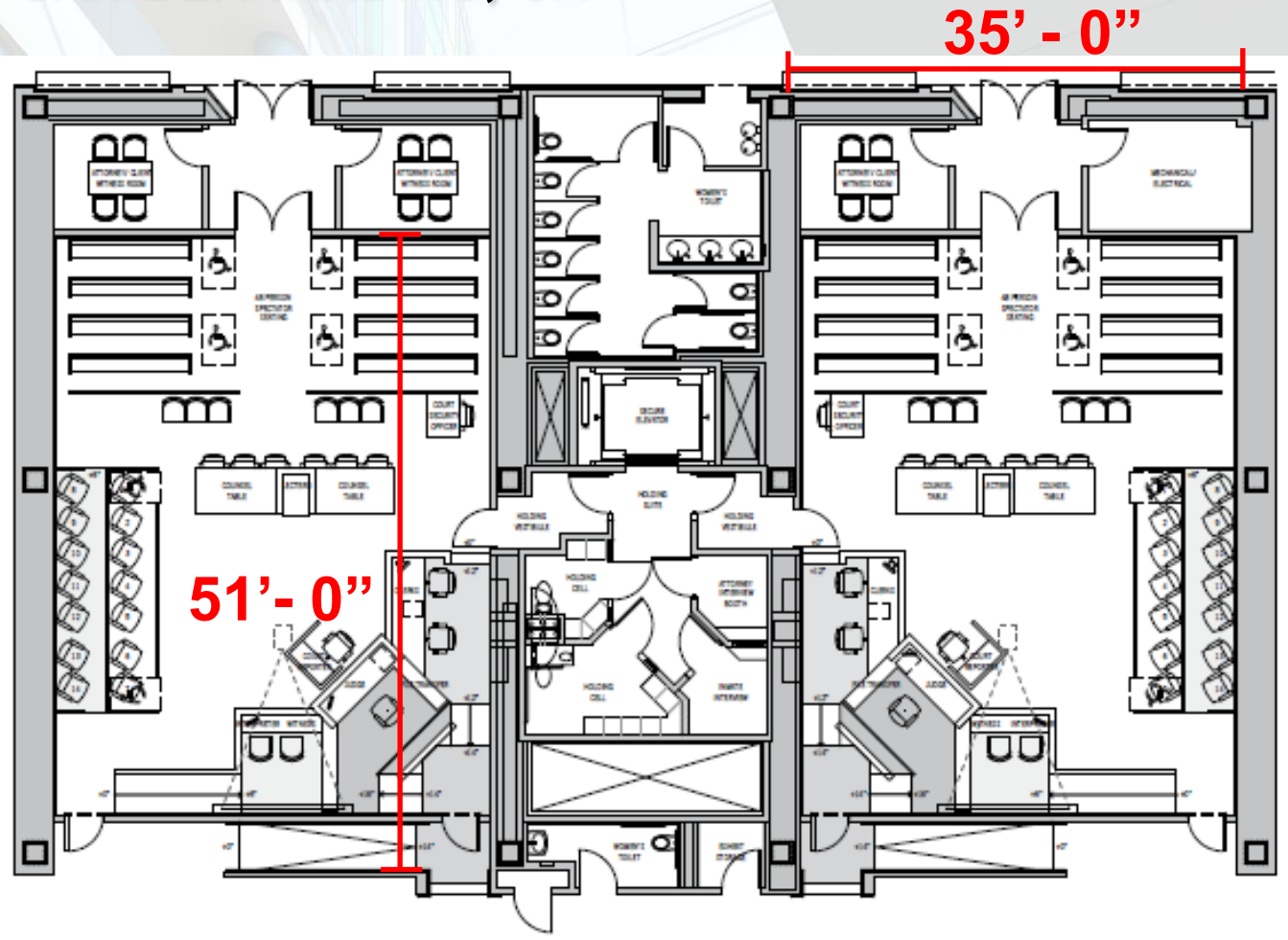
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## SAN BERNARDINO, CA





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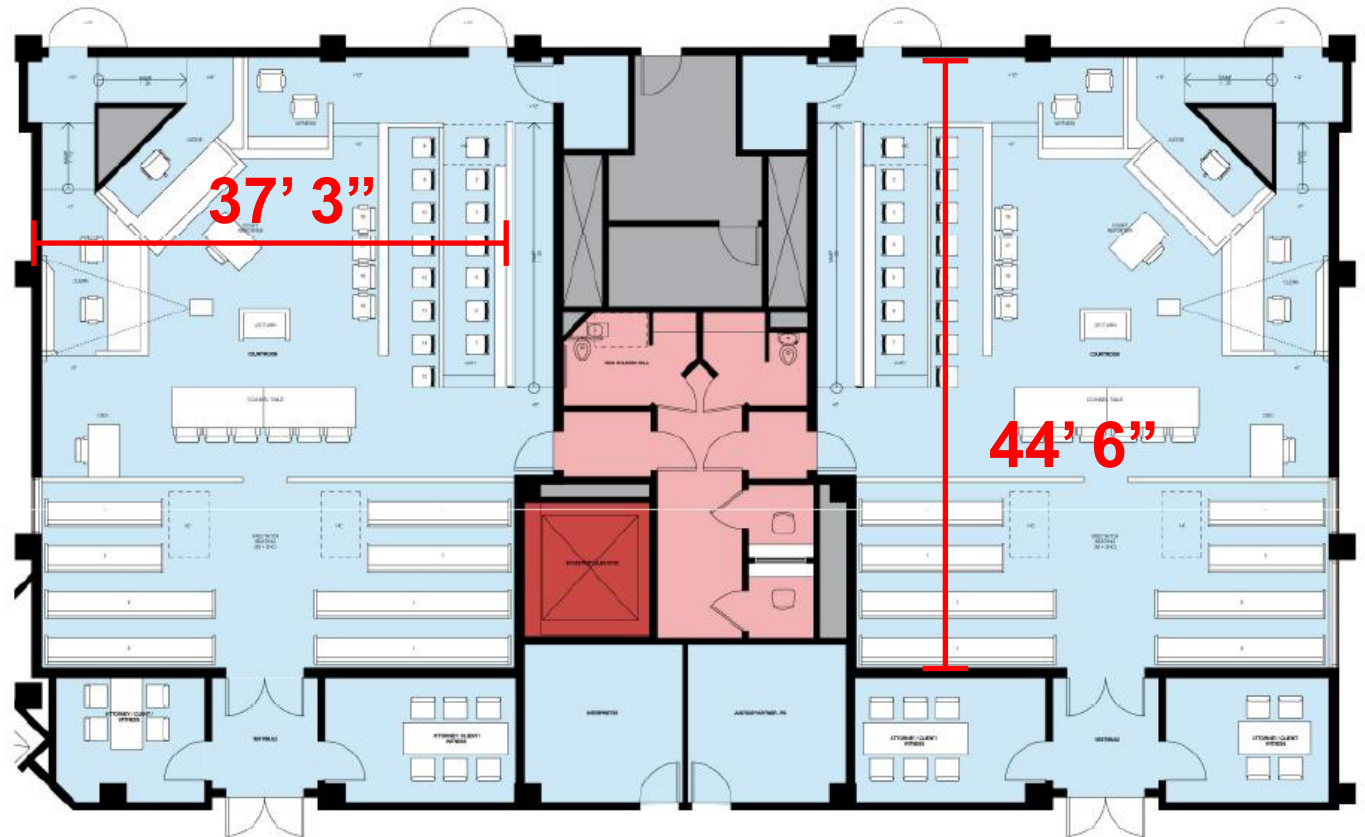
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## SOUTH COUNTY, TULARE, CA



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## Elevating Corner Bench Prominence

- State Seal
- Flags
- Lighting: Natural, artificial
- Change of materials/colors
- Contrast of materials/colors
- Ceiling patterns
- Entry and aisle angle





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## Corner Bench Summary

- Area savings of 9-12% per courtroom - 5-8% per courthouse.
- Better sightlines for all
- Improves court operations – security, communications, paper transfer, etc.
- Reduced prominence of judge can be mitigated
- Success of mitigation depends on architect
- Not suitable for every courtroom



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# RE-CENTERED COURTROOM



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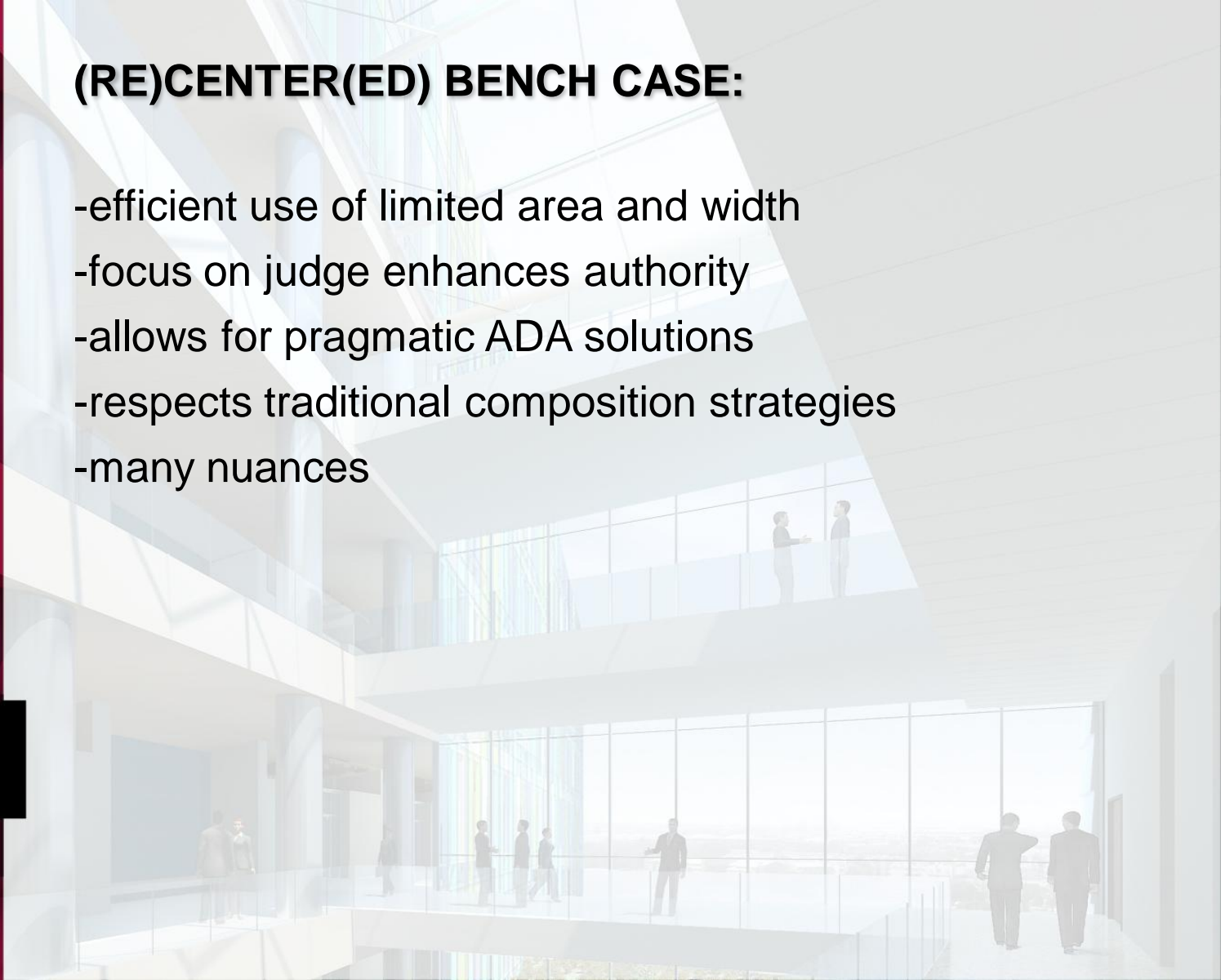
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## **(RE)CENTER(ED) BENCH CASE:**

- efficient use of limited area and width
- focus on judge enhances authority
- allows for pragmatic ADA solutions
- respects traditional composition strategies
- many nuances





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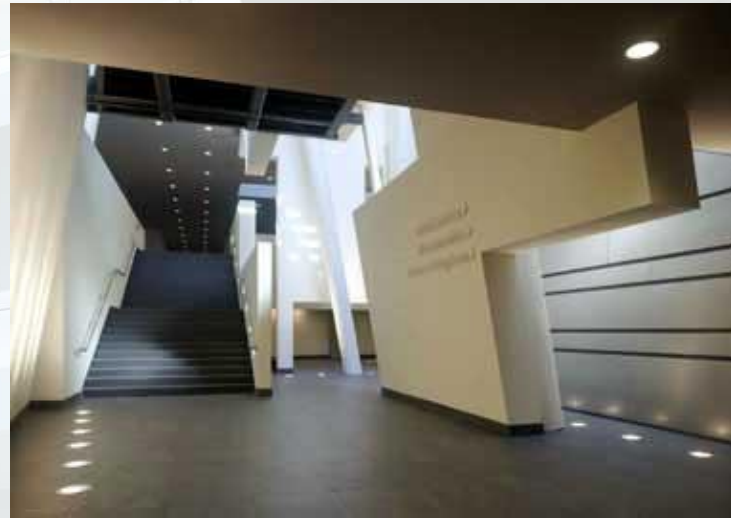
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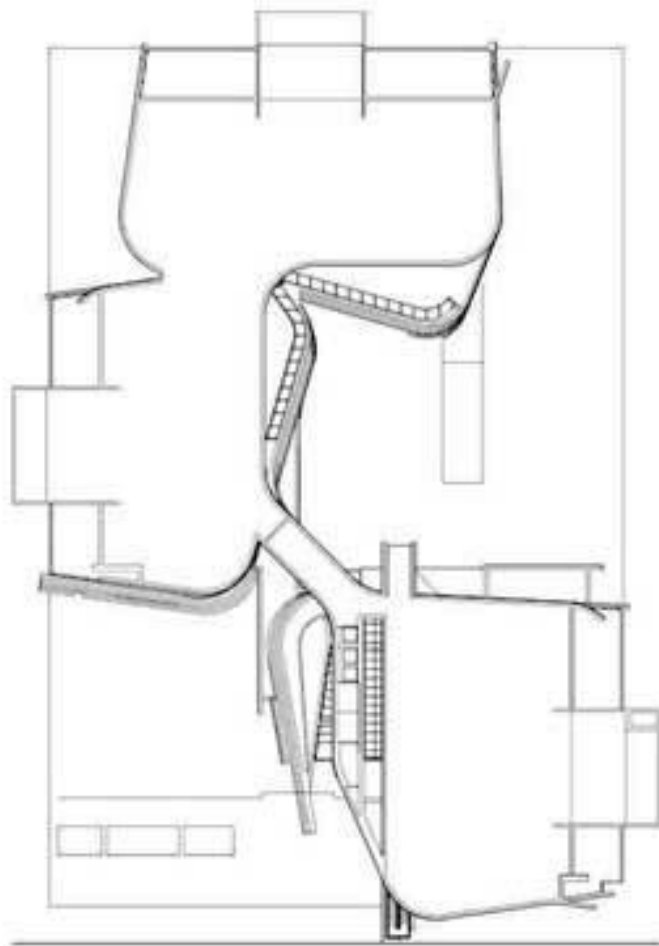
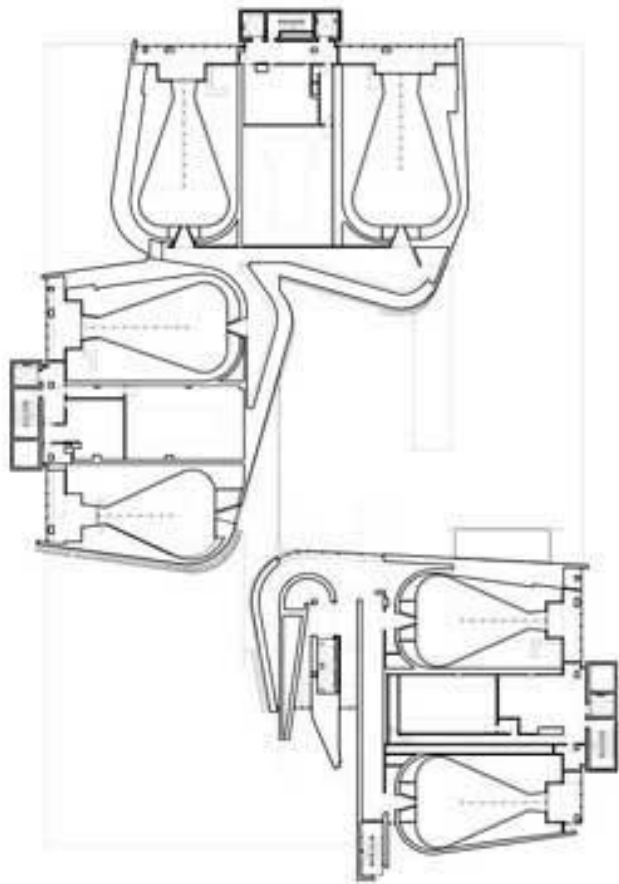
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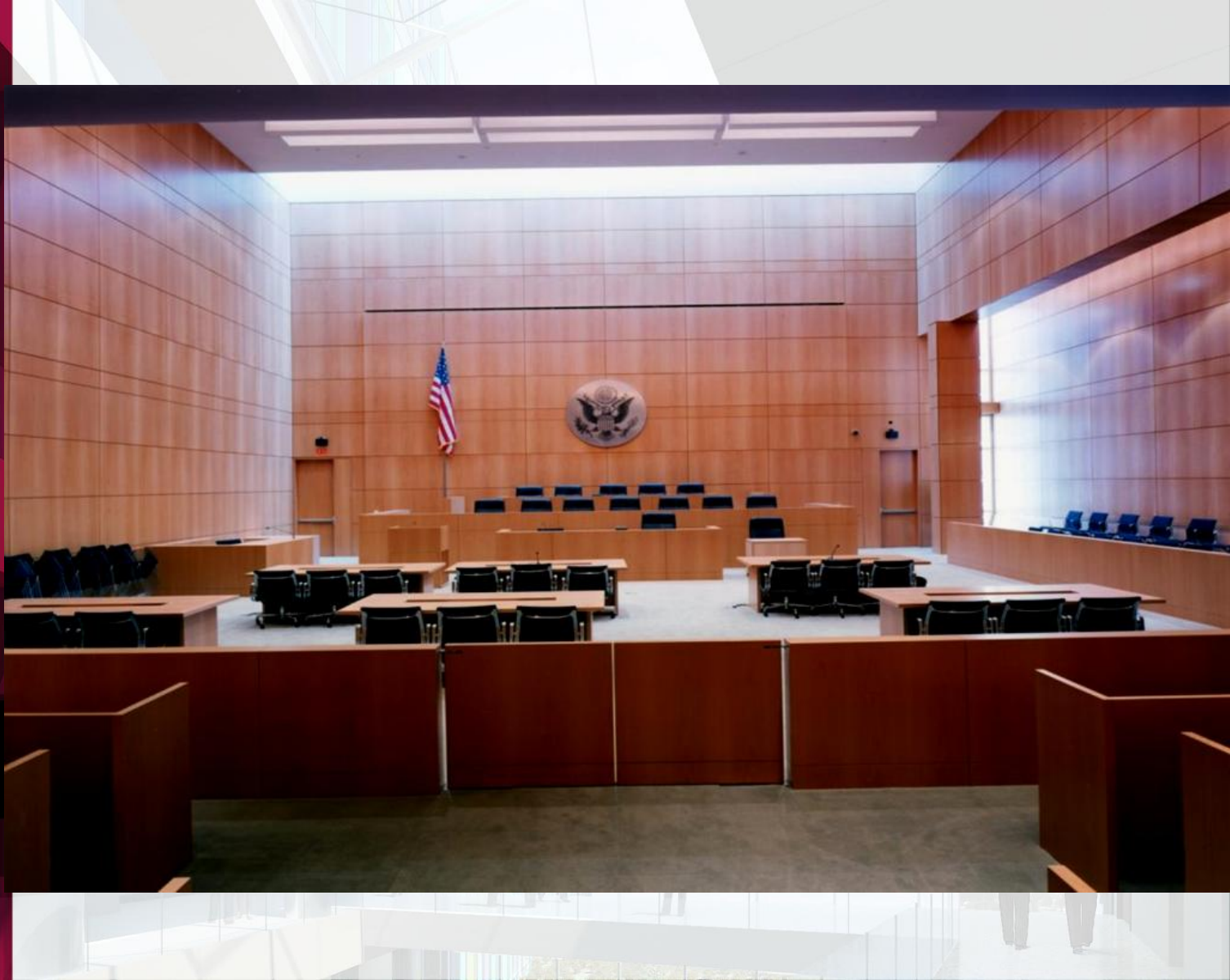
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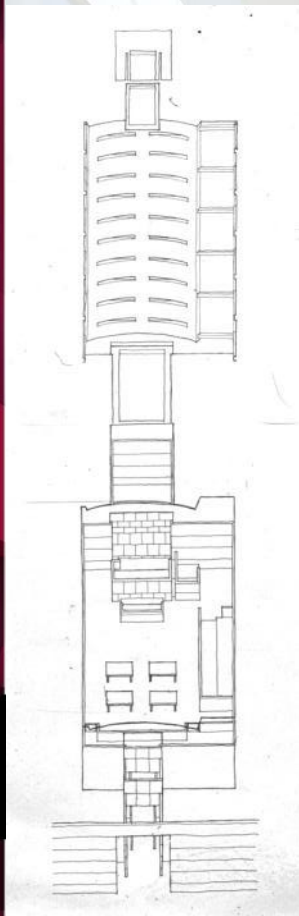
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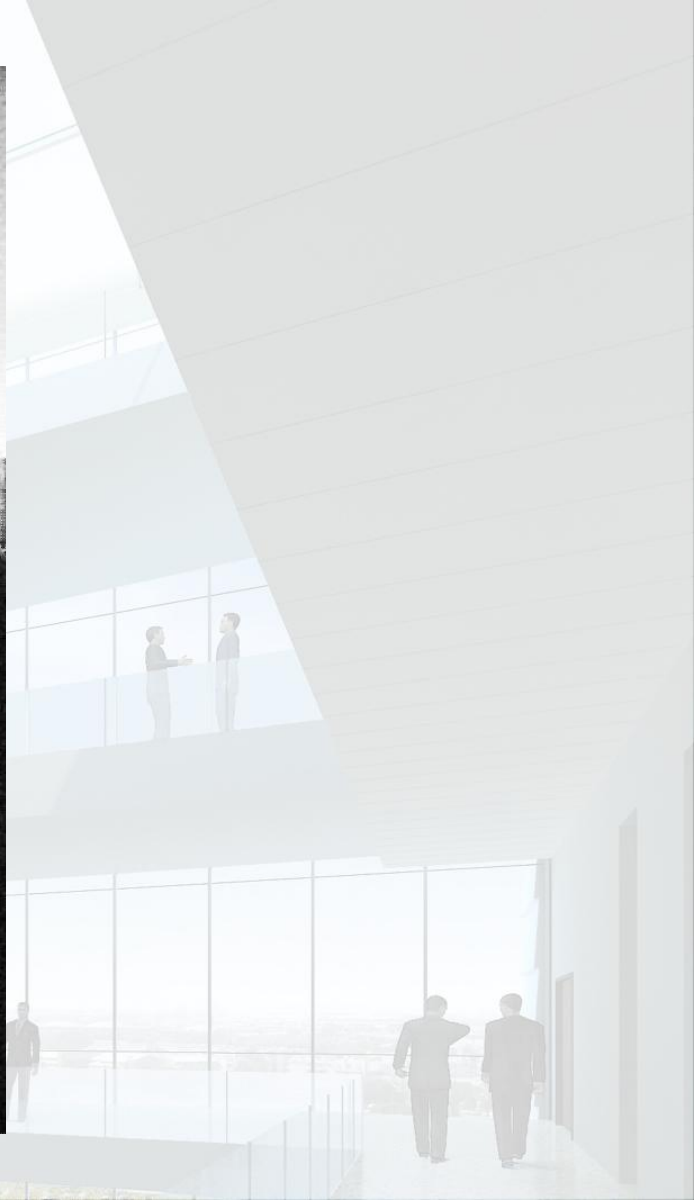
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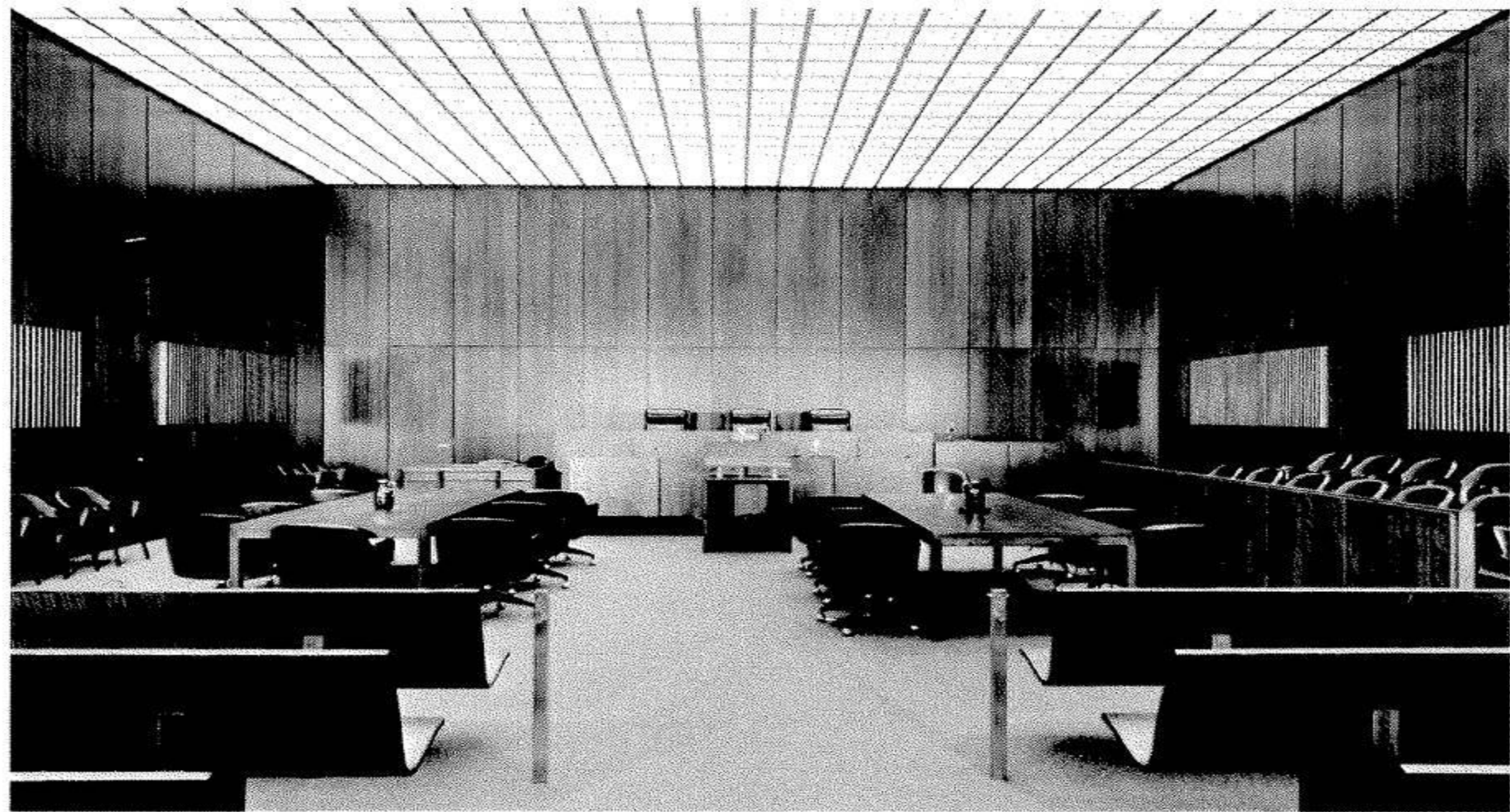
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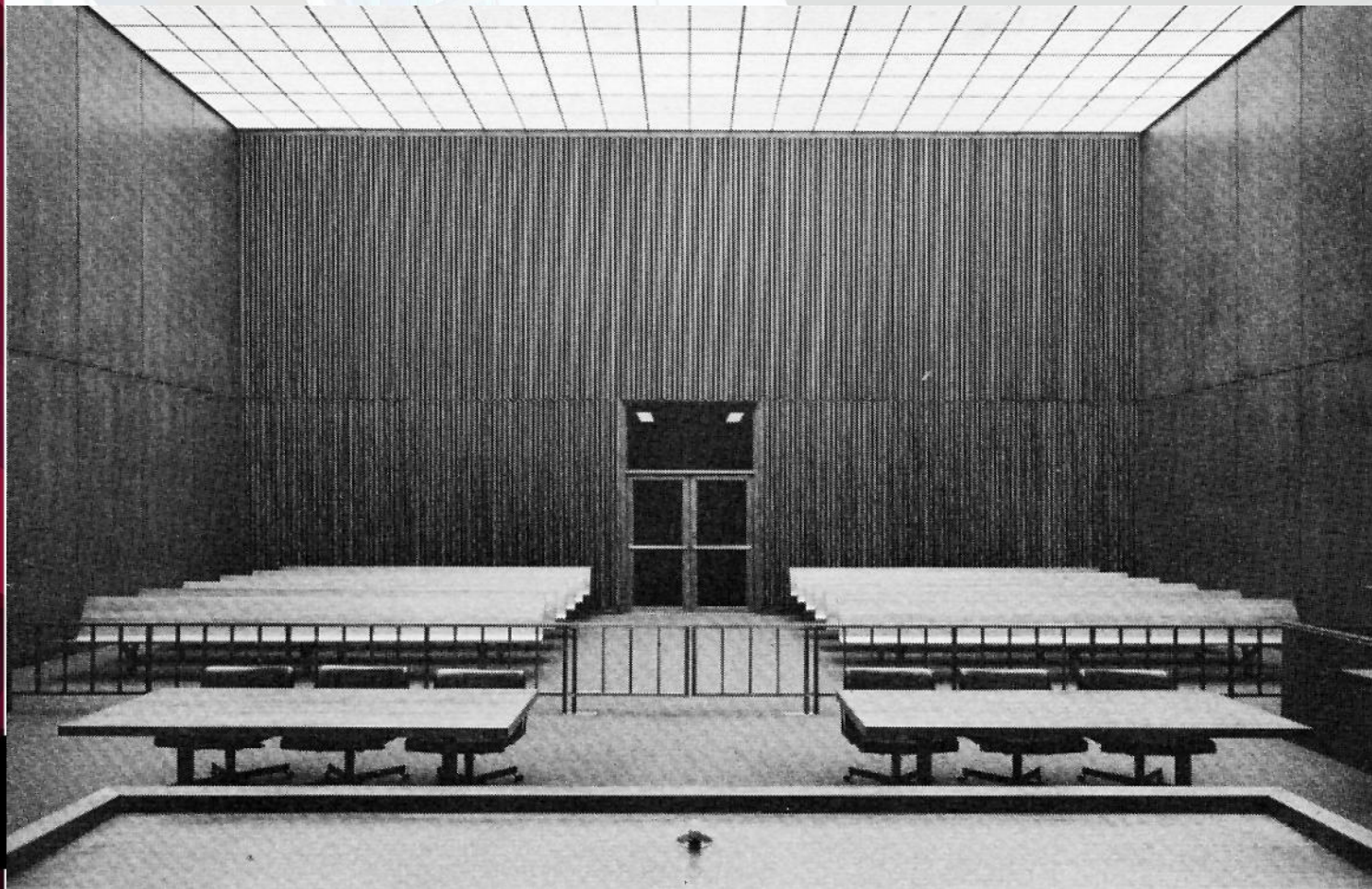
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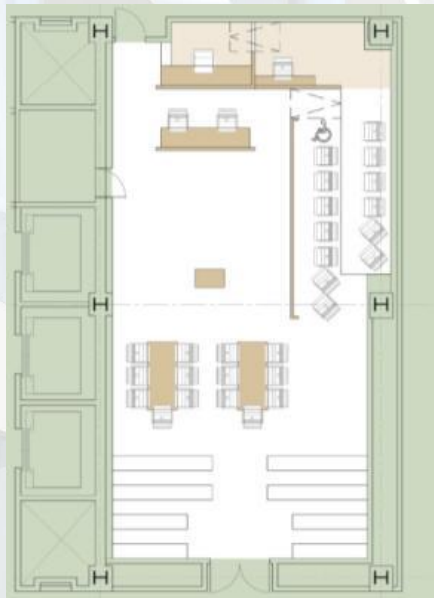
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PRAGMATISM**

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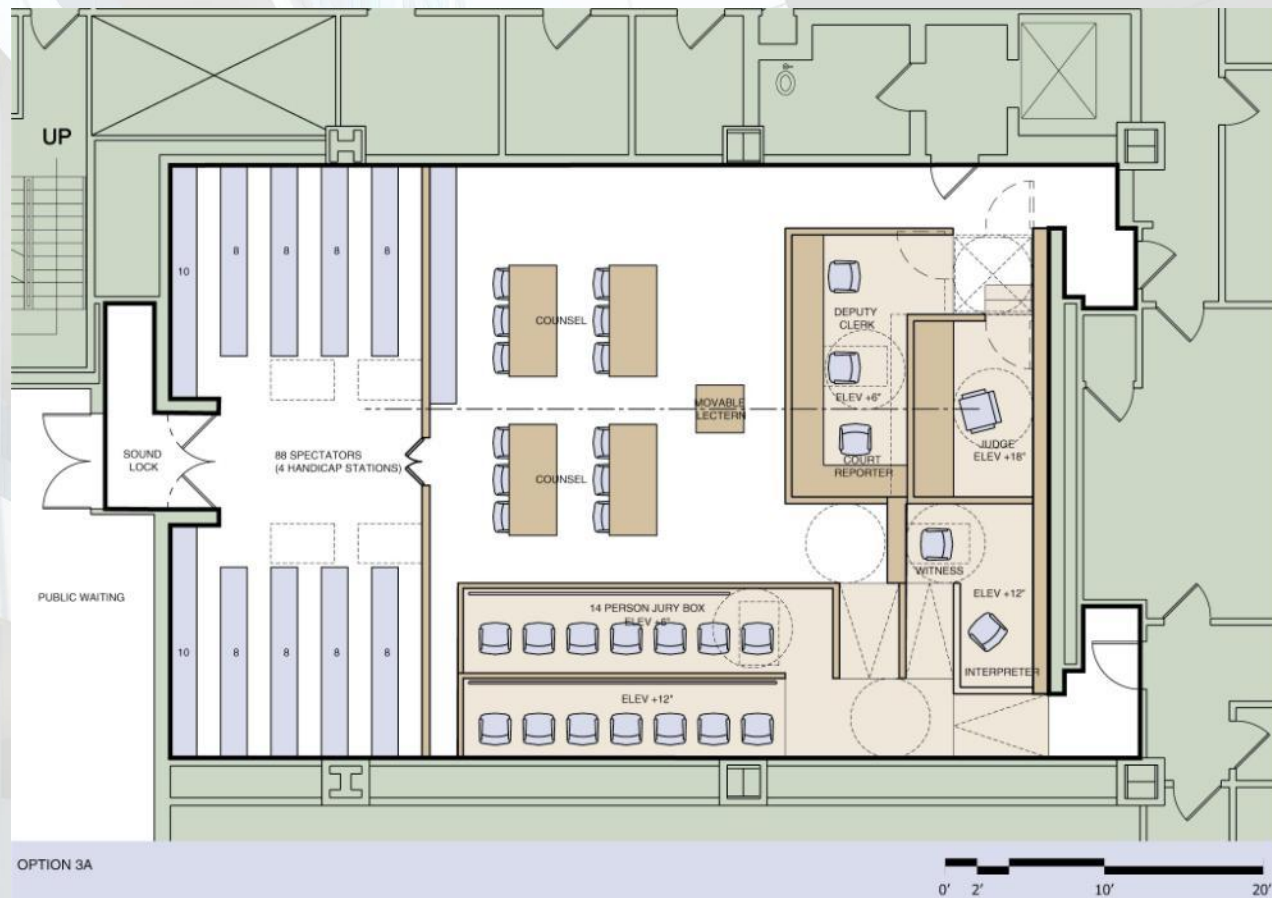
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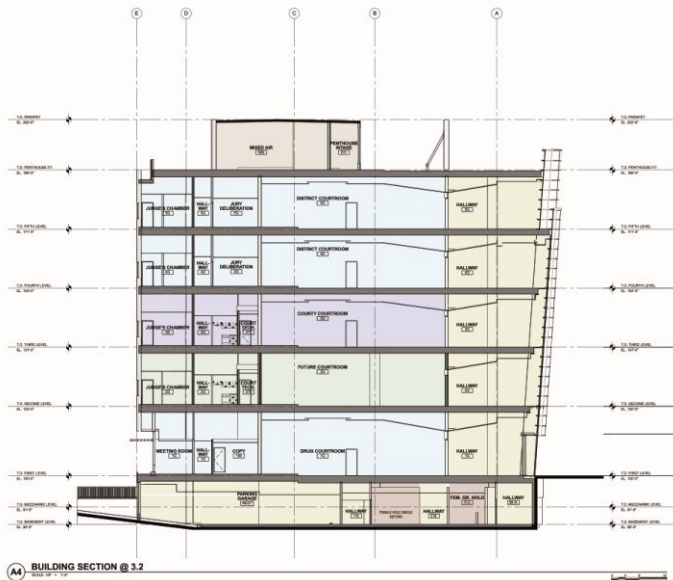
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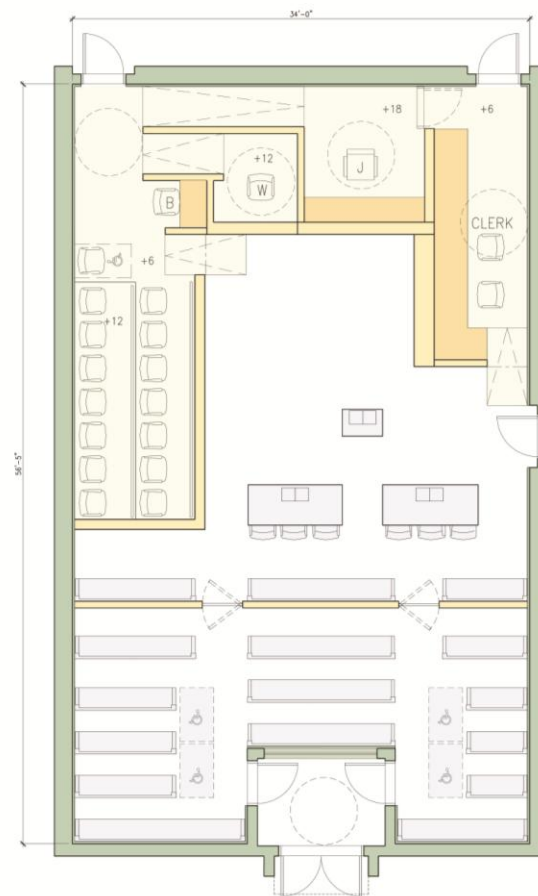


1.avi



1 DISTRICT COURTROOM PLAN - SKETCH A  
1/4" = 1'-0"

70 SEATS + 4 H.C. SPACES  
AREA: 1,918 SQ.FT.



2 DISTRICT COURTROOM PLAN - SKETCH B  
1/4" = 1'-0"

70 SEATS + 4 H.C. SPACES  
AREA: 1,918 SQ.FT.

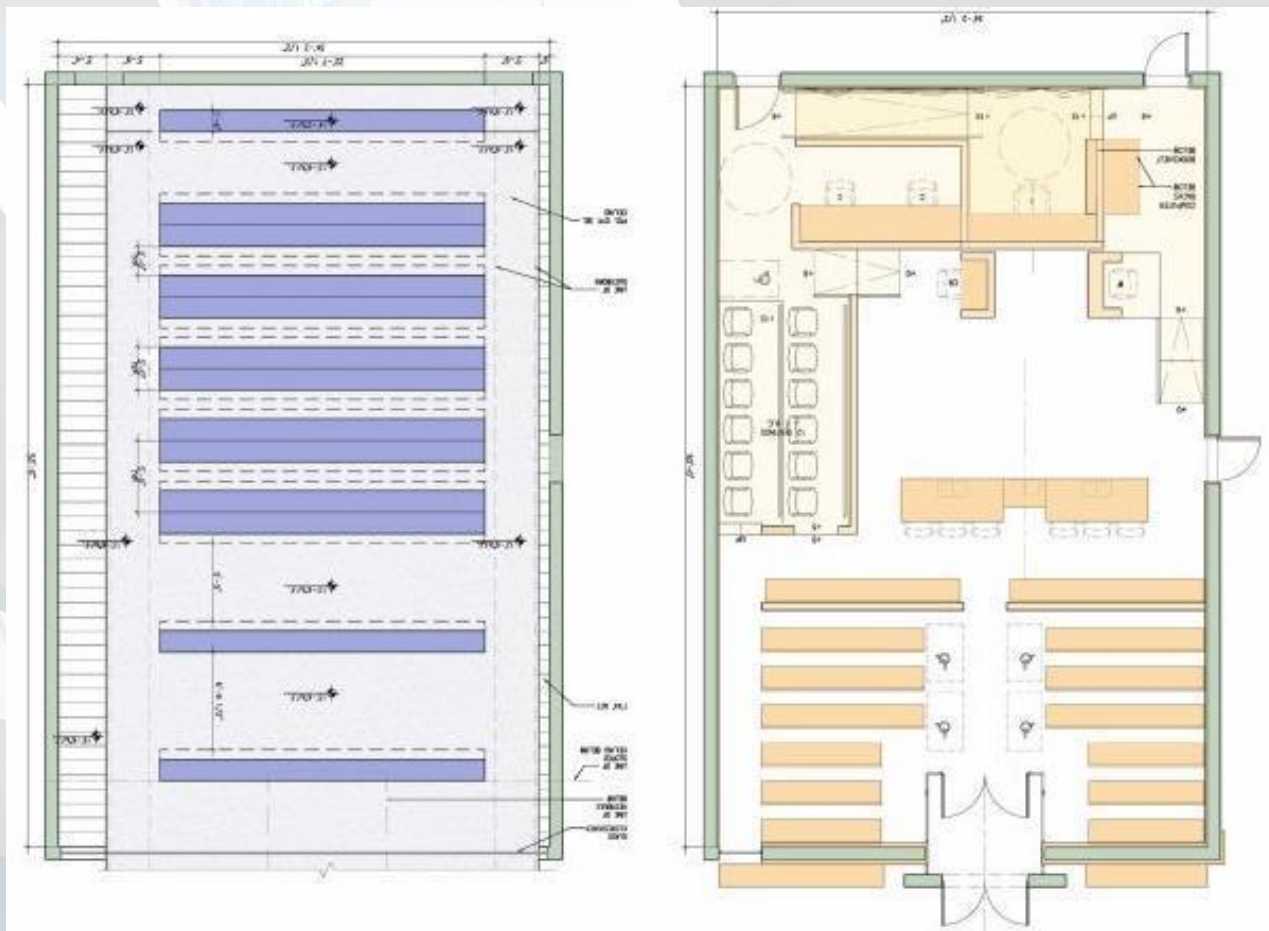
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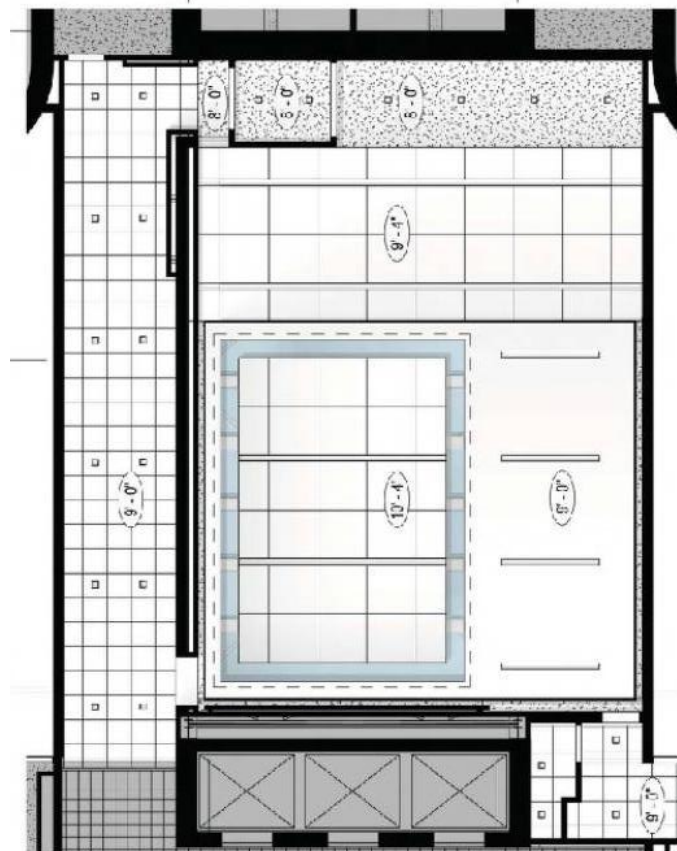
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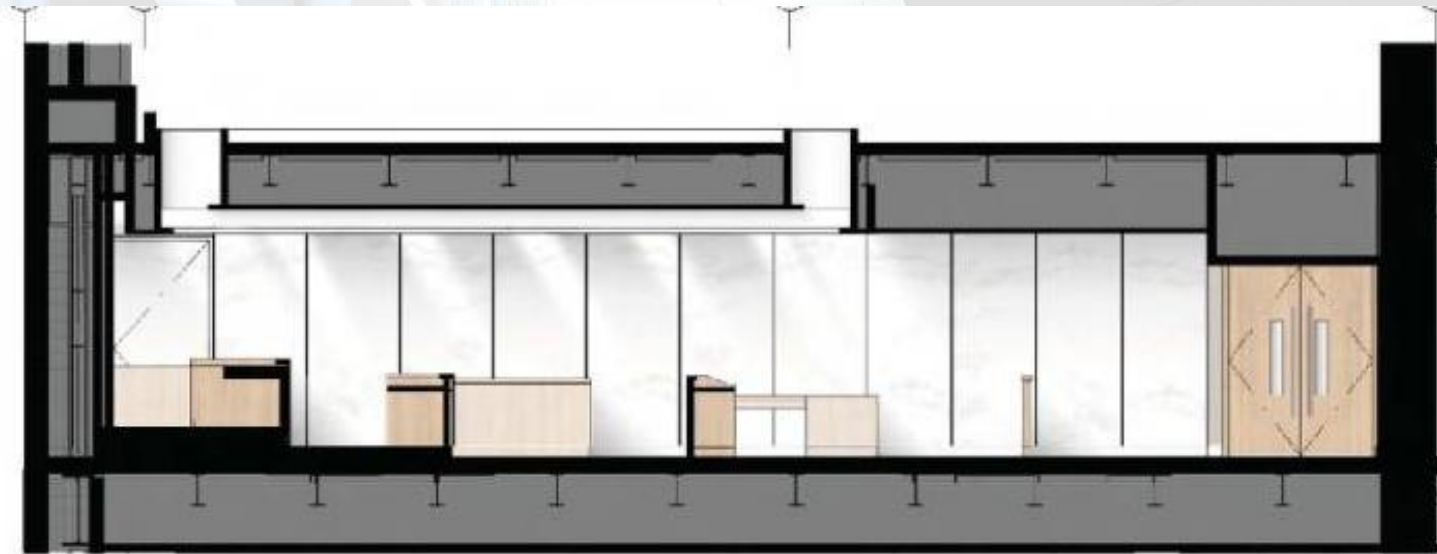
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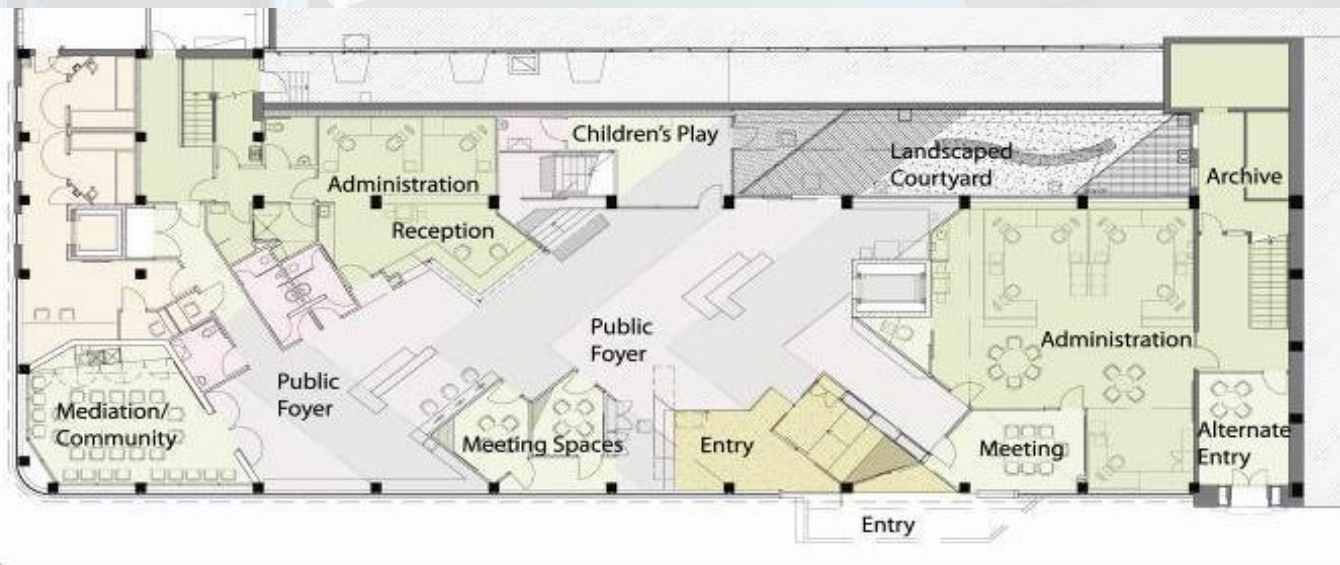
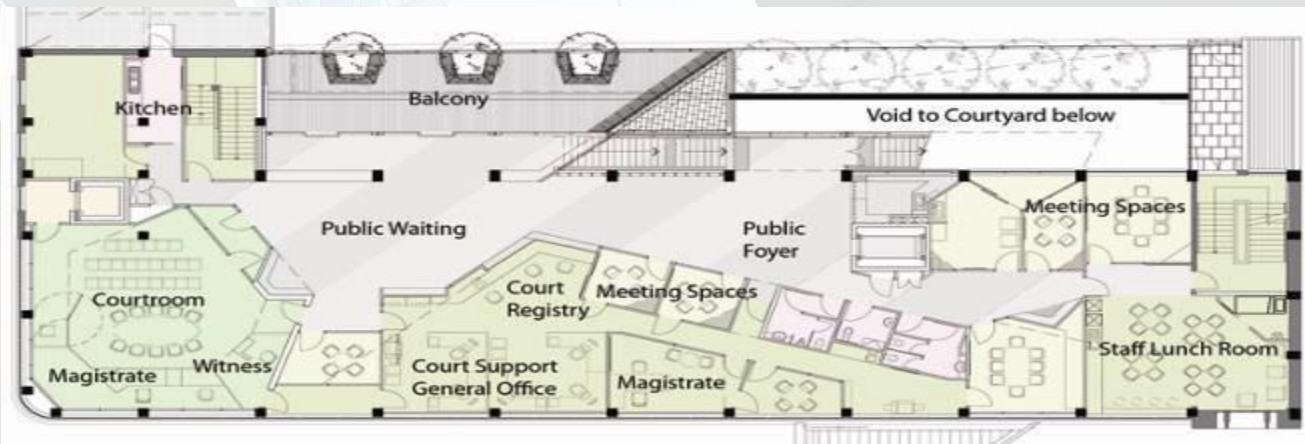
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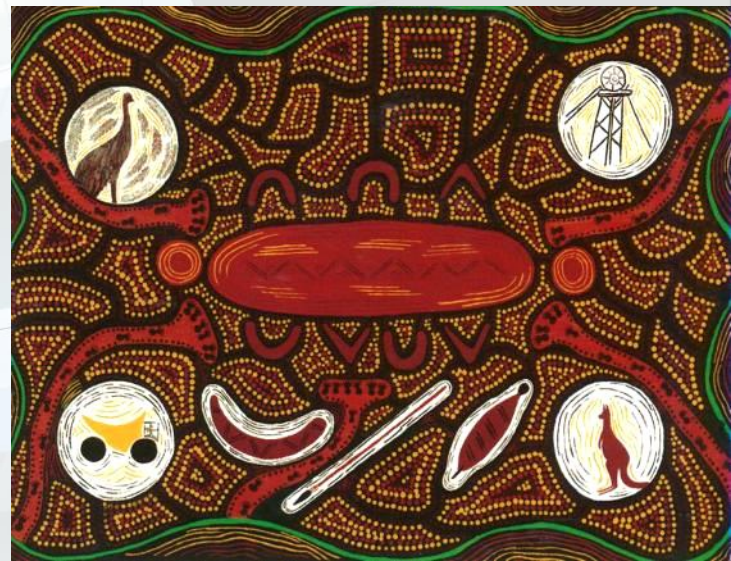
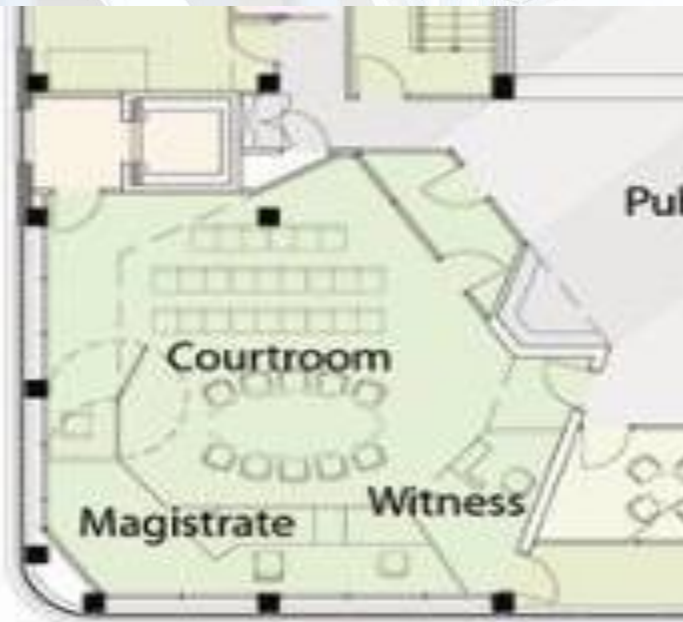
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