JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY
UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE
AND HARBORPARK

Boston, Massachusetts
The John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse and Harborpark in Boston, Massachusetts, was designed and constructed by the U.S. General Services Administration, adding to the legacy of outstanding public buildings that serve our citizens and are a source of pride for all Americans now and in the future.

Special thanks to the Honorable Stephen Breyer, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and the Honorable Douglas P. Woodlock, United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, for their commitment and dedication to design excellence in creating a building of outstanding quality that is a tribute to the role of the judiciary in our democratic society and worthy of the American people.

May 2003
This most beautiful site in Boston does not belong to the judges. It does not belong to the lawyers. It does not belong to the Federal government. It does not belong to the litigants. It belongs to the people.

Stephen Breyer
Associate Justice
U.S. Supreme Court

Carved in granite border of the Harborpark Courthouse Lawn
A LESSON IN CIVICS

With its prominent harbor site, simple red brick façade, sweeping curved glass wall, and landscaped park—the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse and Harborpark in Boston, Massachusetts, is a lesson in civics through the medium of architecture. Its siting, form, layout, and materials express the fundamental democratic principles of equality, fairness, openness, and accessibility.

The spacious, light-filled Great Hall and galleries herald the notion of community, becoming the venues for public gatherings and civic discourse. The architectural arrangement of the courtroom gives recognition and respect to each of the participants—judge, jury, witnesses, litigants, lawyers, and spectators—in the proceedings. The masonry walls connote the permanence, solemnity, and probity of the judiciary; and the fine brickwork laid up in American bond with sixth-course headers shows the same respect for tradition and craft that characterizes the proceedings of the Federal judiciary. Overall, the building is designed to make an explicit connection between citizens and their Government. It is a carefully articulated lesson on the important role of the Federal judiciary in the American political system.

This spacious urban setting allows the judiciary to be both part of and apart from the community, to be of and to reflect upon the community. This idea is clearly conveyed in the form and materials of the Moakley Courthouse. To make the courthouse a part of the urban community, the 10-story, L-shaped structure was located along the street front—Old Northern Avenue to the south and Courthouse Way to the east. Richly fenestrated red brick masonry walls reinforce the character of the warehouse district of which it is part. In contrast to the masonry street wall, the waterfront façade is a dramatic 88-foot-high by 394-foot-long concave glass wall—conoid or cone-shaped—supported by a tensioned steel frame. The glass wall embraces a 2.3-acre public park with dramatic views of the harbor and downtown Boston. As a result, from the waterfront, the building is a distinctive presence. Through the glass wall the entrances to all 27 courtrooms are visible from the city and the harbor. This allows citizens to view the workings of government and helps demystify the judicial process. Symbolically, this bold and innovative glass conoid expresses the openness and responsiveness of the Federal courts in adjudicating ever-new conflicts arising within the society they serve.

A 132-foot-high glass-domed cupola rising above the building distinguishes the entrance to the courthouse. It is a beacon that further proclaims the special status of the courthouse and the Federal judiciary. Visitors move from the city street to the highly ordered public realm of the courtroom through a monumental arched opening on Old Northern Avenue into a spacious, top-lit double height hall.

This area contains visitor information, seating, and security screening. Beyond security, visitors encounter a compass rose set in the floor symbolizing the historic role of Admiralty Law in the life of the court. Flanking this compass is a pair of broad, curved granite stairs rises into a 46-foot-diameter, 108-foot-high rotunda. This space is the circulation hub and the emblematic heart of the courthouse. It is illuminated by the glass-domed cupola and enlivened by nine large colored panels by artist Ellsworth Kelly. The main elevators are located here. From the rotunda, broad passages lead into the Great Hall—a piano...
noble—and three floors of galleries that overlook the Great Hall and serve as public circulation to the courtrooms and other facilities. The crescent-shape of the Great Hall and galleries are defined by the concave form of the waterside façade of the courthouse. A circular pavilion located at the midpoint of the glass wall on the ground floor links the interior of the building and the lawn of the park. The 27 courtrooms are located along the three galleries. The long wall of each gallery is the same brick with fine detailing that is used on the exterior. Pairs of Ellsworth Kelly paintings, echoing the nine panels in the rotunda, enliven the end walls of each gallery. To signal the importance of the courtrooms, elliptical brick recesses with half domes—a derivation of the Greek and Rome exedra—define the entrances that lead to vestibules, which in turn lead to the courtrooms. While the courtrooms vary in shape, size, and purpose, they share a vocabulary of form, material, and detail. Here, the masonry surfaces of the public circulation areas give way to an intimate palette of wood, plaster, and carpet conveying the quiet dignity appropriate to the administration of justice. Large arches outlined in wood and a stenciled pattern based on the offset circles of the conoid glass wall distinguish the two-story courtrooms. Courtroom visitors sit on simple wood benches reminiscent of a New England town hall. Opposite the public entrance is the judge's bench, elevated by only three steps to enable the judge to easily participate in rather than be set apart from the proceedings. All of the courtrooms have two witnesses boxes, one between the judge's bench and the jury box and the other directly opposite the jury box. This arrangement accommodates each judge's preference and the specific needs of the proceedings. Overall, the design gives appropriate recognition and dignity to each player in the judicial process.
The courthouse should convey in every aspect of its design those qualities—probity, permanence, clarity, and restraint—that are embodied in the administration of justice.

Henry N. Cobb
Architect, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners
In his application for selection as the architect of the U.S. Courthouse in Boston
CREATING A PUBLIC VENUE

The John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse and Harborpark have more space dedicated to public use than any other Federal courthouse in the nation. Every effort has been made to make the building and site open and accessible, enabling every citizen to experience this extraordinary place and to see democracy in action. School children regularly visit the courtrooms where they interview the judges, learn legal fundamentals, or stage mock trials. Community groups hold symposiums and social events in the Great Hall. Film festivals, concerts, and art exhibits draw people to the building.

The 2.3-acre Harborpark is essential to making the courthouse a public gathering place. It serves as both foreground and background to the activities of the courthouse and is an inviting outdoor public space. It occupies the site’s entire 850-foot-long waterfront. A broad cobblestone and brick-paved promenade at the water’s edge extends the city’s Harborswalk system, offering panoramic views of downtown Boston and its harbor as well as access to ships that may be berthed along the sea wall. The park is composed of two interconnected parts, one casual and the other more formal. At the eastern end of the site, where Fan Pier reaches out into the harbor, gently curved paths pass through a lawn bordered by groups of trees and shrubs and lead to a raised overlook that is readily accessible, yet removed, from the hubbub of city life. Adjacent to the building and embraced by the concave façade is the Courthouse Lawn. Circular in plan and framed by brick-paved paths leading from the waterfront promenade to a glazed, circular entry pavilion, the Lawn is the symbolic center of both the courthouse and Harborpark. It is a public space celebrating equally the Federal courts and the city it graces.
One of the goals in designing the courthouse was to create a dialogue about the law and American democracy. Forty inscriptions carved into gray granite tablets appear on the interior and exterior walls of the courthouse. Raised lettering for quotations is used in the Jury Deliberation Hall. The inscriptions continue a venerable tradition, rooted in antiquity, wherein a culture expresses its ideals and aspirations on its public buildings. On these tablets, permanent voice is given to an ongoing conversation about American democracy by some of New England’s most articulate sons and daughters: John and Abigail Adams, Lelia Josephine Robinson, Frederick Douglass, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louis D. Brandeis, and John F. Kennedy. The quotes speak of unalienable rights and self-evident truths, of privacy, and of freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. They reflect on the balance of power and on the morality of government. They reinforce the fundamental premise of American jurisprudence that men and women of all races, colors, and creeds stand equal before the law. The inscriptions are strategically located to actively engage the reader. Together, the inscriptions form a discussion about what the law can and should do in a free society.

In addition to the carved granite tablets, there is a wall on the ground floor in the center of the courthouse that lists—alphabetically—the names of the more than 2,500 people who worked to design and construct the building. The Registry of Designers and Builders is the final democratic element a visitor encounters before leaving the building through the main street entrance.
Section through Rotunda and Public Gallery

Section through Courtrooms and Public Gallery
Art has always been an important feature of great architecture. For the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse in Boston, Massachusetts, Ellsworth Kelly created 21 monochrome aluminum panels in 13 colors.

The Boston Panels
Nine panels (each 11 feet high by 13 ½ feet wide) are located in the rotunda, and 12 panels (each 11 feet high by 7 feet 4 inches wide) are hung in pairs on the end walls of the three galleries.

Ellsworth Kelly
In a marriage of art and architecture, Ellsworth Kelly's brilliantly colored panels act as beacons that draw the viewer through a series of dramatic architectural vistas in the courthouse—the soaring entry rotunda, the light-filled Great Hall, and the sweeping galleries. The work's spare and elegant geometry serves as a foil to the curved forms of the courthouse and the dynamic urban skyline of Boston visible through the glass wall.

Painters have traditionally created images by brushing marks of colored paint onto a white canvas. Kelly fuses color and form into a single element—the monochrome panel—and boldly uses the white wall itself as his surface. In keeping with the artist's philosophy, there are no brushstrokes on these paintings. Color is the primary subject. The colors themselves are not meant to be symbolic but rather are meant to provoke an emotional, and even spiritual, response. By freeing his colors from the task of depicting or representing aspects of daily reality, Kelly allows the viewer to experience colors in their purest, most essential form. Viewers are left to create their own meaning for the work based on their personal reactions to the colors. As a result, the experience of looking at the paintings is inherently democratic; each viewer participates in the artist's act of creation.

Art in Architecture Program
GSA's Art in Architecture Program commissions artists, working in close consultation with project design teams, to create artwork that is appropriate to the diverse uses and architectural vocabularies of new Federal buildings. These permanent installations of contemporary art for the nation's civic buildings afford unique opportunities for promoting the integration of art and architecture, and facilitate a meaningful cultural dialogue between the American people and their government. A panel composed of an art professional from GSA's National Register of Peer Professionals, an art professional from the city or region, the project's lead design architect, and individuals representing the Federal client, the community, and GSA provides guidance in selecting the best artist for each project.
...what I've tried to capture is the reality of flux, to keep art an open, incomplete situation, to get at the rapture of seeing.

Ellsworth Kelly
Artist
Justice is the great interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. Whoever labors on this edifice with usefulness and distinction, connects with that which must be as durable as the frame of human society.

Daniel Webster
U.S. Senator

Inscribed in a granite plaque and quoted in raised lettering on the Registry of Designers and Builders at the ground floor of the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse, Boston, Massachusetts.
The most arresting moment in the selection process for the architect of the new Federal courthouse in Boston came during the final interviews when Harry Cobb placed before the selection panel a photograph of the 1735 Hanover County Courthouse in Virginia. This, he told us, was the sensibility to which he would aspire if selected to design the building.

The 18th-century Hanover County Courthouse was—and still is—a modest, elegant and carefully detailed brick structure, using an economy of means to present itself plainly as a civic building and convey in every aspect of its design the qualities embodied in the administration of justice. It was also a building that clearly offered an invitation for the general community to come to participate—directly as jurors and indirectly as observers—in the intense civic drama that court proceedings entail.

After Harry Cobb was chosen as the architect, he told us the image of the Hanover County Courthouse remained affixed to his bathroom mirror for inspiration throughout the Boston courthouse design process. Our design team for the process quickly came to appreciate that both architecture and the law are at their highest level successful marriages of memory and invention. The search for precedent provides continuity with the past. The need to adapt to changing circumstances requires development of new initiatives. To develop our initiatives, we looked to precedents beyond the Hanover County Courthouse for inspiration.

Among these were the promenade architecture that H.H. Richardson designed for the Allegheny County Courthouse in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With its dramatic geometric interplay between the circular and the orthogonal, this courthouse was crafted to draw the visitor through a meaningful transition from the relatively disordered world of the street to the highly ordered ultimate destination and distinctive feature of the courthouse—the individual courtroom.

Perhaps the most difficult design challenge presented by the growth in the machinery of justice in the 20th and 21st centuries is how to celebrate and dignify adequately a courthouse’s distinctive destinations, given their multiplicity—27 courtrooms, in the
case of the new Boston Federal courthouse. To avoid devaluing the significance of individual courtrooms among such multiplicity required reference to other precedents. The elliptical half vault entrance to each of the Boston courtrooms—with its reliance on the bricklayer’s craft to ennoble without bombast the threshold to the ultimate destination—was suggested by the front door of the Lincoln County Courthouse in Wiscasset, Maine.

And for the courtroom destination itself, we looked to the dignified but humane courtrooms of 19th-century Massachusetts. Particularly resonant was the principal courtroom of the Barnstable County Courthouse on Cape Cod where stencil was used as ornament to enrich the detailing of the room.

The stencil in the courtrooms of the new Federal courthouse in Boston provided the occasion to consummate the marriage of memory and invention that was the foundation for the design of the building. The stencil detail derives inspiration from the use of stenciling in 19th-century Massachusetts public buildings. But the pattern was derived from the most innovative element of the new courthouse building: its 33,000-square-foot conoid glass wall.

The geometric figure underlying the conoid is composed of two eccentric circles with a single point of tangency. To generate the stencil pattern, a similar figure was replicated to form a series of overlapping and tangent circles within a grid of diagonally oriented squares. Spaces defined by different parts of those outlines were then filled in to create the stencil pattern itself. The design thus evokes the memory of traditional ornament from the invention of a new type of glass curtain wall.
Those who won our independence believed that the final end of the state was to make men free to develop their faculties, and that in its government the deliberative forces should prevail over the arbitrary.

Louis D. Brandeis
Associate Justice
U.S. Supreme Court

Quoted in raised lettering in the Jury Assembly Hall.
The John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse is the home of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts (formerly known as the Admiralty Court) and headquarters for the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, which includes Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico. It occupies a prominent 4.5-acre waterfront site on Fan Pier across a narrow channel from downtown Boston. Fan Pier was formerly a rail/cargo transfer station and an important link to Boston’s commercial past. Today, major development is underway to integrate the area back into Boston’s urban environment and support the diverse needs of the community. The placement and design of the courthouse is a strategic component of this economic and social revitalization.

The 760,000-square-foot facility rises 132 feet with 10 stories above grade and one level below. There are 27 courtrooms—two Court of Appeals, 19 District, and six Magistrate—with 40 judges’ chambers, Grand Jury suite, jury assembly room, and First Circuit Law Library. In addition, the building houses offices for the U.S. Marshals, U.S. Attorneys, Pre-Trial and Probation Services, a U.S. Congressman, and the U.S. General Services Administration, along with a cafeteria and daycare facility.

**Location**
Fan Pier in Boston Harbor. The site is bounded by Old Northern Avenue on the south, Courthouse Way on the east, and the waterfront on the north and west. The entrance is located on Old Northern Avenue near the intersection with Courthouse Way.

**Size**
- 760,000 Gross Square Feet
- 500,000 Occupiable Square Feet
- 132 Feet High
- 10 Stories Above Grade
- One Story Below Grade With Parking
- For 70 Vehicles

**Time Frame**
- Design Started: September 1991
- Construction Started: October 1994
- Completed: September 1998
- Dedication: September 25, 1998
Structure
Foundation: 130-foot-long concrete end bearing piles.
Frame: Conventional steel with diagonal bracing between courtrooms.

Vertical Circulation
17 Passenger Elevators (four public, four staff, two judges', two passenger-shuttle), one Freight. Monumental stairs in rotunda at main entrance and at the park entry.

Mechanical and Electrical Systems
Low-pressure variable volume system. High efficiency electric centrifugal refrigeration machines supply low-temperature water to a series of ice storage tanks. Low temperature supply air is distributed to variable air volume fan-powered terminal units. These units maintain constant air motion in the occupied space for improved comfort. The fan-powered terminal units, through the induction of warmer above-ceiling plenum air, also incorporate a heat recovery feature for use in perimeter space heating prior to the energizing of heating coils. The air handling units, equipped with high efficiency filters, supply conditioned air with a high percentage of outside air and offer a higher indoor air quality than that of comparable buildings in use today.

Electrical, data, and voice communication systems were designed to be efficiently distributed through multiple equipment closets on each floor. A floor distribution system was designed to accommodate the installation of sophisticated audio/visual systems in each courtroom.

Facade
Walls: Two-foot Deer Isle granite base. Morin Waterstruck Blackstone blend brick, granite trim, coping, and plaques on ground floor.
Conoid Wall: Median length 372 feet. Median height 88 feet. Area 32,736 square feet. Clear, Low-E insulating laminated glass in painted aluminum frame supported by a welded grid of structural steel sections interconnected with a diagonal net of pre-stressed stainless steel rods.
Windows: Clear Low-E insulating glass in painted aluminum frames.
Entrances: Bronze and glass.

Exterior Paving
Morin Artisan brick pavers, granite curb; cobblestone pavers and granite blocks for the Harborwalk.

Interior Finishes
Main lobby: Brick walls, granite floor, veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard ceiling.
Rotunda: granite stairs, granite-bordered terrazzo floors, veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard walls, translucent glass skylight.
Second floor public areas: Brick and veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard wall, granite-bordered Venetian terrazzo and carpeted floor, acoustic tile ceiling.
Courtroom Galleries: brick wall, granite trim, granite-bordered Venetian terrazzo floors, acoustic tile ceiling.
Courtrooms: wood paneling (generally six-feet high), veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard (with stencil pattern) and fabric-wrapped acoustic panels on walls, bordered carpeting, veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard ceiling with glass fiber reinforced gypsum (with stencil pattern) centre dome and fabric-wrapped acoustic panels in coffers.

Chambers: wood base, wood wainscot (in judges’ chambers) and gypsum wallboard wall, veneer-plastered gypsum wallboard or acoustic panel ceilings, carpeting on floors.
John Joseph Moakley was born, raised, and lived his entire life in South Boston. From 1973 until his death, he represented the Ninth Congressional District of Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives and served as chairman of the House Rules Committee from 1989–1995. Moakley was known throughout the House for his amiable personality, often using his humor to diffuse difficult political arguments. At the age of 15, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served in the South Pacific during World War II. Following the war, Moakley briefly went to the University of Miami in Florida before returning to South Boston where he attended Suffolk University Law School at night and received his law degree in 1956. In 1952, at the age of 25, he was elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature. He served in both the State House (1952-1962) and the State Senate (1964-1970), specializing in urban affairs and environmental legislation. In 1971, Moakley won a seat on the Boston City Council and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1972. He was an early advocate for the environment and, while a state senator, initiated efforts to clean up Boston Harbor. These efforts continued in the House of Representatives where he was able to direct Federal funds to implement his vision of Boston with a clean harbor, renewed transportation system, and revitalized waterfront.
Henry N. Cobb, FAIA is a founding principal of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners in New York City and has contributed actively and continuously to the work of the firm since its formation in 1955. In 1968, the firm received the American Institute of Architects Architectural Firm Award, and in 1992 received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York Society of Architects. Cobb's work includes the John Hancock Tower, Boston, Massachusetts; Johnson & Johnson World Headquarters, New Brunswick, New Jersey; ARCO Tower, Dallas, Texas; Library Tower, Los Angeles, California; World Trade Center, Barcelona, Spain; Silver Crown Tower, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China; Tour EDF at la Defense, Paris, France; U.S. Courthouse, Hammond, Indiana; and a new headquarters building for the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. Throughout his career, Cobb has coupled professional activity with teaching. He has held the Davenport and Bishop visiting professorships at Yale University. From 1980 to 1985, he served as Studio Professor and Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In 1992, he was Architect in Residence at the American Academy in Rome. Cobb has received numerous awards as both an architect and an educator, including the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture, the Poes Creative Arts Award Medal for Architecture, the Medal of Honor from the New York Chapter of the AIA, and the Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard College and a Master of Architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Ellsworth Kelly is one of America's most respected artists of the post-war era. He is best known for his experiments with color and is celebrated for his large-scale, monochrome canvases. Kelly was born in Newburg, New York, in 1923. Following two years of studies at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, Kelly served in the Army during World War II from 1943 to 1945, and then resumed his education at the Boston Museum School (now the School of the Museum of Fine Arts). He returned to Paris in 1948 under the G.I. Bill and enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts. While in France, Kelly's encounters with Jean Arp and other leading artists of the day proved more profoundly instructive than his formal classes. During this period, Kelly incorporated the ideas garnered from these exchanges into his work—a dedication to abstraction, geometric organization, and use of randomly determined elements. In 1954, he moved to New York. His first solo show there was held at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1956, and three years later he was included in the important Sixteen Americans exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. In a distinguished career spanning more than 50 years, Kelly has produced works that are in major public and private collections of 20th-century art around the world. He has completed many important public commissions, including the 1993 Memorial for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., a 1996 installation at the Tokyo International Forum in Japan, and his 2001 installation for the new offices of Germany's federal legislature in Berlin. In terms of scale and architectural engagement, The Boston Panels is one of Kelly's most ambitious projects.
Unlike most small parks that are conceived as a focus of attention and a place to be looked into from the surrounding area, here each citizen can literally gain perspective and find a place to look out upon the world and life, and find a locus for social interaction and recreation beside the water.

Laurie Olin
Landscape Architect, Olin Partnership
THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

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Public buildings are part of a nation's legacy. They are symbolic of what Government is about, not just places where public business is conducted.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for providing work environments and all the products and services necessary to make those environments healthy and productive for Federal employees and cost-effective for the American taxpayers. As builder for the Federal civilian Government and steward of many of our nation’s most valued architectural treasures that house Federal employees, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America’s architectural and artistic legacy.

The process for the selection of the architect for the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse and Harborpark in 1991 was a precursor for the Design Excellence Program GSA established in 1994 to change the course of public architecture in the Federal Government. Under this program, administered by the Office of the Chief Architect, GSA has engaged many of the finest architects, designers, engineers, and artists working in America today to design the future landmarks of our nation. Through collaborative partnerships, GSA is implementing the goals of the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture: (1) producing facilities that reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the Federal Government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary architectural thought; (2) avoiding an official style; and (3) incorporating the work of living American artists in public buildings. In this effort, each building is to be both an individual expression of design excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America’s designers and artists can leave to later generations.

To find the best, most creative talent, the Design Excellence Program has simplified the way GSA selects architects and engineers for construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The Program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.