

**LLOYD D. GEORGE**

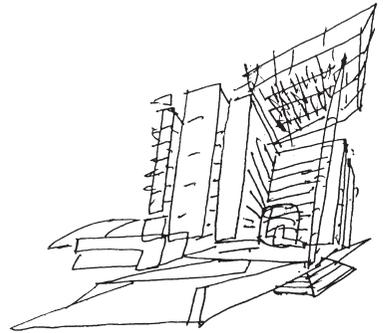
**UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE**

Las Vegas, Nevada

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**In pondering the challenge of designing this courthouse, I recall being awed by the prominence of court buildings and their unique position in the fabric of our society, especially as they embody the heritage of American democracy. In Las Vegas, I wanted to design a courthouse that was civic in nature, one that would enhance and transform the perception of residents toward their downtown. I also felt that the design had to be a truly public space, inviting and open in a way completely unlike the architectural imagery normally associated with Las Vegas.**

Mehrdad Yazdani  
Design Principal, Dworsky Associates



## THE VISION FOR A COURTHOUSE IN LAS VEGAS

Landmarks in Las Vegas are on the highway—the city’s famous “Strip.” They are known for their fanciful imagery and dazzling lights—silhouettes that mimic the skylines of New York or Paris and illuminated signs that are, themselves, entertainment.

The Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse is a Las Vegas landmark, but it establishes very different precedents. It is located downtown rather than on the Strip. It is stately rather than glitzy. It is about open space and the public realm rather than lavish interiors and private enterprise. In these general characteristics, the courthouse continues long-standing traditions associated with civic design. In its architecture and details, its approach is decidedly contemporary.

The courthouse site is on the southeastern edge of downtown. The profiles of modern high-rise hotels and casinos dominate the skyline to the north. An eclectic mix of one- and two-story buildings lies to the east and south. To the west is the four-story Foley Federal building, as well as a group of county and municipal structures that range from low- to high-rise and from modern

to mission style in their design. Framing all of this is the desert and the burnt red silhouette of the mountains.

Architect Mehrdad Yazdani and his colleagues at Dworsky Associates explored many options for addressing this diverse context. A low-rise structure would respect the scale of most of the surrounding buildings but would fill the six-acre site leaving little room for growth. A high-rise would be overwhelming. The selected scheme with four courtrooms per floor was functional, generating a building height more in keeping with other downtown structures, and left a major portion of the site free for future development.

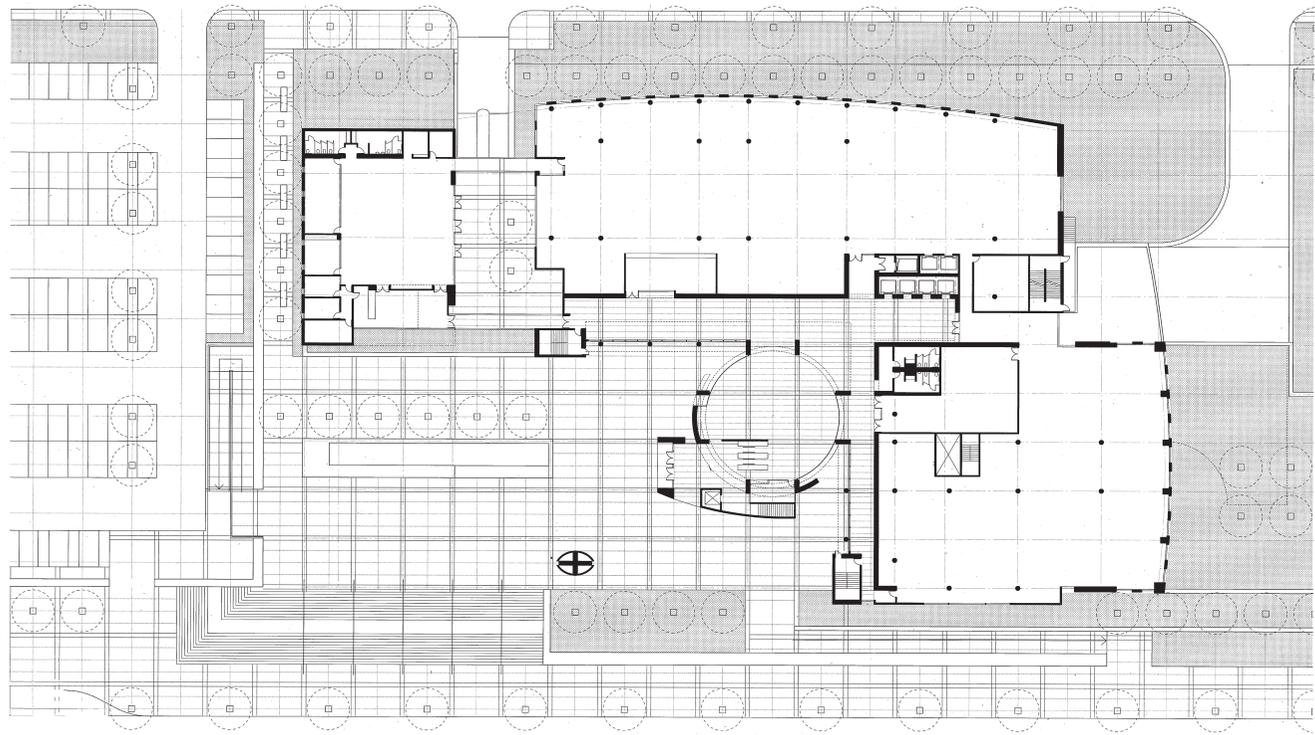
Another concern had to do with the form of the building. A solid rectangle with symmetrical features is the direction dictated by tradition, but this appeared static and uninviting. In contrast, the chosen “L”-shaped design left significant open space and gave the building a dynamic orientation. This layout was constructed on the southeast part of the site so that the courthouse embraces downtown and becomes a gateway to that important area.

A great plaza is located inside the arms of the “L.” The space is elevated above the street level and shaded from the desert sun by an enormous trellis-canopy cantilevered from the roof. To give this dramatic design the sense of permanence and stability appropriate to a courthouse, a single gigantic column anchors the canopy to the open corner of the plaza. This last element rises 175 feet into the sky and is the hallmark that distinguishes this building from all others in Las Vegas.

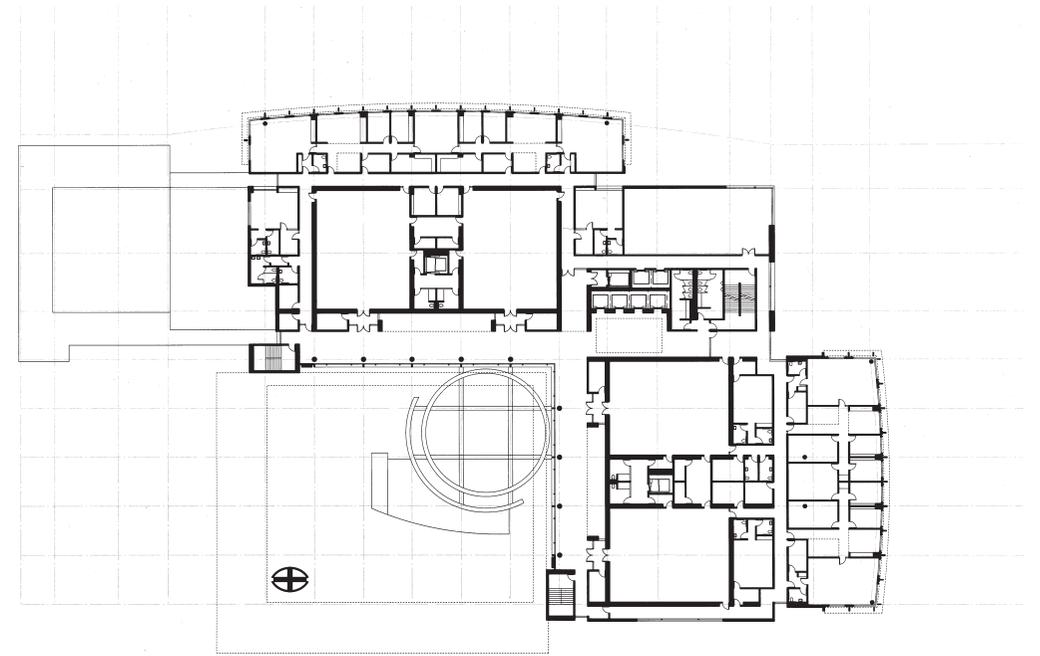
As a place intended to attract and welcome the public, the courthouse plaza creates a new standard for civic space in the city. The Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse enriches Las Vegas. It is a special landmark that blends the dignity and importance of traditional civic buildings with a design that is a meaningful and enduring expression of contemporary architecture and urbanism.







First Floor Plan



Sixth Floor Plan



**This courthouse will become, in many regards, the center of the downtown area, just as historically courthouses have been, both physically and politically, the centers of the community. The structure will not only stand as a monument to skill and workmanship but will also be a symbol of the importance of the rule of law in society and the mission of the third branch of government.**

Lloyd D. George  
United States District Judge  
for the District of Nevada

**CREATING A PLACE  
THAT IS PUBLIC AND DIGNIFIED**

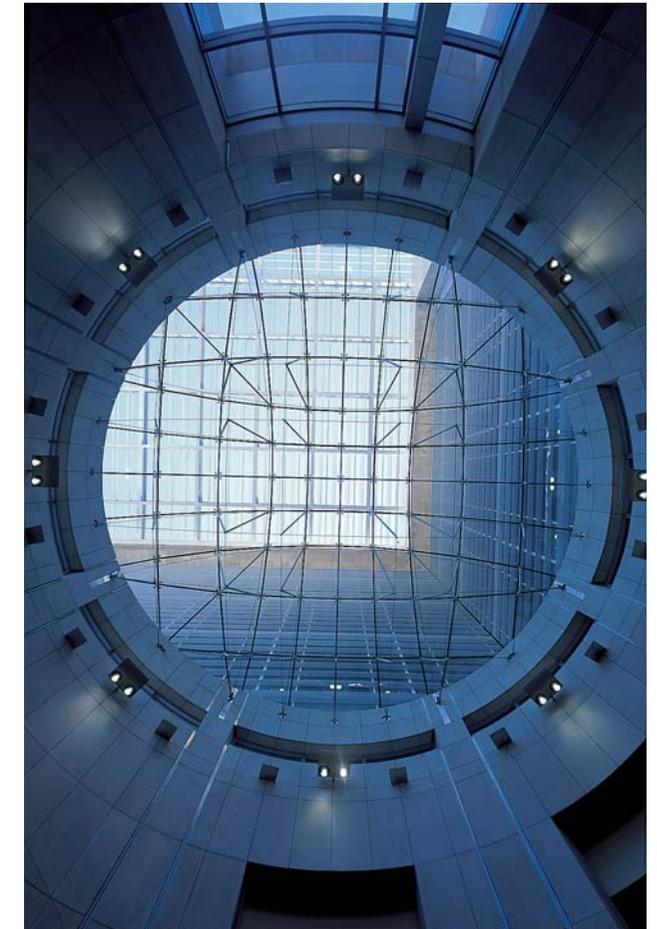
In taking the Las Vegas courthouse from vision to reality, the court articulated two issues as critical: the building had to be part of the community—it had to have a strong public dimension; and it had to appropriately represent the judiciary. These parameters complemented the architect's focus and find expression as important features of the design.

An enduring respect for jurors was a constant. These are the individuals whose time and thoughtfulness allow the system work. In contrast to many courthouses that bury jury assembly rooms in leftover areas or basements, the court wanted to celebrate this public contribution. This is realized by developing jury assembly as a separate, prominent, plaza-level volume. Located to the north of the east arm of the courthouse, this space has a tall sloping roof and a clerestory that fills the room with light. A secure courtyard allows jurors to step outside for fresh air. On days and evenings when jurors are not using it, the room is available for community activities and receptions.

The plaza, of course, is the great public venue. It is elevated between the wings of the “L”-shaped courthouse. Pedestrians, moving along the tree-lined sidewalks of Las Vegas Boulevard,

ascend a broad, gracious staircase into this special realm. Here, they can pause to enjoy a view of downtown or move past a long pool of water and a row of trees to the building entrance. Inside, galleries in front of the courtrooms overlook the plaza and the city. At night these glass walls are transformed into a glow of light around the open area and, as a symbol for the openness of the American judicial system, allow the public to view the building's interior spaces.

As both public space and symbol for the judiciary, the rotunda entry to the courthouse is remarkable. The freestanding limestone cylinder is three stories tall and is located at the intersection the building wings. At its second floor level there are balconies, spaces connected to the galleries of the courthouse “L” that permit people to look down on those moving through the entrance. The most impressive feature, however, is the cable-supported, clear glass dome that ties the space to the sky above. The path to the rotunda is through a one-story pavilion—a security checkpoint clad in marble and translucent glass—which becomes a compact transition to the light and grandeur of the rotunda. It is a symbolic “welcome” to the courthouse and a dignified statement concerning the significance of the judiciary.





A key objective in the design of the courthouse was to make sure people recognized it as a civic building. There was to be no confusion. This was not an office or a hotel or a casino. The plaza and overall form help make this clear. The materials and details also contribute to this impression.

Mehrdad Yazdani  
Design Principal, Dworsky Associates

## DESIGNING A CIVIC BUILDING

Walking around the courthouse, each facade is different. The front of the building—the inside faces of the “L”—is a seven-story “window” with spacious public galleries looking over the plaza, the rotunda, and the downtown skyline. It is delineated by horizontal bands of glass and is surrounded at the top and sides with aluminum and limestone. The back of the building is devoted to offices. These outside faces of the “L” have a pattern of smaller windows set in planes of metal panels. A steel grid is suspended in front of these planes, animating the office walls with an ever-changing composition of shadow and light, and supporting louvers that shade the windows. In between the front and back facades, the courtrooms are a solid block with a pre-cast concrete exterior.

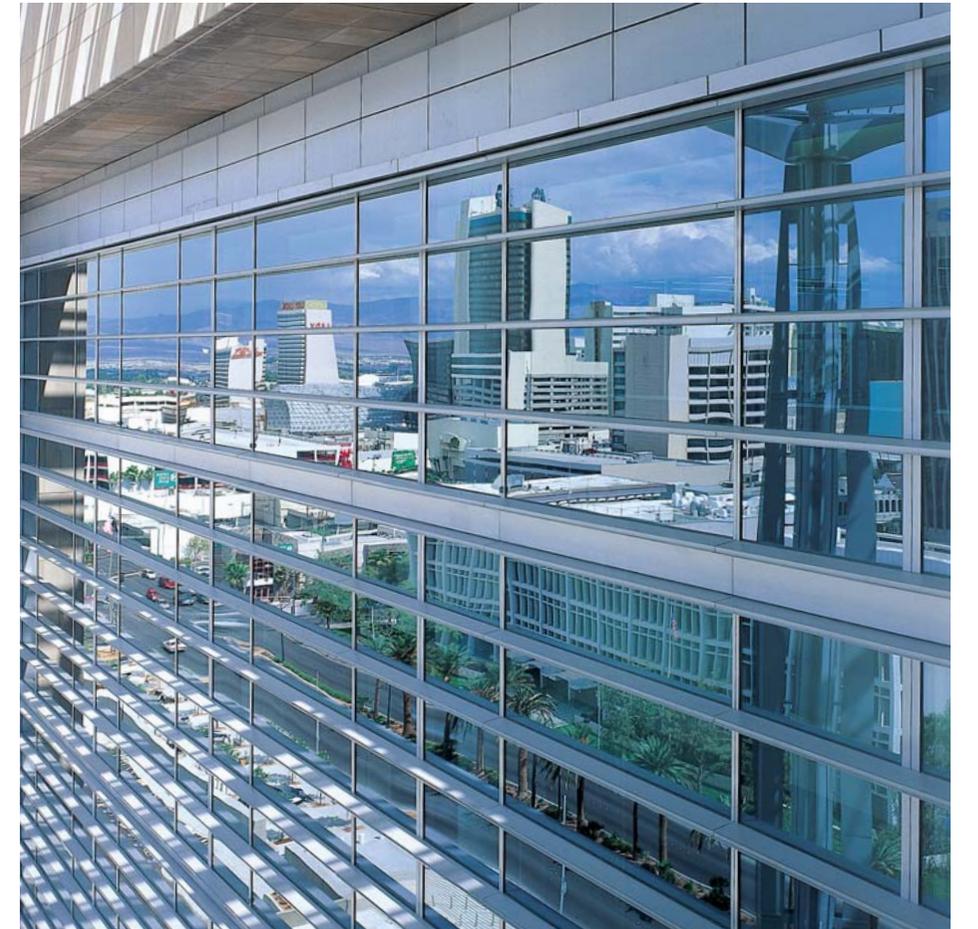
Further enriching the design are subtle refinements and variations that make every view of the courthouse compelling and confirm its identity as a contemporary but dignified civic structure. The plaza column, for instance, is detailed with fins that are bowed slightly to give it a substantial—but not massive—profile. A band of pre-cast concrete panels supported on columns is developed as a light, elegant parapet at the

top of the office spaces. And where magistrate judges’ chambers are located on the south side of the courthouse, windows and aluminum panels are pulled back several feet to accent those functions.

Materials were selected with equal care. The exterior limestone, pre-cast concrete, and metal are durable and of high quality. Like the courthouse, they are meant to last. The colors of these elements—sand, beige, and gray—are chosen to complement the hues of the desert mountains around Las Vegas. On the interior, the basic finishes are metal, limestone, black granite, and cherry wood. The window frames and gallery columns have a metal finish. The rotunda is limestone. Black granite is used in the elevator lobbies and as wainscoting in the public galleries facing the plaza. Cherry wood highlights the entrances to courtrooms and is the paneling for the courtrooms themselves. The lobby floor is terrazzo and, as reminder of this landmark’s distinguished civic purpose, the wall behind the judge’s bench displays the seal of the court on a plane of blue pearl granite.











## ART-IN-ARCHITECTURE

Art has always been an important feature of great architecture. Several works have been created specifically for the Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse.

### **Vortex, Stream and Confluence**

*An Exterior Installation Located on the Sidewalk of Las Vegas Boulevard*  
Howard Ben Tré

*Vortex, Stream and Confluence*, an artwork created by Howard Ben Tré, is inspired by the scarcity of water in this desert environment. Located in the Mojave Desert, Las Vegas receives only a few precious inches of rainfall each year—making it America's most arid large city. This work focuses on the vital role that water has played in the formation and organization of societies.

The piece is a metaphor for three forms of moving water: the vortex, the stream, and their confluence. The vortex is the form that water takes as it surges from the ground; the stream is the form water has as it travels from one place to another; and the confluence is the interaction of the two.

Three circular seating areas represent vortices created by water springing from below the earth's surface. These monumental benches are made from granite of contrasting colors. Their finely honed black and white surfaces refer to the dichotomy between our public and private selves that intermingle in the civic—but often intensely personal—forum of the courtroom. The pink stone that connects the three seating areas marks their confluence with the rectangular plaza, which represents a stream. More practically, *Vortex, Stream and Confluence* serves two uses—a restful gathering space for courthouse visitors and a dignified passageway to the courthouse steps.



**Eldorado**  
*Located on the East Wall,  
 Ground Floor Elevator Lobby*  
 Brent Thomson

In *Eldorado*, a painting by Brent Thomson, the artist contradicts a common notion that the desert is a wasteland. Thomson's landscape depicts an environment that is both grand and inviting in its unspoiled beauty. The long, horizontal format the artist chose for the canvas aids in his depiction of a vast, immense environment, giving the impression that the scene could continue on forever in both directions. Thomson's manipulation of light and color also contributes to this sense of immeasurable distance, as colors and details become lighter and less distinct as they recede into the background, effectively capturing the true atmospheric qualities that exist in this region.

Thomson's use of soft colors and warm light imbue *Eldorado* with the sense of mysterious quietude that one finds in the desert. His painting reminds visitors to the courthouse of the natural splendor that exists only a short distance from the city, a visual retreat from the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas. The courthouse is situated at the edge of downtown and is a symbolic transition between city and desert. This contrast of the urban and natural environments characterizes the Las Vegas region and exemplifies the diverse reality of the contemporary American landscape.

**Red Rock Canyon**  
*Located on the North Wall, Jury Assembly Room*  
 Willard Dixon

After receiving a commission to paint two landscapes, Willard Dixon explored areas surrounding the city—such as Lake Mead, Red Rock, and Valley of Fire—to gather ideas. In these paintings of the southwestern American desert, Dixon captures the details of color and light that indicate a specific time of day and season of the year. By accurately describing in visual terms the differences in topography, foliage, and rock formations, he demonstrates that the American desert is a beautiful and varied place. The paintings also address contemporary concerns. They are poignant images of the pristine Nevada wilderness, environments quickly disappearing under the pressure of urban development. The works faithfully represent the splendor of a countryside that symbolizes openness and freedom, a reminder of the founding principles of our nation and the need to preserve this heritage.



**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 exploring the integration of art and architecture, and facilitate a meaningful cultural dialogue between the American people and their government. A panel that includes the project architect, art professionals, the Federal client, and representatives of the community advises GSA in selecting the most suitable artist for each Art-in-Architecture commission.



## GENERAL FACTS ABOUT THE COURTHOUSE

The Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse is located on Las Vegas Boulevard South between Bridger Avenue to the north and Clark Avenue to the south. The six-acre site was donated to the Federal government by the city and is an important tract in the Las Vegas downtown business and government district. The 456,000 square foot facility rises eight stories to a height of 175 feet.

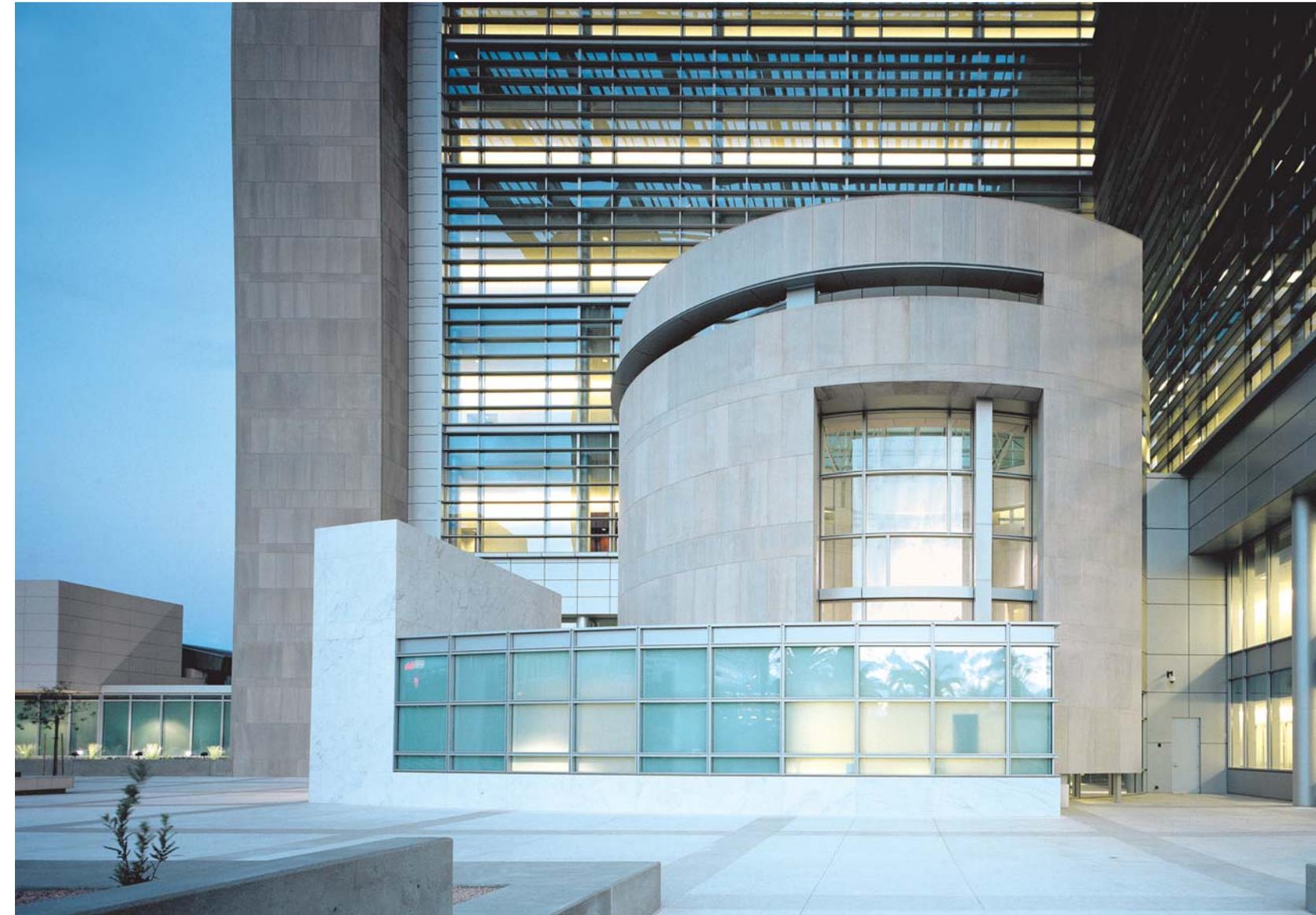
The courthouse has ten courtrooms: four Magistrate Courtrooms and six District Courtrooms, including the ceremonial Special Proceedings Courtroom. The building will accommodate growth through the year 2022 by renovating space currently used for offices to create up to eight additional courtrooms. Organizationally, on courtroom floors, there are two courtrooms per wing of the “L.”

Courtroom plans are traditional. Opposite the entrance, there is a tiered bench area for the judge and court staff. Attorneys use the broad well space in front of the bench. The jury box is to the side, and visitor and witness seating is behind a railing near the entrance. Ceilings are 14 feet tall in the Magistrate and 16 feet in the District Courtrooms. All the courtrooms are fully

accessible and equipped with the latest digital and audio-visual technologies.

In addition to the courtrooms and judges’ chambers, there is an independent pavilion and courtyard for jury assembly, a library, offices for several Federal agencies and the state’s two United States Senators, and a cafeteria.

While wonderfully open in appearance, the courthouse is also secure. The elevated plaza provides protection from vehicular bombings. The building’s steel frame is designed so that if one support collapses, the rest will remain standing. Particularly unique is the facade that has been designed and tested to be blast resistant. Glass panels are held in frames integrally connected, rather than clipped, to the building frame so that in an explosion the glass will not be blown away. In addition, the panels themselves are actually fabricated from multiple layers of glass with a clear membrane in between, a process that allows the glass to shatter upon impact without flying apart. Together, features such as these create a building that is safe without appearing as a fortress.



**Location**

A six-acre parcel of land located in downtown Las Vegas, bound by Bridger and Clark Avenues, and 6th Street and Las Vegas Boulevard South.

**Size**

456,000 Gross Square Feet  
175 Feet High  
Eight Floors above Grade  
One Floor below Grade

**Time Frame**

Bridging/Concept Design: August 1995  
Construction Starts: October 1997  
Occupancy: July 2000

**Major Building Components**

U.S. Courts 134,500 Square Feet  
Tenant Office Space 138,500 Square Feet  
Occupiable Area 273,000 Square Feet

**Parking**

Interior: 91 Spaces  
Outside: 184 Spaces  
Loading Dock: 3 Vehicles

**Foundation**

Spread Footing

**Structure**

Moment Resistant Steel Frame

**Mechanical**

Three-Chiller System (1100 Tons);  
Air Distributed via Central Supply Shaft;  
Outside Air is Pre-Cooled by 24-Hour  
Cooling System; Separate Systems for Security,  
Computer and Communication Areas

**Exterior Walls**

Aluminum and Glass Curtain Wall;  
Clear Glass with Interior Laminated Glass  
Insulated System Designed to Meet GSA  
Blast Criteria; Both Conventional and  
Truss Wall Design with Punched Windows;  
Precast Concrete Wall Panels with Stone  
Cladding in Selected Areas

**Public Area Interior Finishes**

**Rotunda Floor:** Flame Finished Granite  
**Corridor Floors:** Terrazzo (Except 4th  
and 5th Floors)  
**Walls:** Painted Drywall with Wood;  
Paneling at Court Entrances; Granite in  
Elevator Lobbies





#### PROFILE: LLOYD D. GEORGE

The Honorable Lloyd D. George was appointed United States District Judge for the District of Nevada by President Ronald Reagan in May 1984. He served as Chief United States District Judge from 1992–1997, and assumed senior status in December 1997.

Judge George was a pilot in the United States Air Force. He received his B.S. degree in 1955 from Brigham Young University and his J.D. degree in 1961 from the University of California at Berkeley (Boalt Hall). Upon graduating, he returned to Las Vegas where he built a successful private practice.

His career as a jurist began in 1974 with his appointment to the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Nevada, where he served for ten years. As a District Court judge, in 1996 Judge George was selected to represent the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit as a member of the Judicial Conference of the United States, the national policy-making and management body of the Federal judiciary. That year he was also appointed by Chief Justice Rehnquist to the Conference's Executive Committee.

Prior to his appointment to the Judicial Conference, he served for a number of years on three Judicial Conference committees and was the chair of two.

Judge George has distinguished himself as an expert in the organization of the judiciary. While serving on the International Judicial Relations Committee from 1993–1997, he and other judicial colleagues from various countries participated in numerous seminars and lectured on constitutional issues and court structure in Eastern Europe and the nations of the former Soviet Union. In 1996, he chaired a committee that worked to update the long-range national plan for the judiciary. He also has been a board member of the Federal Judicial Center (the education and research arm of the Federal judiciary), where he served for four years with Chief Justice Warren Burger.

He has authored articles on the administration of the Federal judiciary, ethics, and insolvency. He has won many awards, including the Brigham Young University Alumni Distinguished Service Award and the Notre Dame Club's John C. Mowbray Humanitarian of the Year Award.

**BIOGRAPHIES:  
THE ARCHITECT AND ARTISTS**

**Mehrdad Yazdani**, Design Principal at Dworsky Associates (now Cannon Dworsky) in Los Angeles, California, earned a Master of Architecture from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Texas at Austin. Throughout his career, he has focused on the design of a new generation of public buildings for institutional clients. His projects include city halls, government centers, civic utility buildings, museums, university buildings, private schools, police headquarters, and metro rail stations. In addition to the Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse in Las Vegas, he has designed the West Hollywood City Hall, the El Sereno Recreation Center and Indoor Pool in Los Angeles, and the Sinai Temple Akiba Academy Expansion, also in Los Angeles. Within the past decade, his designs have garnered 18 international, national, state, and local awards. In 1990, *Progressive Architecture* named him one of the Top Emerging Young Architects in the World, and in 1998, the *Los Angeles Business Journal* cited him as one of the 25 most well regarded designers in the city. His work has been widely published and exhibited and is part of the permanent collection in both the San Francisco and New York Museums of Modern Art.



**Howard Ben Tré** was born in Brooklyn, New York. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, where he continues to live and work. In addition to his numerous public commissions, Ben Tré's sculpture is included in the collections of many leading museums across the nation, including the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC.

**Willard Dixon** was born in Kansas City and studied art at the Arts Student League of New York, the Brooklyn Museum School, Cornell University, and the San Francisco Art Institute, where he received his Master of Fine Arts in 1969. A realist painter, Dixon continues a tradition of American landscape painting that dates back to the Hudson River and Rocky Mountain schools of the nineteenth century. He currently resides in San Rafael and has been painting landscapes of the Northern California coast for nearly thirty years. Dixon paints many urban landscapes, as well as natural scenes,

that reflect human involvement in some way, whether it be through the inclusion of a boat on the water or a telephone pole in the distance, in order to impart a powerful sense of time and place. His work can be found in major museums across the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City, and the Oakland Museum.

**Brent Thomson** was born in Calgary, Alberta. He moved with his family to the American Southwest in 1964, eventually settling in Nevada in 1975. Thomson realized a long-standing dream when he opened his own gallery in Boulder City, Nevada, in 1984, which he continues to operate with his wife. His works are displayed in numerous galleries throughout the Southwest and across the United States, and are a part of several private collections. Thomson also exhibits widely in local juried exhibitions where he has received a number of awards. In addition to his large oil canvases, the artist is also known for his original intaglio etchings, monotypes, and linoleum cuts. Regardless of the medium, all of Thomson's works are inspired by the power and magnificence of the desert landscape.

## THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

### Owner

U.S. General Services Administration  
Regional Office: San Francisco, CA

### Design Architects

Dworsky Associates  
(Now Cannon Dworsky)  
Los Angeles, CA

Harry Campbell Associates  
Las Vegas, NV

### Construction Manager

Chanen/Sverdrup  
Phoenix, AZ/St. Louis, MO

### J.A. Jones-Langdon Wilson

#### Design/Build Team

#### General Contractor

J.A. Jones Construction  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Executive Architect

Langdon Wilson Architects  
Los Angeles, CA

#### Civil Engineer

Kimley-Horn & Associates, Inc  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Structural Engineer

Martin & Peltyn, Inc  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Design/Build Mechanical

Southland Industries  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Design/Build Electrical

Sasco  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Curtain Wall—Design/Build

Harmon, Ltd.  
Bloomington, MN

#### Curtain Wall Testing

Construction Research Laboratory  
Miami, FL

#### Building Code/Life Safety

Schirmer Engineering Corporation  
El Segundo, CA

#### Vertical Transportation

Edgett Williams Consulting Group  
Mill Valley, CA

#### Acoustical

Paul Veneklasen & Associates  
Santa Monica, CA

#### Blast

Hinman Consulting Engineers  
San Francisco, CA

#### Security Electronics

Schatz Consulting Group  
Yorba Linda, CA

#### Environmental

AGRA Earth & Environmental  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Fire Alarm

Johnson Controls, Inc  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Fire Protection

Desert Fire Protection, Inc  
Las Vegas, NV

#### Lighting

Lighting Design Alliance  
Long Beach, CA

#### Graphics

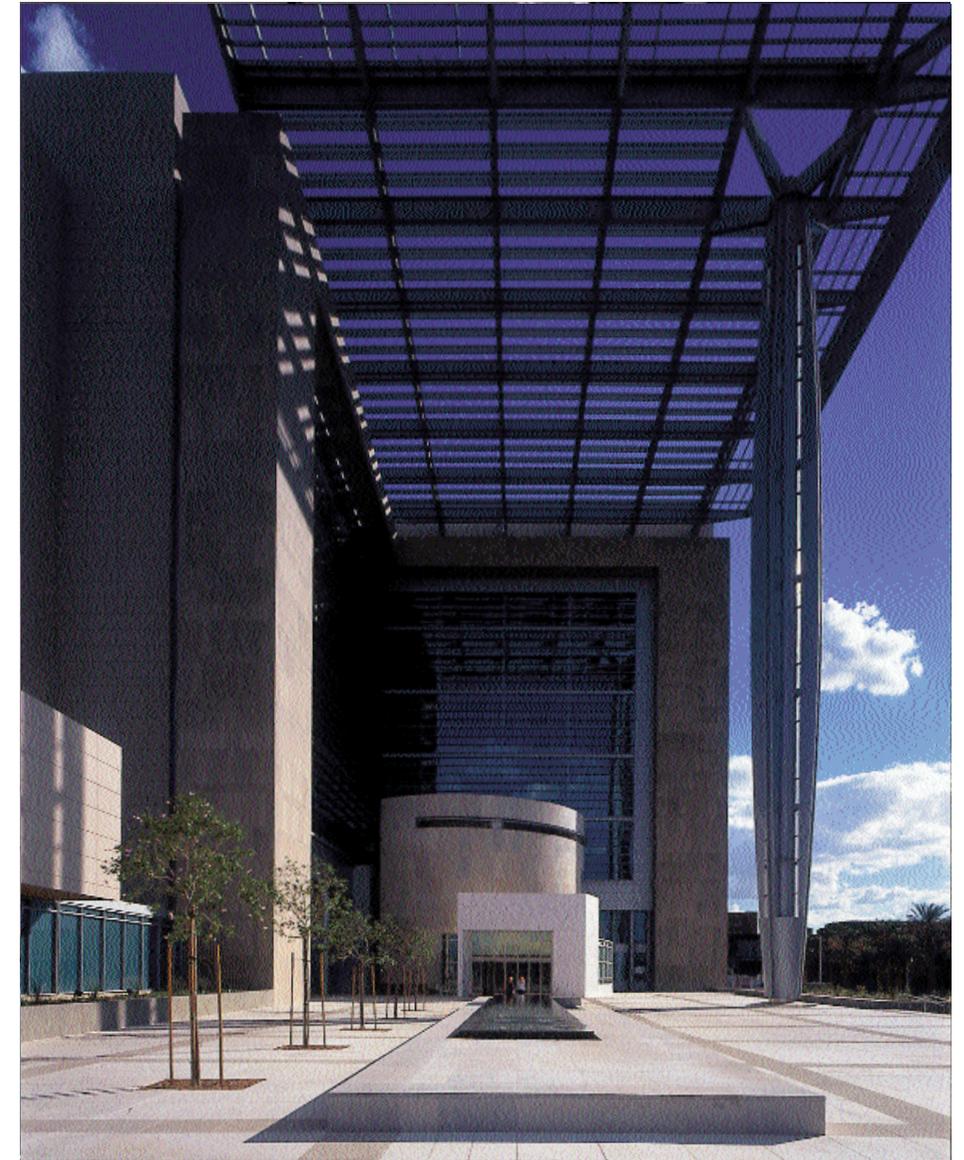
Kaminski Kaneko Design  
Los Angeles, CA

#### Landscape

The WLB Group Inc  
Henderson, NV

#### Specifications

Pro-Spec Associates (WBE)  
Tehachapi, CA



**U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

*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 these 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.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program 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 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.

The Lloyd D. George United States Courthouse in Las Vegas, Nevada, was designed and constructed under the GSA Design Excellence Program.

