

SYLVIA H. RAMBO U.S. COURTHOUSE

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



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The Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was realized through the U.S. General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, an initiative to create and preserve outstanding public buildings for generations of use and enjoyment.

January 2025

**We established the courthouse and
sense of place in an area that didn't
have any prior civic context.**

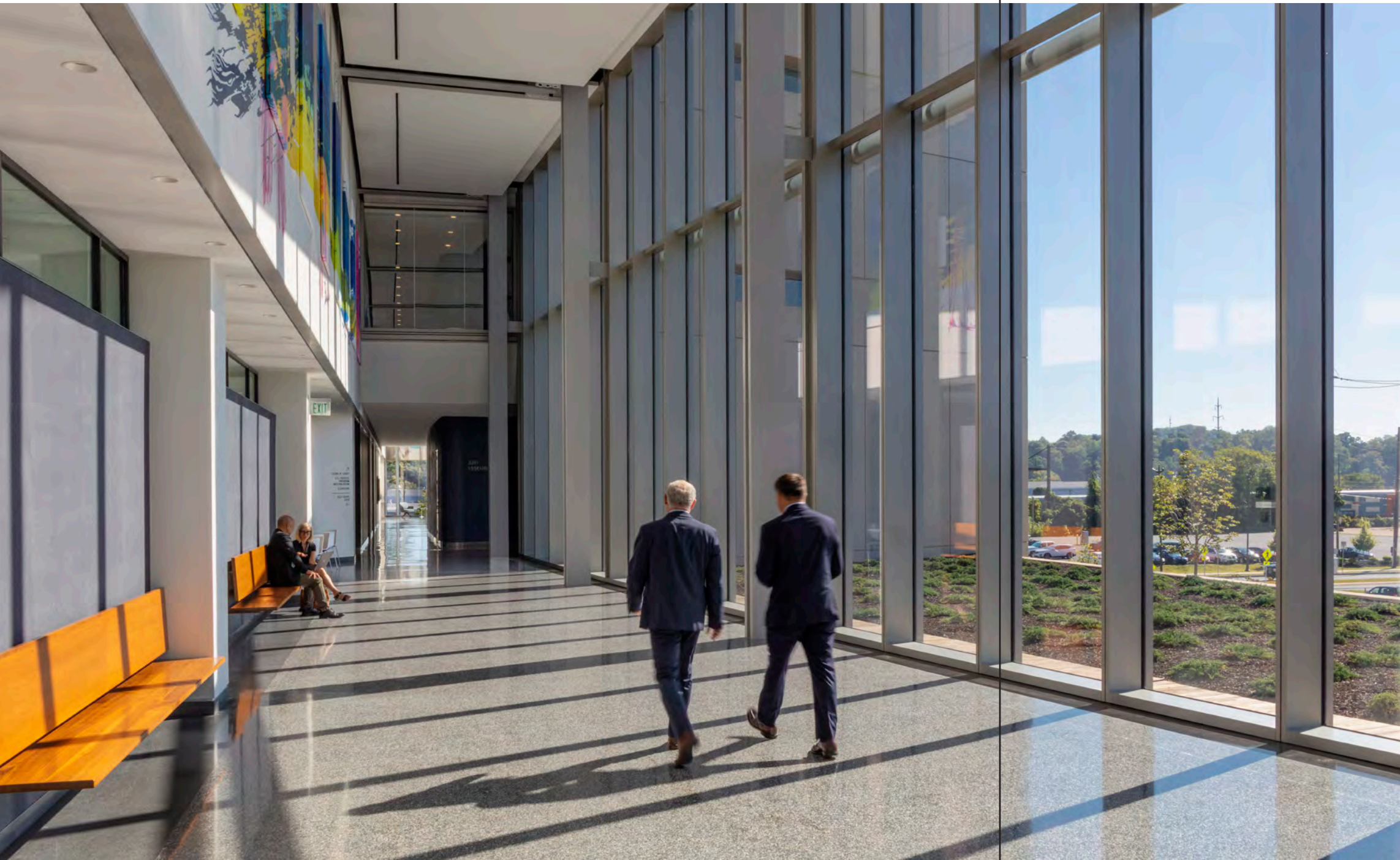
Susan T. Rodriguez
Architect





All of the design elements contribute to greater confidence in the execution of my duties and my ability to faithfully preside impartially over jury trials and bench hearings.

Christopher C. Connor
Chief Judge of the United States
District Court for the Middle
District of Pennsylvania



THE SUSQUEHANNA AND AMERICA'S STORY

When John Harris, Sr. arrived at the banks of Paxtang Creek and the Susquehanna River in 1719, the confluence was a well-established trading post among Native Americans. And just as fertile soil and a peaceful economy had sustained the Susquehannocks who had occupied this site as well as the wider region for millennia, so Harris thrived in his new home. His prosperity swayed the proprietaries of Pennsylvania to grant Harris 300 acres on which he developed a trade in fur and skins, and introduced the first plow for farming. Harris also used the land in part to operate the Susquehanna River's first ferry crossing, which in turn drew so many other Western settlers to the location that Paxtang Indian Town became known as Harris' Ferry and then Harrisburg.

Especially after becoming the Pennsylvania state capital in 1812, Harrisburg served as an important stop for pioneers in their westward expansion and for escaped slaves heading north to Canada via the Underground Railroad. Postbellum Harrisburg became a major rail center and steel town while, in the early 20th century, ideas introduced by the City Beautiful

movement inspired prominent citizens to hire landscape architect Warren Manning to enlarge the city's park system.

Throughout Harrisburg's evolution, its courthouses had been located downtown, in and around what became the Capitol Complex. The April 2023 opening of the Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse marked a significant departure from this tradition. Designed by New York-based Ennead Architects, the concrete-and-glass structure is located about a mile north of the Capitol, marking a new gateway to the city on a ridgeline at the corner of North 6th and Reily Streets. The massing and geometry of its tower and podium are abstractions of the city's picturesque and productive landscape, as well as the bridges and rail lines that were introduced to traverse it. The new courthouse is also prospect and refuge: a place from which all of Harrisburg's citizens can observe the riverside city and the magical water gap cutting through Blue Mountain to its north, while taking solace in the Judiciary's pledge to balance freedom and order.

THE JUDICIARY'S PRESENCE IN HARRISBURG

More than 50 years before the Declaration of Independence was signed, Pennsylvania took a small step toward independence from England when it passed the Judiciary Act of 1722 establishing a colonial Supreme Court as well as Courts of Common Pleas in three counties. Previously the Pennsylvania judicial system was a disparate collection of part-time courts inherited from the reign of the Duke of York, and all final appeals were taken to England for veto power.

The 18th-century law kicked off a steady refinement of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's judiciary, the current organization of which dates to the establishment of the Unified Judicial System in the Constitution of 1968.

Today the system takes palpable physical shape in the Judicial Center that opened in Harrisburg's Capitol Complex in 2009. Designed by local architecture and engineering firm Vitetta, the 438,000-square-foot limestone-and-granite building houses a conference and education center and consolidates state administrative offices.

The federal Judiciary has undergone its own centuries-long series of organizational, jurisdictional, and administrative changes, which also impact the look and feel of contemporary Harrisburg. The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania is a district-level federal court created in 1901 that operates largely under the jurisdiction of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. Because Harrisburg, the state capital, is located within the Middle District, most federal suits against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are filed here. Similarly, because York County Prison served as the largest Immigration and Naturalization Service facility in the U.S. Northeast, the Middle District also has adjudicated many immigration cases.

Since the agency's 1949 founding, the U.S. General Services Administration has managed the real property of the federal civilian workforce. Prior to the opening of the Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse, GSA had housed the United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania in the Federal Building that was completed in 1966 and later renamed

the Ronald Reagan Federal Building and Courthouse. While the 12-story Reagan building enjoyed a choice location at the southern corner of the Capitol Complex, it was deemed by GSA as outdated as far back as 1993. Among other reasons, it could not accommodate growing caseload nor increasingly sophisticated best practices in judicial building security.

Indeed, when Chief Judge Christopher C. Connor took his seat on the federal bench in Harrisburg in 2002, structural columns in courtrooms interfered with the sightlines of U.S. Marshals overseeing the safety of hearings and trials, and privacy and security challenges plagued the Reagan building overall. “The manner in which we judges circulated around the building required us to interact with the public and prisoners, because the four elevators that were the main means of access to the 11 upper floors in the building were shared by prisoners, the public, the judges, and the judges’ staff,” Judge Connor specifically recalls.

He further reflects on one incident of sentencing a defendant to an extended

period of incarceration, only to find himself in an elevator with the family directly following the hearing. “I then made the decision to not leave my chambers for some period after any of my hearings,” Judge Connor explains of the experience. “I literally felt like a prisoner in my chambers. I had no ability to leave without the potential of running into someone affiliated with the defendant I had sentenced.” The Reagan building also lacked a necessary perimeter buffer due to its being surrounded on two sides by parking lots.

Federal courthouse development is an inherently time-consuming process. Yet in Harrisburg, numerous challenges slowed GSA’s progress toward replacing the outmoded facility. During site selection between 2004 and 2007, on-site replacement of the Reagan building was considered, but the lot could not contain an appropriate buffer zone. Other downtown parcels that conformed to federal security setbacks failed to win overwhelming local approval, as they required the demolition or displacement of businesses and residents.

In 2010 GSA announced that it would erect a new courthouse at North 6th and Reily Streets, north of Harrisburg’s downtown in a nascent civic corridor known as the Midtown District. The new federal building would be the cornerstone of this northern gateway to the capital city, sparking neighborhood economic development and civic pride among all Harrisburg residents. “I think one of the significant benefits of the new location is that it allows for peaceful assembly in and around the courthouse, which is something that would have been hard in a downtown location,” Judge Connor adds.

In late 2015 Congress appropriated \$948 million for eight judicial buildings that included a new courthouse for Midtown Harrisburg. At the groundbreaking in June 2018, Judge Connor recapped the project’s unusual timeline while paying tribute to his colleague Judge Sylvia Rambo: “Sylvia, words cannot express our Court’s deep appreciation for your tireless efforts. Multiple site selections, design challenges, court annexes, and funding issues—you have seen it all, so much that I am certain

this day feels quite surreal to you. But it is happening. And our Court thanks you for all that you have done for the past quarter of a century in pursuit of this project.”

Equally patient was Ennead Architects, which was selected in 2011 to create the courthouse through GSA’s 30-year-old Design Excellence Program and attended to the commission’s complex unfolding. Founded eponymously in 1963 by James Polshek and relaunched as Ennead in 2010, the architecture firm was well-equipped to weather delays and adaptations, thanks to numerous experiences with time-consuming public projects that include embassies and infrastructure in addition to courthouses. Over the course of amassing its civic portfolio, Ennead has also earned a reputation for activating a building’s surroundings and for nurturing occupants’ sense of belonging through the inclusion of essential community space. The Rambo courthouse is the latest example of this principled approach to the public realm, from the generous forecourt that leads to the building’s entrance to the ample daylighting of its courtrooms.



DESIGN PERSPECTIVES

As Susan T. Rodriguez notes, the uniquely set-apart location of the Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse was an opportunity to think anew about the experience of a civic landmark. “It needed to be a generous meeting place for the public and a symbolic identity for the Judiciary,” says the architect, who led the courthouse project as a founding partner and design principal at Ennead and launched her own eponymous practice in 2017.

Even if its team had aspired to less lofty goals, Ennead would still need to elegantly solve the challenge of the courthouse’s site—an elevated parcel adjacent to a men’s shelter and a new Pennsylvania State Archives building, in an industrial area sandwiched between the Susquehanna River and Amtrak rail lines respectively to the west and east. “When we did finally come to the site on 6th and Reily, it was interesting to see it in terms of its vantage points,” Rodriguez says of considering the direct surroundings as well as views of the Susquehanna, the Capitol Complex and downtown Harrisburg to the south, and the Appalachians’ Blue Mountain ridge farther to the north.

After many massing studies and a cross-country tour of highly regarded federal courthouses commissioned under the GSA Design Excellence Program, Ennead settled on a long podium intersected by a tower that nears but is offset from the podium’s easternmost corner. Pulling the tower away from the corner of that lower bar volume created a vertical punctuation for the whole courthouse facility, while securing the tower structure’s own majesty and context, Rodriguez explains. The podium respects the residential scale of the immediate surrounding neighborhoods, too. As Ennead Principal Brian Masuda notes, “The reason why that massing solution was so appropriate was the way it looked at landscape—the distant views and Blue Mountain water gap. It serves as a catalyst that welcomes the community in. You get the best of both worlds, with a connection to both the regional and immediate context.”

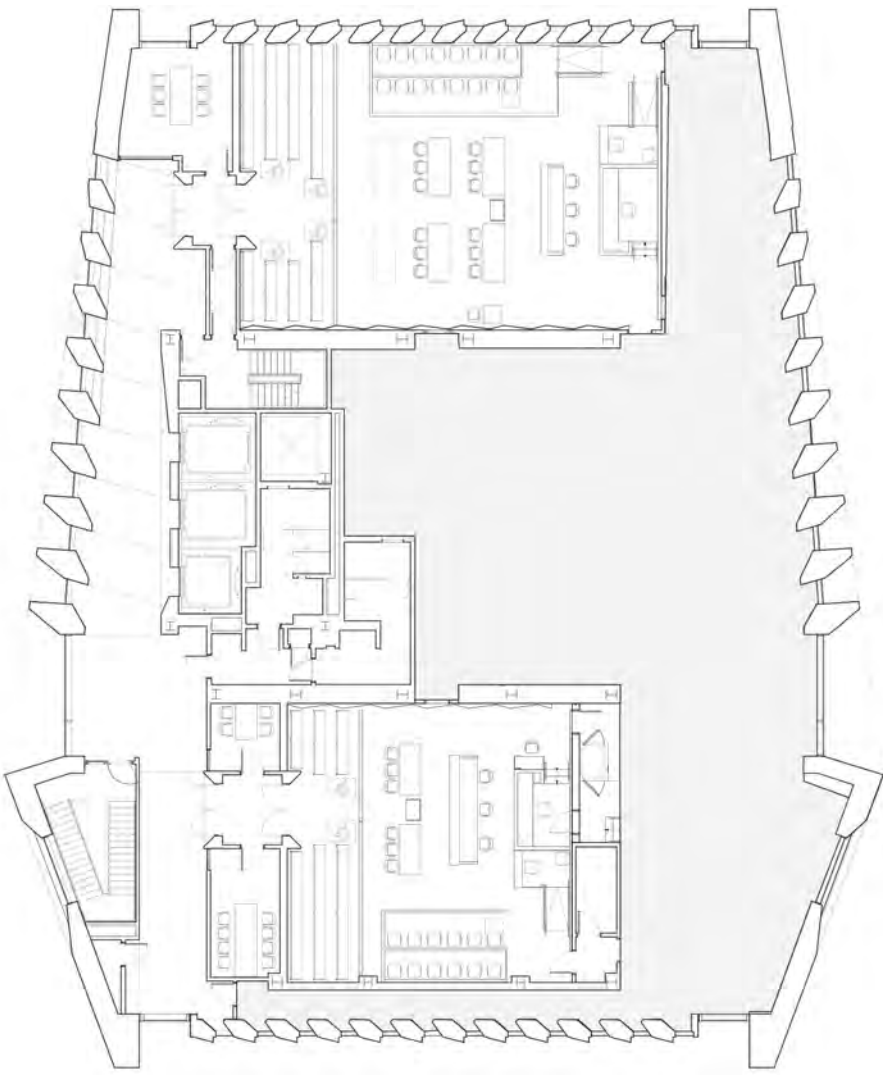
The architects had the limestone Capitol Complex in mind when they decided to clad the new courthouse in glass fiber reinforced concrete panels. GFRC is a lighter, thinner, and more malleable form



Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan With Landscape



Typical Court Floor

of traditional precast concrete, and the material allows for subtle textural shifts and interplays of light and shadow. The generously glazed four-sided tower is oriented in response to views, programmatic needs, and ideal access to daylight even in north-facing courtrooms. Fluted GFRC blades, an abstraction of the Doric columns that date to ancient Greece, elegantly soften the monumental form and lend it proportion.

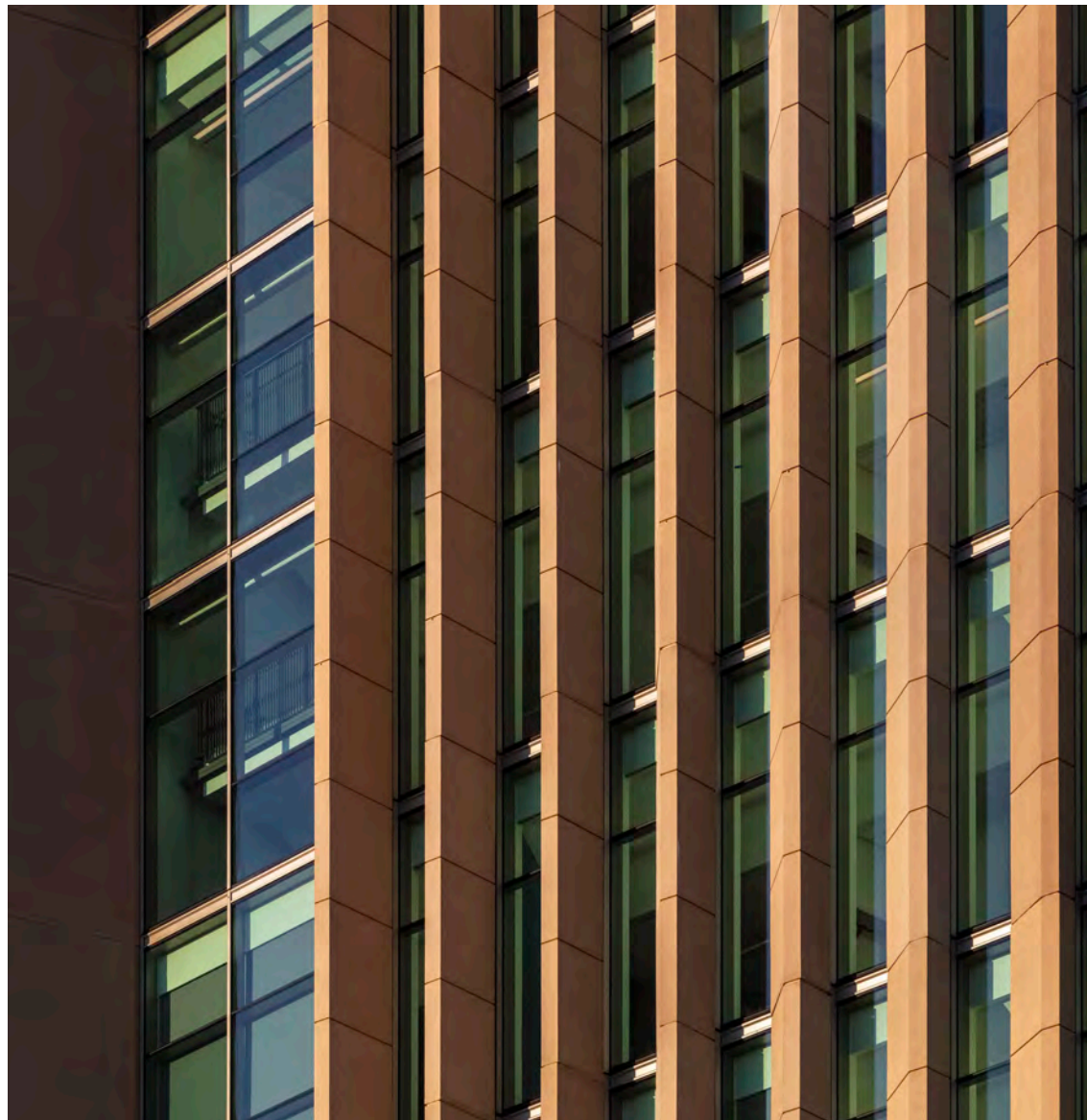
Within a relatively synthesized footprint of approximately 240,000 square feet, the building is home to the Judiciary and its accompanying clerk and administration functions, plus tenants such as the District Attorney's office, probation services, the U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Trustee Program, and GSA. Ennead placed the court's public spaces, which include the secure entry, cafe, meeting spaces, and tenant offices, in the podium, to echo the horizontality and visual rhythms of Harrisburg's train station and many bridges. Acting as an internal street, this lobby also continues the curving path of North 6th Street, connecting the building to the city and Capitol. Generous glazing

and a soaring atrium foreshadow the daylit courtrooms and judges' chambers located in the 10-story tower. There, eight courtrooms, chambers, and jury deliberation and robing rooms all benefit from views of the city, conveying dignity for all involved in the days' procedures and reflecting the court's significance in its urban context. District courtrooms receive diffuse northern light, while the magistrate and bankruptcy courtrooms are on the south side of the tower.

Ultimately, the patience and adaptability exhibited by all of those who saw the Harrisburg project from ideation to completion resulted in a substantive reframing of the Midtown District. With breathtaking vistas and efficiency in performance and usability, the Rambo courthouse respects its historical context while modeling judicial buildings of the future.







SCALING PERFORMANCE

Just as resilience was required of the judges, architects, and GSA throughout the Sylvia H. Rambo U.S. Courthouse's nearly 20-year development, sustainability and flexibility were key to the design of both the building and surrounding 3-acre site as the project team targeted LEED v4 for New Construction Gold Level certification and SITES v2 Silver Level certification. In practice, these performance goals, which are standard to all of GSA's new capital investments, resulted in a seamless web of strategies that optimize energy consumption, acoustic performance, indoor air quality and thermal comfort, and water usage.

To start, the building's orientation sets it up for success. It receives indirect northern light, direct eastern and western light, and diffuse southern light. Double-panel, low-emissivity glass reduces solar heat gain in the summer and helps the interior space retain warmth in the winter. Increased insulation at the roof and walls, in addition to a continuous air-vapor barrier, support this system. The vertical GFRC blades on the tower's east and west facades create a self-shading system. On the north and

south facades, folded metal fins control incoming daylight while engaging in an aesthetic conversation with the blades. Chilled beams embedded within the structure reduce air handler fan energy and provide additional cooling.

Outside, the courthouse's landscape plan begins with the building's placement within an earth berm that enhances security, improves passive cooling, and minimized soil displacement during construction. The elevated topography was also an ally for landscape architects from New York-based Balmori Associates. With it, they were able to hide many of the protective security barriers required for a modern courthouse; blur the boundary between the courthouse's northern location and the rest of Harrisburg; and reintroduce drought-tolerant native plants and wildflowers to what had become a scarred site.

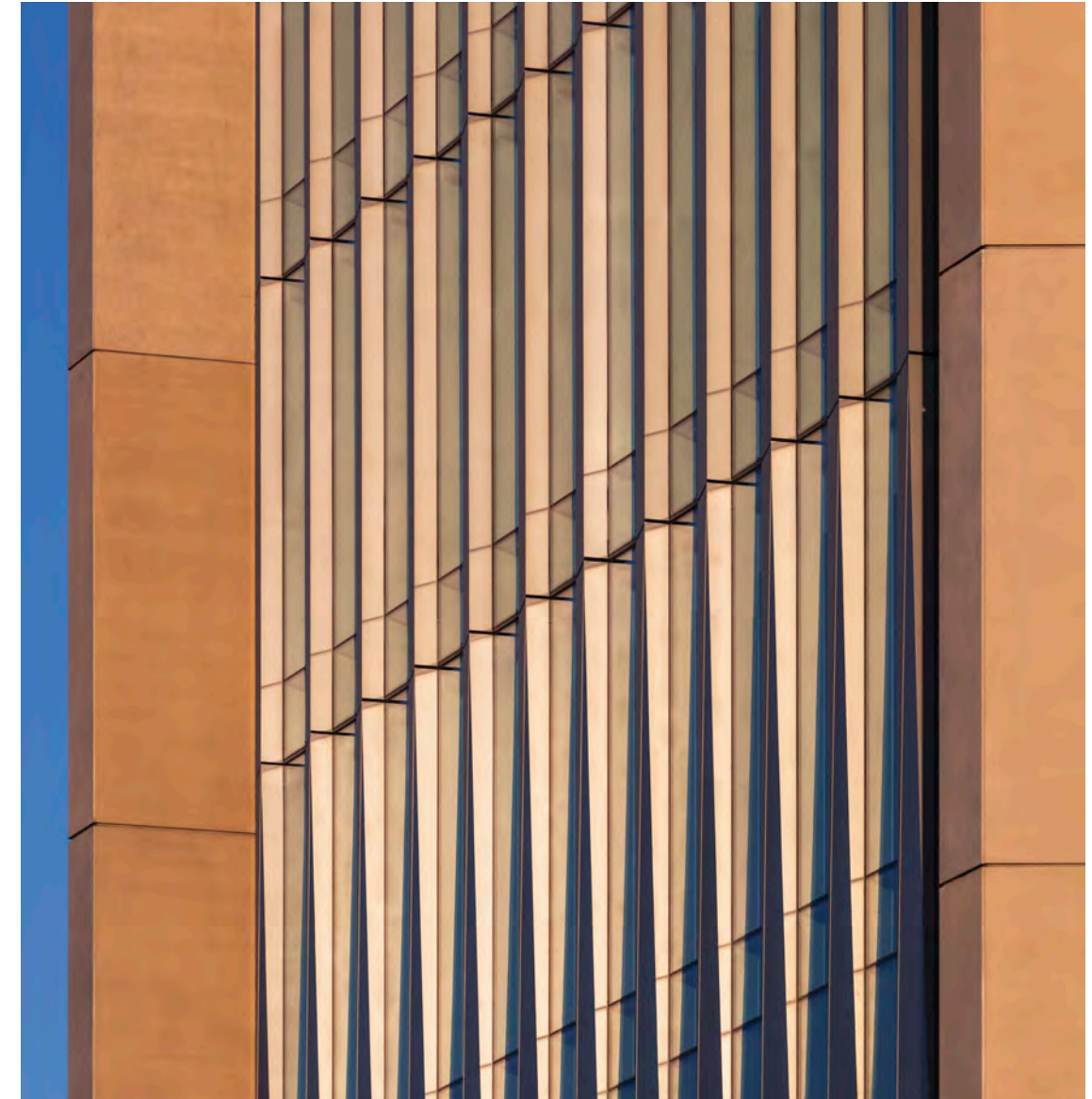
Restoration of the natural ecosystem is a driving tenet of Balmori's philosophy since the studio's founding by Diana Balmori in 1990. (It also was well suited to a landscape project in Pennsylvania, where the Department of Conservation and Natural

Resources is campaigning to convert 10,000 acres of mowed grass into meadows or forest by this year.) During Balmori's research phase, its design team identified two distinct biotopes for the courthouse site. One encompassed plants found in an upland Pennsylvania forest, while the second included lowland plantings that could filter stormwater that is then stored in underground cisterns for reuse in the landscape. "Our agenda was to make a public space and to work with nature," says Balmori Partner Javier González-Campaña, adding that he and his colleagues also drew on Harrisburg's City Beautiful-era landscapes, as well as the Midtown District's curving train tracks, for inspiration.

As visitors and building occupants approach the courthouse's public entrance, they are led into the building from 6th Street through a generous paved forecourt and stepped terraces. Rhododendrons and white pine, red maple, and paper birch trees offer a dignified procession while casting shade on low stone seating walls, without sacrificing the visibility necessary for security sightlines. To the south and

east, along Riley and North 7th Streets, a mix of flowering dogwoods and American lindens merges with sedges, sedum, and wildflowers. Biofiltration gardens surround the parking lot to the north to help capture, treat, and store runoff from the impervious surfaces on site. Along North 7th Street, a Freedom Lawn comprising lawn grasses, flowering plants, and native plants was introduced for both ecological performance and ease of maintenance: after following Balmori's instructions for weeding and pruning during plants' establishment stages, courthouse facility managers can allow the prairie-like plot to manage itself.

Balmori also advocated for a green roof garden on the podium, even when budget constraints were looming. "Rainwater capture justified both a vast amount of diversity in planting and the green roof," says González-Campaña. Today the terraced surface provides spaces for dining and taking in the views, while plantings reduce stormwater runoff and reduce the urban heat island effect.



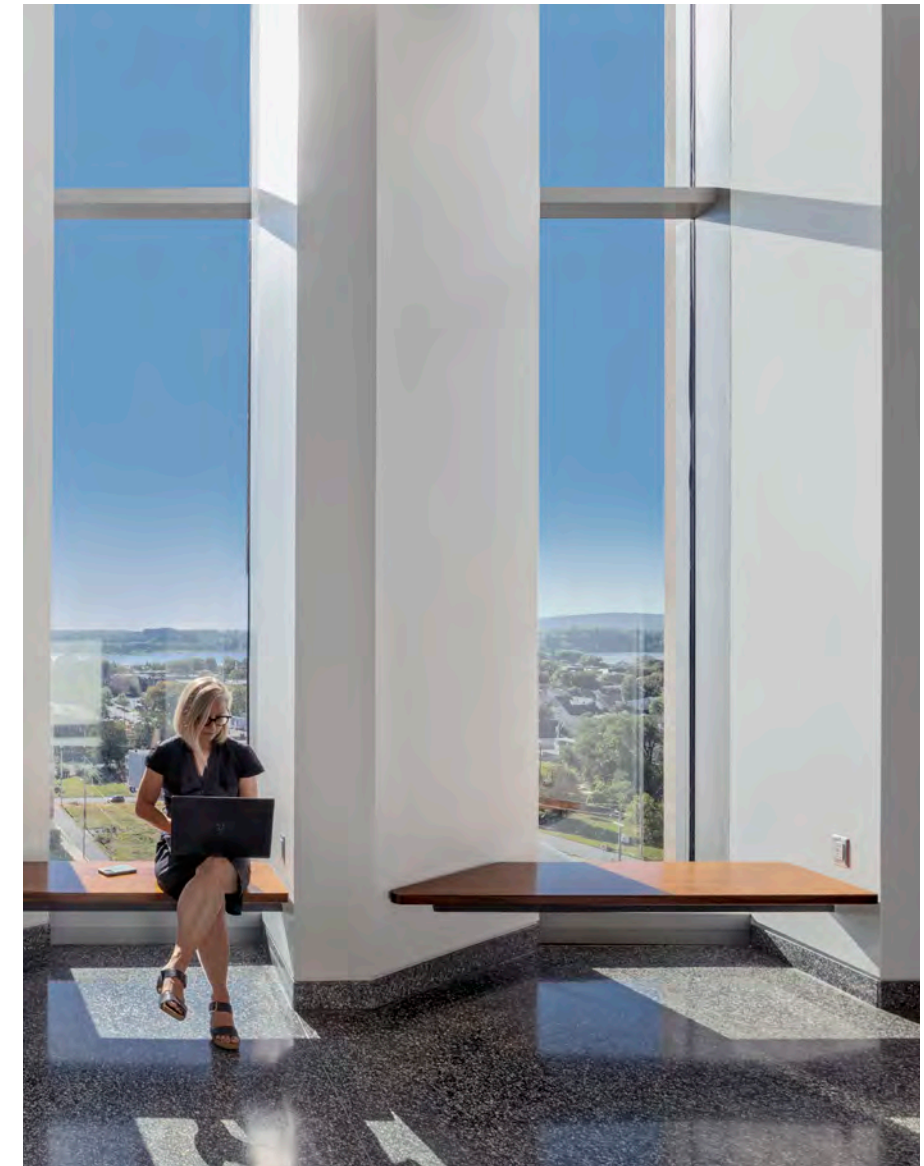
THE INTERIOR EXPERIENCE

In addition to eight courtrooms, the Rambo courthouse contains 11 chambers in its tower volume. In a departure from the downtown Reagan building, these new judges' chambers are grouped collegially in the top two floors of the tower. Collegial chambers are a developing trend in courthouse design that supports space savings as well as staffing and resource efficiencies; allows for shared courtrooms, which were historically attached to a judge's chambers; and fosters greater collaboration among judges and their staff. "There was an understanding that this courthouse was going to be about working together," says Ennead's Susan Rodriguez.

Nowhere is a sense of community more present than within the building's lobby, which further offers a moment for decompression and orientation in clear, crisp terms. This guiding concept was in no small part a response to the physical obfuscation that occurred in the old courthouse. "You got off the elevator and you weren't sure where you were," architect Susan Rodriguez recalls of the previous headquarters. "Here there is a clear sense of sequence and delivery of justice."

This most public interior also actively reminds users that a federal courthouse belongs to the citizens of Harrisburg, and Rodriguez in turn calls the ground-floor lobby "an immersion in place" that stimulates both local pride and faith in national governance. It's fitting, then, that California-based artist Monique van Genderen's expansive mural *I Thought of You... The People's Painting* is a fundamental component of the lobby experience.

Inspired by the courthouse's surrounding landscape, van Genderen painted an immense mural of abstract brushstrokes that spans the entire length of the lobby; this colossal blue ribbon meanders across and around slender clerestory windows that overlook the interior space, and it is accented with contrasting marks of vibrant yellow, magenta, orange, and green. The artist envisioned *I Thought of You... The People's Painting* as an homage to the Susquehanna River, in which the windows slice across the painting just as bridges visually divide the waterway into parts. "The inspiration was the architecture; the architecture is the modern frame for the painting," van Genderen told current GSA





Administrator Robin Carnahan prior to the courthouse’s dedication, adding that she intended the art to be as legible to drivers passing by the building as guests and occupants of the courthouse.

People who do experience the artwork up close will discern another layer to the composition, namely 21 digitally printed canvases that depict van Genderen’s original paper sketch. The photographic surfaces of these canvases create a visual contrast with the hand-painted mural and impart an additional topography to the artwork. Simultaneously considering small- and large-scale interactions, crisscrossing time, and a buoyant color palette, van Genderen said in a statement that she aims “to transport the viewer to a space apart from our everyday reality, a space that speaks to our individuality and commonality at the same time.”

From the ground floor, an elevator bank connects the lobby to public space at all levels that include the courtroom and chambers floors. Judges meanwhile access court floors through an internal elevator that runs from their parking level to the

courtroom and chambers floors above—and about which Judge Connor reports a comprehensive sense of security and safety for himself, his staff, and jurors.

A series of eight oil paintings by New York-based artist Claire Sherman, entitled *Ascend* and installed between the 3rd and 10th floors, underscores community ownership in the courthouse’s tower volume. Derived from photographs the artist shot over the course of multiple hikes, the magnified landscape scenes are dense and knotty with native South Central Pennsylvania foliage and natural forms in the lower-floor canvases. For the paintings installed on the upper floors of the tower, Sherman’s scenes become airy and sparse, as if the viewer is looking toward the sky. “I wanted to pull from foliage and plants that are specific to the area, so that you feel like you’re entering a familiar environment, rather than something foreign, when you journey through the courthouse,” Sherman said in a videotaped interview.

She continues, “I was trying to consider how the paintings would be viewed on different levels of the building. Someone

might see one, go up a level, and see another work; I thought those experiences could feel a little fractured, but collectively they could also add up to some form of narrative. I came to the conclusion that I wanted the painting to move from density and fullness near the building’s ground level and then transition to more lightness and airiness, so that when viewers go from one level to the next, there’s an opening up of space that relates to the opening up of the building to its substantial views.” Sherman also uses architecture as a framing device, albeit differently from van Genderen.

As critic Barbara A. MacAdam wrote of Sherman’s oeuvre in *The Brooklyn Rail* in 2022, “Her work not only refines our powers of discernment, but also suggests analogies with our own vascular systems and as such helps us to sense the effects of our surrounding natural world.” And as Sherman herself concludes, “I was interested in creating an immersive environment, something the viewer can enter into within the courthouse, to create a moment or a pause within someone’s daily routine.”

Both seamlessly integrated art installations were made possible by GSA’s Art in Architecture Program. The program commissions sculpture, paintings, and installations for GSA’s new construction and major modernization projects, using one half of one percent of a facility’s estimated construction cost as funds for public art. Art in Architecture was founded in 1972 and fulfills the assertion by the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture—which since 1962 has provided GSA with one of its essential mission statements—that the work of living American artists should be incorporated in the design of public buildings. In Harrisburg, van Genderen’s *I Thought of You... The People’s Painting* and Claire Sherman’s *Ascend* amplify GSA and Ennead’s goal of expressing the historic optimism of Harrisburg and the Susquehanna Valley in three dimensions.



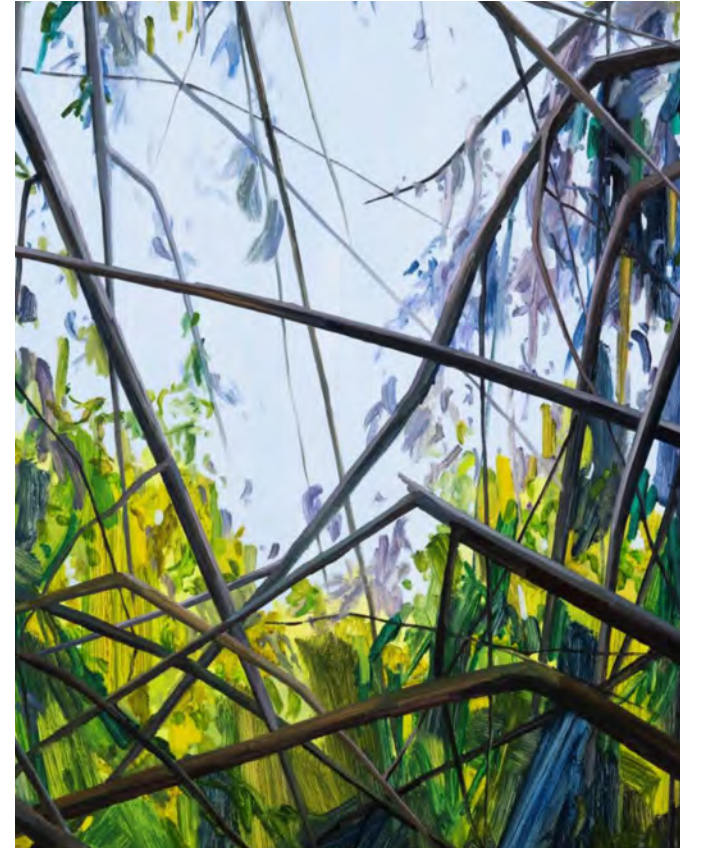
Floor 3
Moss and Ferns



Floor 4
Trees and Vines



Floor 5
Trees and Ferns



Floor 6
Trees



Floor 7
Trees and Vines



Floor 8
Trees and Vines



Floor 9
Vines



Floor 10
Trees

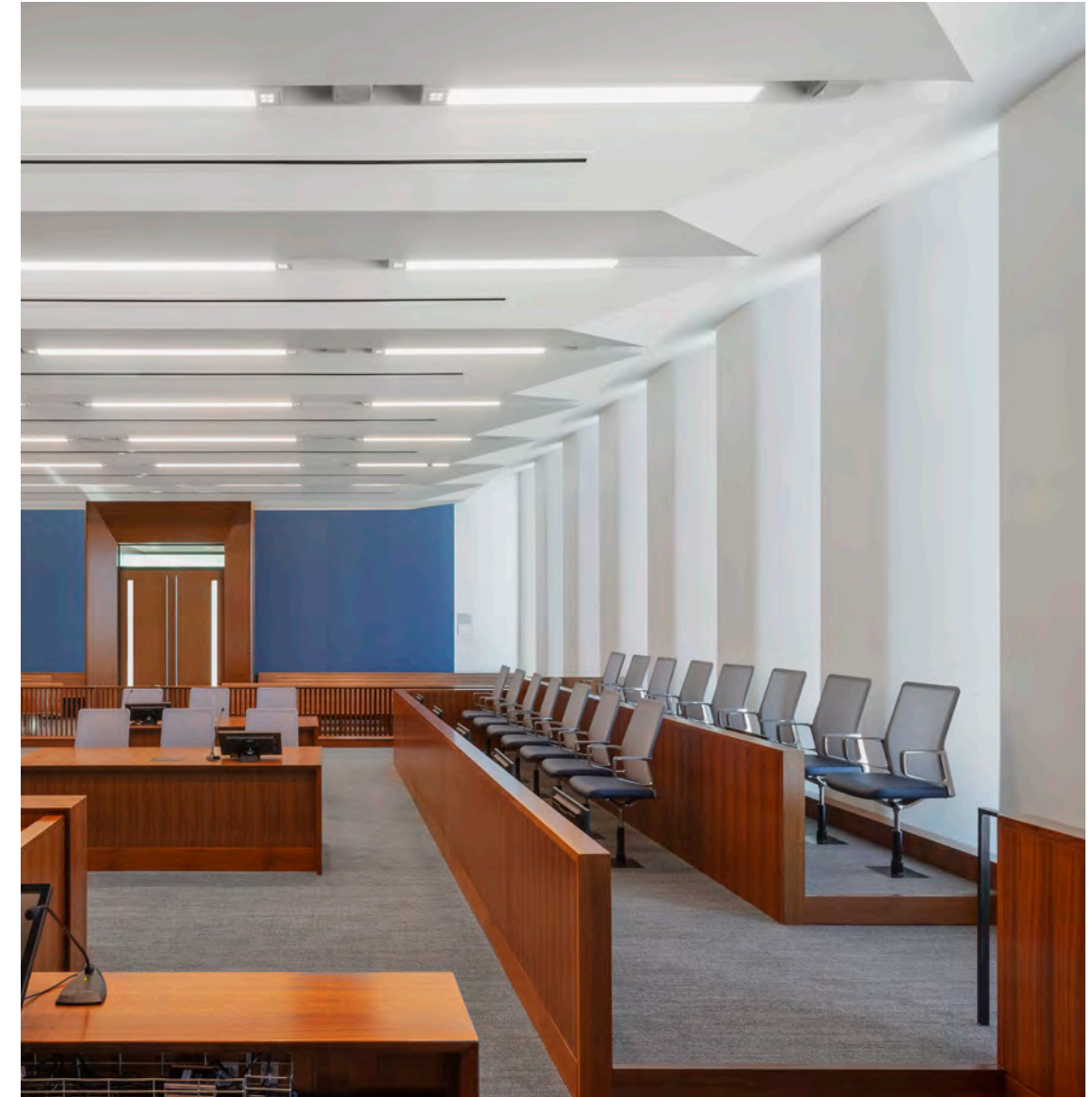
SYLVIA H. RAMBO

Sometimes an inner voice is loud, clear, and consistent. This was the case for Judge Sylvia H. Rambo, when, as an 11-year-old in 1947, her school bus passed the Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and she said to herself, “I’m going to become a lawyer.” As Rambo wrote for the fall 2023 issue of *Dickinson Magazine*, that clarity helped her persevere through challenges both expected and unforeseen.

Rambo was born in 1936 in Royersford, Pennsylvania, and her parents divorced at age 2. “Books about crusading lawyers kept me inspired,” she wrote of her childhood, and she ultimately graduated first in her high school class and attended Dickinson on a full academic scholarship. Studies at the George Washington Law School were cut short when Rambo returned home to care for her 14-year-old sister Ruth. Family friends soon stepped in, and Rambo diligently returned to law school, this time becoming the first woman law student at Dickinson. Upon graduating, Rambo worked in the trust department of the Bank of Delaware, and then returned to Carlisle where she worked for a general

civil law practice. More pathbreaking followed, and in 1979 she became the first woman to occupy a seat on the federal bench in the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Judy Rambo quickly rose to the challenge of complex adjudications, presiding over landmark education and environmental-protection cases that included multiple lawsuits following the 1979 partial nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island. In 1992, she was appointed the first female chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania. In 2001 she took senior status but maintained a demanding caseload; Rambo has had the rare of honor of not only living to see the building named in her honor but also working in it until her retirement in August 2024. A special tribute video to the trailblazing judge plays in the lobby of the new courthouse that she championed so determinedly, and which opened on her 87th birthday.





THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

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Shannon Richman, Kerry Rose, Larry Salter, Katrina
Scarpato, Tim Schardt, Joe Scharnagl, Jessica
Simmons, John Tegan, Bob Theel, Pedro Viera, John
Welling, Teresa Williams, Faith Zahm

Tenant

United States District Court for the Middle District
of Pennsylvania

Administrative Office of the Courts

United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit,
Middle District of Pennsylvania

United States Bankruptcy Court for the Middle
District of Pennsylvania

United States Courts Probation and Pretrial Services
Office

United States Marshals Service

United States Attorney’s Office for the Middle
District of Pennsylvania

U.S. Trustee Program

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Federal Public Defender

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Abel, Hsin-Yi Wu, Stefan Knust, Julia Champman,
Chihwei Hsu, Bernardo Almonte, Suzanne Troiano,
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Mostafa Khar, Alejandro Guerrero

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Tami Muckle, Joe Stubenbort, John
Fettis, Harry Nagy, Eric Pokrywiecki,
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Claire Sherman
New York, New York

Court Programming and Planning

CGL Ricci Greene
New York, New York

Frank Greene, Jeff Hyman, Brett Firfer,
Michele Graham, Pam Shui, Andre
Voss, Dominika Barszcz

Landscape Architect

Balmori Associates (with CEC
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Spray, Michael Urban

Urban Planning

OPA Architecture
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SBLD
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Dawood Engineering
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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New York, New York

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Trackenberg

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Scott Rubin, Adam Wells

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Joseph DeCoteau

Environmental Graphics

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Thinc Design
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Kathy Hall

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Tristyne Youngbluth, Adrienne
Heller, Laura Hodgson, Coreen
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Susan Van Dyke

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Spectrum Engineers
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USMS Security

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Chantilly, Virginia

Robert Harper
Gilbane Building Company
Houston, Texas

Ralph W. Johnson
Mason-Johnso
Williamsburg, Virginia

Maurice Cox
Chicago, Illinois

Enrique Norten
TEN Arquitectos
New York, New York

James Timberlake
KieranTimberlake
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Hugh Hardy
H3 Hardy Collaboration
New York, New York

Frances Halsband
Kliment Halsband Architects
New York, New York

Fine Arts National Peers

Penny Balkin Bach
Association for Public Art
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rosa Lowinger
RLA Conservation
Los Angeles, California

Ken Lum
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Construction Excellence National Peers

Larry Hopp
Kiewit
Omaha, Nebraska

Scott Boling
Federal Constructors
San Antonio, Texas



**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.

Since its establishment in 1949, the U.S. General Services Administration has been responsible for creating federal workplaces, and for providing all the products and services necessary to make these environments healthy and productive for federal employees and cost-effective for American taxpayers. As builder for the federal civilian government and steward of many of our nation's most valued architectural treasures, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994 to better achieve the mandates of public architecture. 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: producing facilities that reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the federal government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary architectural thought; avoiding an official style; and 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 new construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.

The Design Excellence Program is the recipient of a 2003 National Design Award from the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and of the 2004 Keystone Award from the American Architectural Foundation.

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U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
Office of Architecture and Engineering
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U.S. General Services Administration