

UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Richmond, Virginia



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I wanted to carry forward the long and distinguished tradition of monumental public architecture in the United States, one that has its roots in Classicism. Where would this be more appropriate than in Richmond?

Robert A.M. Stern
Architect, Robert A.M. Stern Architects



A PLACE IN HISTORY

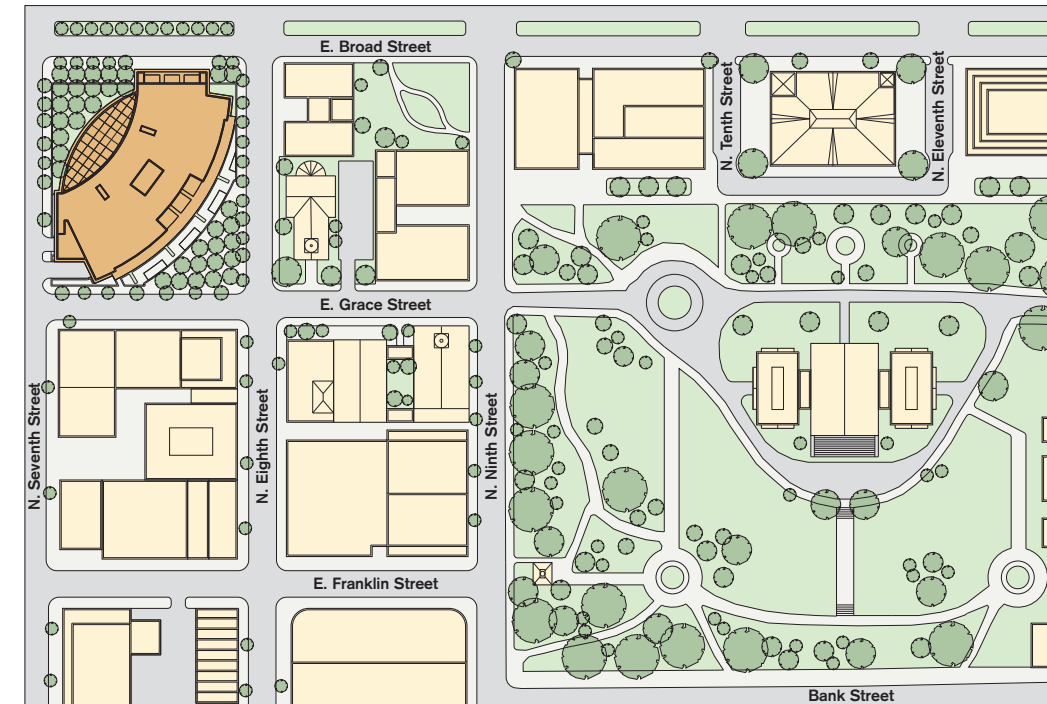
By American standards, Richmond, Virginia, is an old city. Founded by William Byrd II in 1737, the settlement took root along the falls of the James River, which is so riddled with granite boulders that English explorers who came here in 1607 could navigate no further upstream. The nation's history is woven through the city's fabric. At St. John's Church, Patrick Henry delivered his "give me liberty or give me death" speech. In the old U.S. Circuit Court, the nation's third vice president, Aaron Burr, was tried for treason. Abraham Lincoln walked the city's streets soon after the surrender at Appomattox.

Among Richmond's most venerable landmarks is the pristine white State Capitol, designed by Thomas Jefferson and Charles Louis Clérisseau, who modeled it after a Roman temple—the Maison Carrée. The stately neoclassical building occupies the crest of a ridge, overlooking a broad expanse of lawn in the Capitol Square. A few blocks to the northwest lies the former heart of Richmond's retail district along Broad Street. Through the mid-1900s, the department stores clustered on the city's main commercial thoroughfare

attracted shoppers from long distances away. But in Richmond, as in many cities across the nation, population shifts and the advent of suburban shopping malls accelerated the decline of the city center. By the early 1990s, all that was left of the once-vibrant retail district were a handful of small, independent shops.

The new United States Courthouse in Richmond occupies a strategic site that connects these two nodes of the city—filling a prominent city block between the historic Capitol Square and the former retail center, which is being reinvented as an entertainment district and a locale for hotels catering to the city's convention trade. Bordered by Broad Street to the northeast and Grace Street to the southwest, and situated between Seventh and Eighth streets, the courthouse site was intentionally selected not only for its proximity to the State Capitol, but because of what the new building might contribute in terms of reviving Broad Street.

In plan, the 346,000-square-foot building is configured as a bent bar, curving gracefully from the eastern corner of the



Site Plan



block to the west, and bowing toward the south with an impressive, seven-story façade built of granite and cast stone.

Its stately presence, balanced geometry, and sweeping cornice line project a strong image that relates well to the buildings around Capitol Square. At the same time, the building deflects away from the entertainment district, creating space for 100-foot-tall atrium that serves as the building's principal public space. When illuminated at night, the atrium will enliven the street and provide a dramatic backdrop for the developing performing arts district.

The curved footprint of the courthouse provides room for an urban plaza at the corner of Eighth and Grace streets. The openness of the plaza, which is planted with ginkgo trees, mediates the shift in scale between the courthouse and two smaller-scaled churches on the adjacent block—St. Peter's (built in 1835) and St. Paul's (built in 1845). The gradually sloping site was used to best advantage by placing the underground parking entrance unobtrusively near the intersection of Seventh and Grace streets, where it also

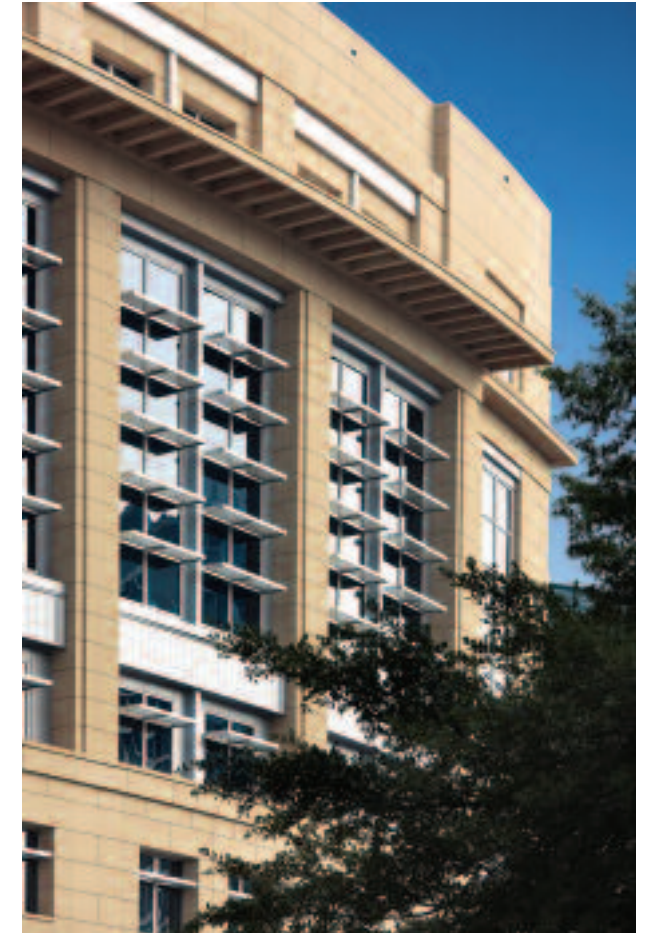
causes the least conflict with pedestrian movement.

In the tradition of grand public buildings, the Richmond courthouse celebrates its monumentality. This is no more obvious than in the prominent loggia, which announces itself as the public entrance at the corner of Eighth and Broad. Rendered in the language of classicism, the design resonates deeply with the tradition of the courts in America—indeed, with the whole national tradition of architecture and the conception of the nation by the Founding Fathers, who were deeply imbued in the values of the humanist classical tradition.

The language of the building is a stripped-down Classicism that recalls the government buildings of Paul Philippe Cret, a Beaux-Arts architect who simplified classical form to meet modern needs. The style evolved during the 1930s and 1940s and is easily observed in Washington, DC, in buildings such as the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Marriner S. Eccles Federal Reserve Board Building, which set the tone for this fresh interpretation of Classicism. In this

regard, the Richmond courthouse joins the family of nearby state-owned landmarks such as the Department of Highways Building and the Patrick Henry Building (Old Virginia State Library), both of which also front on Broad Street.

In addition, the articulation of an attic story gives the courthouse a strong profile against the sky. The attic is set back in the center of the south façade, creating space for an upper-level terrace that is embellished with a pergola. On the Broad Street façade, the fifth floor accommodates a grand porch—the kind of place that might be decorated for a grand parade or other important civic occasion. It is a place that engenders pride in the buildings that represent the public institutions of our government. Like many other aspects of this building, it speaks to new possibilities, just as the courthouse's integration into the urban setting of Richmond contributes to the revival of an important thoroughfare and creates a tangible federal presence in a district of civic buildings.







The design is magnificent. The building is not only aesthetically pleasing, but its functionality is outstanding.

Honorable, James R. Spencer
Chief Judge, United States District Court
for the Eastern District of Virginia

PROCESSION AND PUBLIC SPACE

A fitting degree of pomp and ceremony is woven into the design of the Richmond courthouse, which in its essential form, materials, and spatial organization embodies the high ideals of the American judicial system. This narrative begins with the placement of a monumental portico or loggia on the eastern corner of the building—an architectural statement of dignity and purpose. Rendered in a contemporary classical language, with heavy piers of granite and cast stone and well-proportioned rectangular openings, the loggia establishes the court's position of importance along Broad Street and introduces the first stage of the public procession inside. Likewise, the architect's interpretation of traditional architectural language advances a long tradition of public architecture in the United States.

Visitors to the building follow a carefully orchestrated entry sequence and circulation pattern that fosters a sense of ritual suited to the country's highest courts. This ordered sequence of experiences begins in front of the building and continues through the grand threshold into a vestibule or queuing space that is finished

in granite and marble. Cove lighting illuminates a large circular coffer in the ceiling that—combined with a wall-mounted seal of the District Court carved in granite and infilled with nickel—lends the space a decorum that is rarely found in contemporary buildings.

Members of the public and employees alike pass through security as they proceed from the compressed vestibule into a soaring, seven-story atrium. Lozenge-shaped in plan, the atrium provides a new public space for the city that was expressly placed along the Broad Street face of the building for public visibility and ease of access. The proportions and rhythm of the loggia extend into the atrium, whose heavy granite base wraps around the lower level of the space. Its floor is finished in polished terrazzo, which is laid out in a charcoal gray-and-white checkerboard pattern that recalls the use of stone in older buildings.

A soft, diffused light fills the space through a large north-facing window wall and a fritted-glass roof whose coating filters out more than 70 percent of the direct sun. The columns in the glass wall emphasize

its vertical thrust, while more slender intermediate structural members allow for the desired impression that the wall is mostly glass. This transparency has great symbolic value—the important notion that, from the outside, the public can look in and see the daily workings of the courthouse. And because it is glassy, it can be illuminated at night and used for public functions in the evening. In such instances, the courthouse would not be a dead building but would function like a lantern that contributes to the revived life of the street.

At the center of the atrium's south wall, a tiered double staircase leads to the second floor, where grand jury suites and the offices of the U.S. Marshals and U.S. Attorneys are located. A portal between the stairs provides access to elevators that lead to the upper floors. Pretrial services and probation offices, both on the ground level, are accessed from the west end of the atrium. Court clerks, public defenders, and trustees' offices are located on the third and fourth floors. Staff offices on all these levels receive plenty of natural daylight, which both reduces the courthouse's dependence

on energy and enhances the office environment for employees and the public.

From the second floor up, a curved gallery runs along the edge of the atrium. This public circulation space overlooks the atrium and enjoys sweeping views of the activity along Broad Street. Unadorned walls along the galleries are washed by warm light, with benches at regular intervals and deep openings into the offices and courtrooms framed by muted gray door frames.

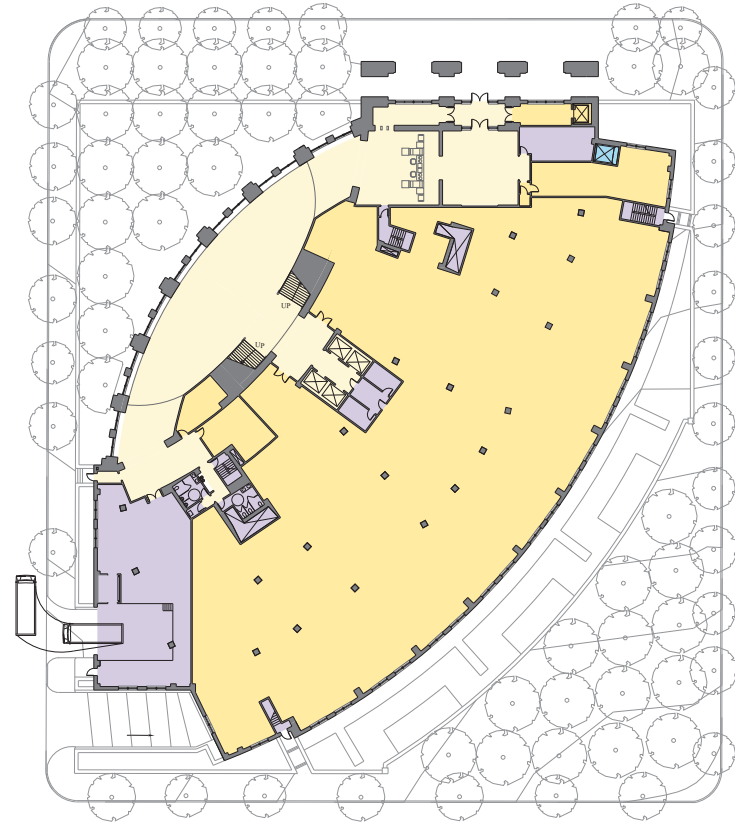
The building's nine courtrooms are located on the upper three floors. Bankruptcy and Magistrate's courtrooms, four in all, occupy the fifth floor, along with judges' chambers and their staffs. U.S. District courtrooms—three in all, with space to accommodate a fourth at a later date—are on the sixth floor. A Special Proceedings courtroom, a 3,000-square-foot court that can seat five justices at the bench and up to 18 jurors, occupies the east end of the seventh floor. One additional District courtroom fills the west end of the floor.

The courts are appointed with walnut paneling that rises along the walls to door

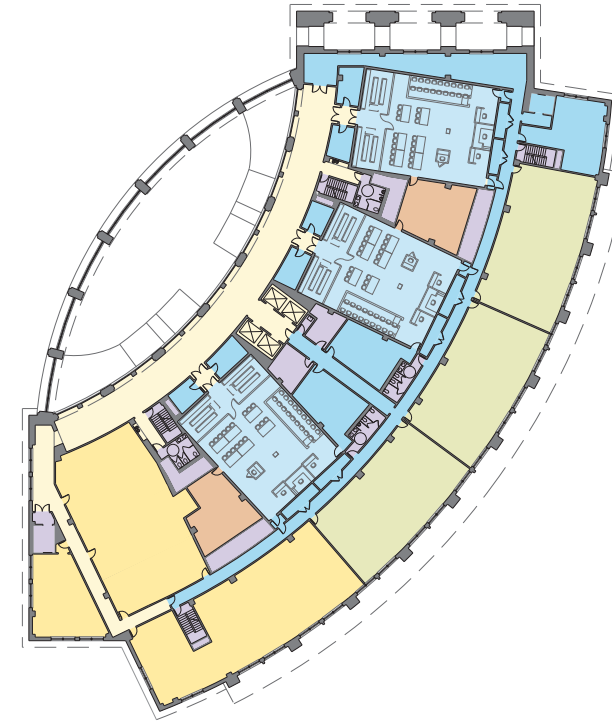
height in the District courtrooms. Laylights in the ceilings provide soft, even illumination. Each courtroom features a traditional layout, with the public entrance at the center point of the rear wall, the judge's bench on the central axis, a jury box along the wall to one side, and a witness stand opposite it. The custom-designed benches, with a scalloped motif across the front, echo the curves of the building's exterior. Leather panels on the wall behind the bench lend an air of gravity to the proceedings.

Judges' chambers are located in close proximity to their courtrooms on the upper floors. Each chamber has a southern exposure offering views toward Capitol Square. The chambers are furnished with built-in cabinetry including a credenza and bookshelves, with generous amounts of daylight through two large rectangular windows. On the seventh floor, a spacious terrace overlooks the historic square and the city's financial district beyond.

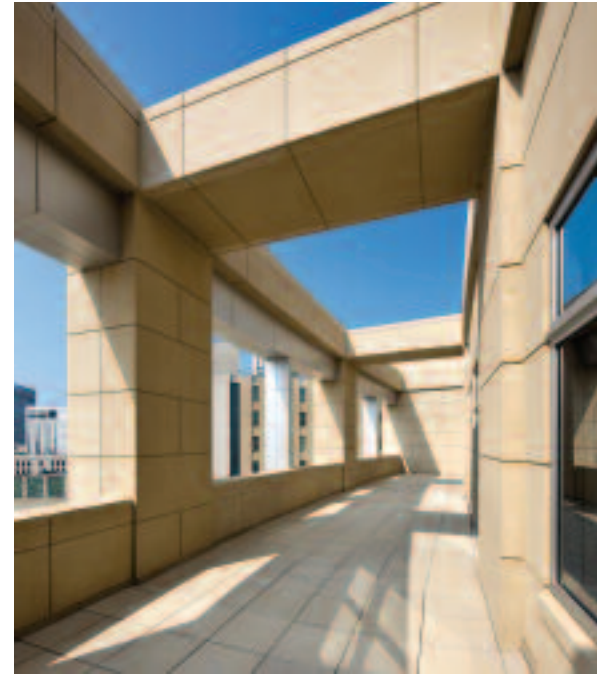




Floor Plan, Level 1



Courts Floor Plan, Level 6



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

In keeping with the General Services Administration's policy to certify all new construction projects and substantial renovations through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Green Building Rating System of the U.S. Green Building Council, the U.S. Courthouse in Richmond was designed with sustainable goals at the forefront. The building exceeds basic LEED® green building certification and achieves the LEED® Silver level designation, setting a high standard for other public buildings to emulate.

The design team employed several broad, energy-saving strategies. The very fact that the building is constructed on a redeveloped site in the city center means that it relies on existing infrastructure, rather than requiring new public investment. Bicycle racks and locker rooms are provided for employees to encourage the use of alternative transportation. In addition, the size of the building footprint is concentrated, which creates a more efficient configuration for heating and cooling while allowing for two open spaces on the remainder of the site: a public

plaza at the south and a landscaped bosque to the north of the building. Parking is located below grade to reduce the building's heat island effect, a phenomenon by which the replacement of nature's cooling mechanisms with buildings, sidewalks, and parking lots causes urban areas to overheat. Highly reflective roofing and high emissivity roofing further reduce the courthouse's heat island effect.

The control of daylight coming into the building and the level of artificial lighting needed to supplement it are carefully balanced in the public spaces and offices. Low-emissivity (Low-E) glass greatly reduces the amount of heat that enters through the skin of the building. In addition, aluminum louvers placed along the south façade prevent direct sunlight and heat from entering the building, while bouncing light deep into the interior spaces. Natural light provides much of the illumination in the grand atrium on the north side of the building, where the light quality is softer and the heat gain is far reduced.

Water conservation is addressed through the addition of a 10,000-gallon fiberglass

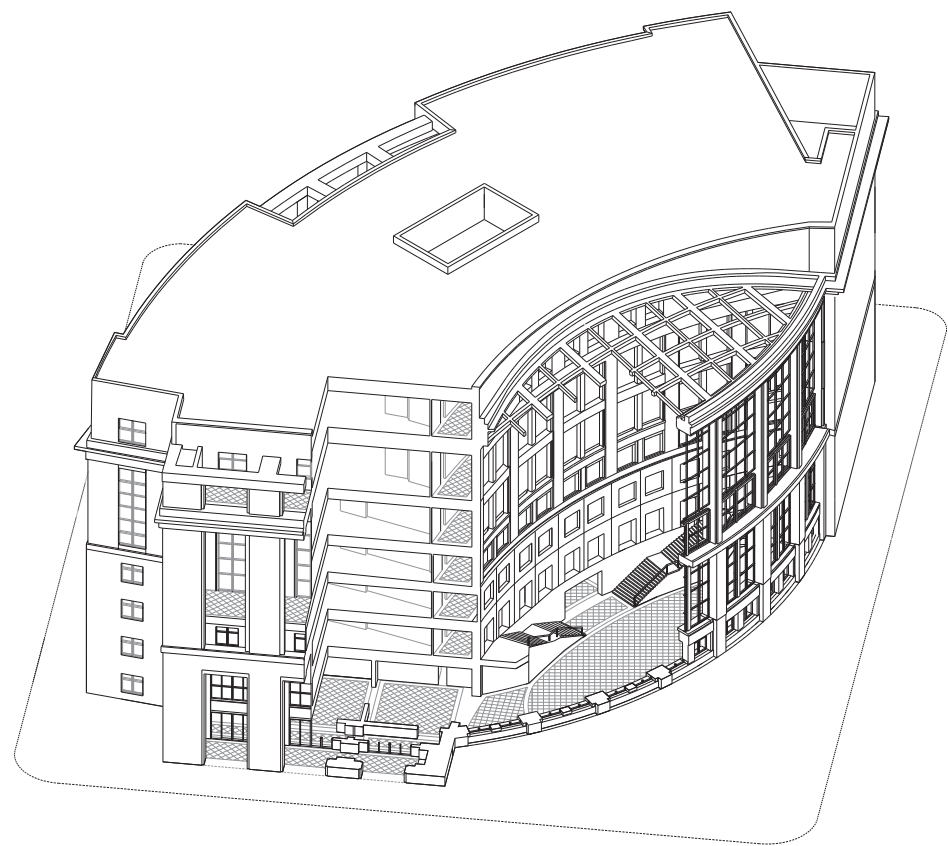
rainwater harvester storage tank in the lower level of the courthouse. Rainwater is collected from the top of the building and then reused for landscape irrigation on the site.

The quality of the building's indoor air is a high priority. The air is constantly monitored for levels of carbon dioxide. Air circulation systems provide for effective delivery and mixing of fresh air to support the comfort of building occupants. Materials (such as carpet adhesives) that emit noxious gases were limited to reduce the quantity of indoor air contaminants. Furthermore, all areas where chemicals are used were segregated from building occupants to prevent cross-contamination.

Twenty percent of the courthouse's building materials and products are manufactured locally, thus reducing the energy required to transport them to the site. Fifty percent of the wood-based materials were supplied by a source that practices responsible forest management. Of the construction waste generated by the project, 60 percent was recycled. In addition, a recycling area is designated within the building so that responsible

environmental practices become part of the building's ongoing operation.

With the completion of the building, all of its mechanical systems are being systematically evaluated to ensure that each piece of equipment is working according to specifications, as well as determining that they interact with each other as intended. Energy performance of the building's HVAC, hot water, and interior lighting is optimized to be 30 percent above the national standards set by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).



Axonometric Drawing



GENERAL FACTS ABOUT THE COURTHOUSE

The United States Courthouse in Richmond, Virginia, is located on a 1.8-acre site along Broad Street, the main commercial thoroughfare in the city's downtown. The site is bounded on the northeast by Broad Street and on the southwest by Grace Street, filling the block between Seventh and Eighth streets. Two historic churches—St. Peter's and St. Paul's—front Grace Street in the adjacent block. Beyond the churches is Capitol Square, the seat of government in the Commonwealth of Virginia and location of the State Capitol.

The public entrance into the courthouse is beneath a monumental loggia on the building's east corner, at the intersection of Eighth and Broad streets. Seen from the west along Broad Street, the building presents a strong sweeping curved façade that forms a marker or gateway to a district of government and institutional buildings beyond it. A retaining wall along the Broad Street frontage creates an edge for a large planting bed raised about the sidewalk level to provide an unobtrusive, yet secure, barrier. The granite wall wraps around the building, appearing to rise higher toward the rear as the grade drops off gradually

toward the southwest as it slopes toward the James River.

The building encloses 346,000 square feet of space, which includes offices for non-court agencies including U.S. Attorneys and U.S. Marshals. Four courtrooms are spaced evenly along the fifth-floor corridor—two Magistrate's courtrooms and two Bankruptcy courtrooms. The sixth floor accommodates three District courtrooms with space to accommodate a fourth at a later date. An additional District courtroom is placed on the seventh floor, along with the 3,000-square-foot Special Proceedings courtroom that can be placed in service for ceremonial purposes. Most of the courtrooms are finished in walnut paneling, the exception being the smaller courtroom on the seventh floor, which is cherry with a mahogany finish. Key design elements are consistent throughout the courtrooms, such as laylights centered in the ceiling to lend appropriate illumination to the proceedings. The two seventh-floor courtrooms, placed on opposite ends of the building, benefit from additional windows that offer visual connections to the outdoors.

Judges' chambers are placed along the south face of the building, where they enjoy views toward Capitol Square and the city's financial district. The top-level chambers, which are placed in an attic story that gives the building a strong skyline profile, have convenient access to a restricted terrace, where guests may be entertained.

A base of Virginia granite visually anchors the building to its site; above that, walls of sand-colored precast stone panels are penetrated with large glazed openings. On the south façade, a system of horizontal aluminum louvers shades staff offices and judges' chambers from direct sun, while reflecting natural light deep into the building.

Within the building, separate pedestrian circulation systems are designed to segregate the three major user groups: the public, judges and staff, and prisoners. An automobile entrance on Seventh Street provides access to secure underground parking for judges and marshals, as well as for transfer of prisoners.

Location

A 1.8-acre site in downtown Richmond along Broad Street, bounded on the southwest by Grace Street and filling the block between Seventh and Eighth streets.

Size

346,000 Gross Square Feet
135 Feet High at Broad Street entrance
Seven Floors Above Grade
One Level Below Grade

Time Frame

Design Contract Award: July 2001
Construction Started: March 2005
Dedication: October 2008

Parking

Underground: 64 spaces

Foundation

Reinforced concrete mat foundation

Structure

Composite reinforced metal deck supported by steel beams and girders, moment-resistant frame with side-plate technology to resist progressive collapse

Mechanical

High efficiency hot water boilers and chillers with primary and secondary pumping systems, dedicated outside air handling units with room carbon dioxide sensors and air-to-air energy recovery units

Electrical

Raised-floor electrical distribution system, double ended switchboard with redundant utility transformers and feeds, emergency generator

Finishes

Exterior: Virginia Mist granite water table, precast concrete panels, curtain wall with painted aluminum spandrels

Roof: Modified bitumen membrane roofing system with reflective surface

Atrium skylight: Insulated glass with ceramic frit coating

Plaza: Concrete pavement with exposed aggregate, painted metal bollards, ginkgo trees

Atrium and Public Areas: Epoxy terrazzo floor, honed Virginia Mist granite walls at first floor, painted walls above

Courtrooms: Carpeted floors

Walls: Stained walnut paneling with fabric-wrapped acoustical panels

Ceilings: Painted gypsum wall board soffit with 2' x 2' acoustical tile ceiling and center laylight

Judges' Chambers: Carpeted floors

Walls: Stained walnut paneling with painted gypsum wall board

Ceilings: Painted gypsum wall board soffit with 2' x 2' acoustical tile

Offices: Carpeted floors

Walls: Painted gypsum wall board

Ceilings: 2' x 2' acoustical tile ceiling



BIOGRAPHY: THE ARCHITECT

Robert A.M. Stern is the founder and senior partner of Robert A.M. Stern Architects in New York City and Dean of the Yale School of Architecture. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and received the Medal of Honor from its New York Chapter in 1984 and the President's Award in 2001. Stern directs the design of each of the firm's projects, which range from residential and commercial to institutional and civic facilities. Completed buildings are located throughout the United States and in Europe, Asia, and South America. Recent projects include the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse and Federal Building, Beckley, WV; the Frank J. Battisti and Nathaniel R. Jones Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, Youngstown, OH; the Ernest F. Hollings National Advocacy Center, Columbia, SC; the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA; Fifteen Central Park West, New York, NY; and Comcast Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Stern was previously a Professor of Architecture and Director of the Historic

Preservation Program at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation and from 1984 to 1988 was the first director of Columbia's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture. He is the author of several books, including *New Directions in American Architecture* (Braziller, 1969; revised edition, 1977); *George Howe: Towards a Modern American Architecture* (Yale University Press, 1975); and *Modern Classicism* (Thames & Hudson and Rizzoli, 1988). He is co-author of a five-volume series of books documenting New York City's architecture and urbanism. Thirteen books on the firm's work have been published, including most recently *Robert A.M. Stern: Houses and Gardens* (Monacelli Press, 2005) and *Robert A.M. Stern: Buildings and Towns* (Monacelli Press, 2007).



THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

Owner

U.S. General Services Administration
Regional Office: Philadelphia, PA

Design Architect

Robert A.M. Stern Architects
New York, NY

Architect of Record (and consultants)

Heery
Orlando, FL

Baker Engineering & Risk Consultants
Federman Design and Construction
Consultants, Inc.
Hankins & Anderson, Inc.
Newcomb & Boyd
Sideplate Systems, Inc.
Snead Associates, P.C.
William Hunt & Associates, Inc.

Design Excellence National Peers

Shalom Baranes, FAIA
Shalom Baranes Associates, PC
Washington, DC

Karen Bausman, AIA
Karen Bausman + Associates
New York, NY

Bradford Grant, AIA
Howard University
Washington, DC

Laurie Hawkinson
Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects
New York, NY

Construction Excellence National Peers

Joseph Lawton, AIA, CCM
DMJM
Arlington, VA

Mark Baugh, DBIA
Hensel Phelps
Chantilly, VA

Blake Peck, FCCM
McDonough Bolyard Peck
Fairfax, VA

Robert E. Daniels
Hensel Phelps
Chantilly, VA

Construction Manager

Jacobs Project Management Co.
Arlington, VA

General Contractor (and consultants)

Tompkins Builders, Inc.
Washington, DC

AIW Inc.
Atlanta Marble Co.
Banker Steel Co.
Century Concrete
Colonial Webb Contractors
David Allen Co.
Ebenisterie Beaubois, Ltee
Hodgmans, Inc.
MEM Interiors Inc.
Modern Mosiac, Ltd.
RW Hitt Inc.
Simon Contracting
Trainer Glass Co.
Truland Service
Virginia Elevator Co., Inc.
Virginia Sprinkler Co.



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 and 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.

The Design Excellence Program is the recipient of a 2003 National Design Award from the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, the 2004 Keystone Award from the American Architectural Foundation, and a 2007 Collaborative Achievement Award from the American Institute of Architects.

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