From Plan to Punch List: Effective Collaboration for Successful Courthouse Renovation Projects

Hon. Jay Tlusty
Lincoln County Circuit Court

Hon. Andrew Voigt
Columbia County Circuit Court

Moderator: Patrick Brummond
District Court Administrator, 7th Judicial Adm. District
Lincoln County, Wisconsin
Historic Courthouse

- Built in 1903
- Added to National Register of Historic Places in 1978
Community Symbol

• Important part of city and county identity
• Figures prominently in county seal
Renovation Project Overview

- Part of larger, 3-phase project begun in mid-1990s
  - Phase 1: Lincoln County Jail renovation
  - Phase 2: Relocation of non-court administrative offices to new county administration building
  - Phase 3: Remodel courthouse and add security features to enable secure movement of prisoners from jail (across the street) to courthouse.
- Project completed in 2010
Goals of Courthouse Project

• Improve security for judicial and clerk offices
• Reduce public and victim/witness contact with in-custody defendants
• Eliminate need to use public elevator for court transport
• Relocate second branch courtroom and add jury box
Challenges

- Balance desire to stay in historical building against space and security needs
- Minimize interference with historical elements
  - Rotunda area could not be added to or modified
  - Plans reduced building symmetry
- Cooperation between County Board, State Historical Society and the State Court System
Architectural Details

Image: Ayres Associates
Overall Project Outcomes – Lincoln Co.

- No renovation project can be perfect
  - Compromise needed for success
- Relocation of court functions saved time and money
- Benefits of the project outweighed the drawbacks
Columbia County, Wisconsin
Columbia Courthouse History

- Historic courthouse constructed in 1865 and demolished in 1962
- County administration building constructed in 1962 on same site as courthouse
- Housed county administrative offices as well as court functions
- Some county functions had been moved to annex space
Project Genesis

• County Board approved initial project concept and funding in 2014
• Total cost of $45 million
  – New county administration building
  – New Health and Human Services building
  – Renovated building for court-related functions
• Completed in June 2018
• Dedication of courthouse in August 2018
Renovate vs. New Construction

- Desire to retain downtown location for courthouse
- Renovation less expensive than design and construction of new court complex adjacent to law enforcement center
Renovation Project Goals

- Completely renovate county administration building to become a dedicated court facility
- Provide secure chambers and staff areas
- Dedicated public entrance with security screening during business hours
- Addition of conference rooms and hearing room
Temporary Relocation

- Initial plan was to remain in building during renovation
- Court functions moved into newly-built HHS building space temporarily
Image: Lyn Jerde, Portage Daily Register
Successes

• Reused marble to the extent possible
• Salvaged a fair amount of wood paneling
  – Stained new paneling to match the old
• Recessed ceiling tiles used in courtrooms
  – Better for acoustics
  – Match style in new administration building
Security Improvements

• Secure entrances for judges from chambers to bench
  – Emergency escape routes
• Retractable walls in 2\textsuperscript{nd} floor hallway
  – In-custody defendants separated from public hallways while in transit
• Addition of sally port with secure inmate transport elevator
• Five conference rooms to provide space for confidential attorney-client conversations
Challenges

• Location of Branch 2 courtroom bench
• Cost overruns
• Sally port reduced in size from 6 cars to 4
• Proposed fence for parking area turned into open-work fence with electronic gate
• Disruption of court functions moving twice – once to temporary space and again back into renovated space
Pre-Renovation Parking Area
Post-Renovation Parking Area
Overall Project Outcomes – Columbia Co.

- Security greatly improved
- Renovation enabled project to be done without excessive expense
- Flexibility of HHS staff and willingness to delay getting into new space so that courts could temporarily relocate was helpful
- New facilities have capacity to serve county moving into the future
Questions?
Thank you