

## **Schenectady City Court**

Since 1987, Schenectady City (“City”) has been required to develop and implement a plan to provide an adequate and consolidated facility for the courts in the City of Schenectady. The City Court is split between two facilities, with civil cases heard in City Hall (one court room and one legislative council room serving as an additional court room) and criminal cases located at one court room in the police station.

2002 - 2004 –Despite promises from many different city administrations and the Unified Court System’s growing concerns over the state and condition of City Court facilities, the City has never a consolidated facility for the City Court. In 2004, the Court Facilities Capital Review Board disapproved of the City’s Capital Plan for failure to complete the planning process and to present a plan with a consolidated City Court facility. The Board placed the imposition of sanctions in abeyance until November 2004. The Board urged the City to join with the County in planning efforts. See attachments.

At that time, sanctions were not imposed to give the new City administration the opportunity to address the City’s immediate financial crisis.

2004 – 2005: The County expressed desire to expand the county courthouse to incorporate the City Court. This plan was not advanced.

2007: The County revisited the idea of expanding the court courthouse and relocating the City Court to this expanded building. The proposed space was not large enough, and the plan was scrapped. At the same time, the County allocated approximately \$4M to renovate a former bank into county offices.

2013: Governor Cuomo signs a bill creating a fourth full-time judge in the City of Schenectady. The City Court only has three judges’ chambers and three available courtrooms. The Unified Court System sought an amended Capital Plan from the City; the City responded that they were unable to provide a substantive response at that time and requested an indefinite extension. See attachments.

2014: The City looked at the Gazette building and a downtown building next to the YMCA as potential sites for City Court. These plans were not advanced.

2015: Proposed Capital Plan was rejected by the CAJ because it only addressed immediate needs at that time and failed to propose a comprehensive approach to short term and longer-term objectives.

2019 – 2023: The Unified Court System met with the City on numerous occasions to facilitate conversations about new space, statutory requirements to provide space suitable and sufficient to the Unified Court System, and encourage a Capital Plan to address these recurring, unresolved,

issues, being a lack of adequate chambers, lack of adequate court rooms, the layout of the City Court buildings, and the fact that the City Court facilities are split between two buildings.

October 2023: The Unified Court System sent a written demand to the City for an updated Capital Plan that addressed outstanding facility concerns. The City's response was due in January 2024. Schenectady did not formally respond to that request. See attachment.

May 2024: The City engaged the Judicial District and a third-party architect to advance expanding City Court operations by proposing an additional court room and additional chambers at an existing shared-use city facility (531 Liberty, shared with the Schenectady Police Department).

July 2024: After numerous conversations and architectural plan iterations, the City agreed to confer with the City Police Department concerning the proposed design. The City failed to engage in further conversation with the Unified Court System or their architect, despite multiple attempts (see attachment). Expanding space at the police department still does not create one consolidated facility for the City Court.

November 2024: UCS solicited a Capital Plan amendment from the City; the City failed to submit a capital plan amendment or provide a substantive response.