

COURTHOUSE

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for all of it.

“In 1996 we had probably 107 indictments in Madison County, you fast forward prior to Covid and you had 1200. That’s just Circuit Court, doesn’t include Family Court, doesn’t include anything in District Court,” said Judge Taylor.

Due to this growth, and the addition of a new judge to the 25th Circuit Court that operates in the courthouse, it was determined that there was the need for renovations of the space that already existed, and the addition of a new wing of the building.

While the need for renovations was present, Taylor expressed that the county wanted to feature as much of the original parts of the courthouse as possible, which has been around since the 1850s.

In the 1850s when the courthouse was first built they created what Taylor refers to as “the T” which includes the lobby of the courthouse, the stairs, and the first courtroom on the first floor. After that more space was added to the building in the 1960s in what Taylor has referred to as “the U” of the building.

With the renovations to the original part of the building, one thing that is different from when Taylor took office is that the administrative governmental offices that were previously located here, such as the Judge Executive’s office or the County Clerk’s office, have been relocated to other buildings in town to avoid intermingling between the Circuit Courts and the county administration.

“You may have a trial going on, and you’ve got victims and family members of the defendant, and you’ve got news media here and all those things, and you’re coming in to pay your car tags,” said Deputy Judge Executive Jill Williams. “You were mixing two very different functions, judicial and administrative.”

One of the larger problems identified with the old portions of the court-

house, according to Taylor, is that none of it was really ADA compliant, and it also wasn’t that safe with people being able to access large parts of the courthouse without any kind of security measures between themselves and those who stood on trial.

According to Taylor it was common for people to even try to hide things in the public areas for inmates to smuggle into and out of court due to the lack of security measures between the public spaces and the spaces inmates had access to.

“It’s not always safe for the inmate to be out in the open like that, it’s not safe for the court security staff or our jail deputies and their staff,” said Taylor.

These issues lead to large safety concerns for jurors, judges, inmates, and the general public alike. So a good deal of the renovations focused on these safety measures.

The building is now mostly ADA compliant, barring some features like an elevator from the original design of the building that was grandfathered in, with features like new elevators, ramps, and sprinkler systems that were not present in the courthouse before.

Additionally the courthouse now has much better security, with more than 50 cameras added as part of the renovation, a secure parking section added off the side of First Street for the judges, and the biggest renovation: a sally port where the inmates will be able to be securely brought into the building without walking through public spaces.

“Some people feel like it’s no longer public, but this building is still a public building. Anybody has a right to still come through this door and go through the public spaces,” said Taylor.

The only change is, he added, that now you have to go through security when you enter the building, which used to you only had to do when you were entering the court room.

The renovations to the original part of the building have kept several historical pieces intact, such as the original court-



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room or the original staircase, while also replacing old spaces with a second courtroom, judge’s offices, and Circuit Clerk offices. Public bathrooms and an ADA compliant elevator were also part of these inner renovations.

These spaces replaced other administrative spaces that were previously in the courthouse, such as the Motor Vehicles or Elections and Marriage Licenses departments.

But the largest part of the work done to the courthouse was the addition of the aforementioned sallyport, a large addition to the north side of the courthouse.

This sallyport allows for inmates to be brought to court safely, without having to enter public spaces. Whereas before inmates were sometimes even walked across the street to the courthouse, allowing plenty of public access before they reached the secure portions on the second floor.

Once unloaded into the sally port, there are cells for the inmates to be kept in while awaiting trial that the public cannot access, as well as rooms for secure interviews between attorney’s and inmates — the same kind that are seen in jails or prisons that allow for a conversation

through a glass window. Secure restrooms are also available for the inmates.

“It allows for us to transport inmates from a secured enclosed location to a secure location as well. You didn’t have holding cells in the old facility, you just had inmates in a room with open doors, open windows, and that kind of thing,” said Taylor.

An additional safety feature that was added to the original courtroom that was not previously there is that the bench now has a layer of kevlar built into it, providing bullet proof protection for judges in the case of an emergency.

This entire project was funded for by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Kentucky State Legislature as a capital project. The county did not pay anything for the renovations to the courthouse. In total the AOC and State legislature paid just about \$17 million for the project according to Taylor.

At this time there are very few things left for the courthouse before it reopens, the AOC will be coming in and adding in networking, data, and security features before the courthouse is able to

open.

Additionally Madison County is working with the Richmond Garden Club and local contractors for a landscaping plan for the courthouse, to help make it a “centerpiece of downtown.”

The courthouse will open on May 12th. A dedication ceremony will be held on May 23rd.

“It’s Madison County’s White House, I’m proud of it,” said Taylor.



The sally port that was added to the courthouse contains secure holding cells for inmates, as well as a new secure interview space for attorneys and inmates that previously was not available at the courthouse.

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