

ARKANSAS

Mississippi County Courthouse



LOCATION	Blytheville, Arkansas
COURT JURISDICTIONS	Criminal, Civil, Domestic/Family, Juvenile, Small Claims
PROJECT STATUS	Completed August 2022

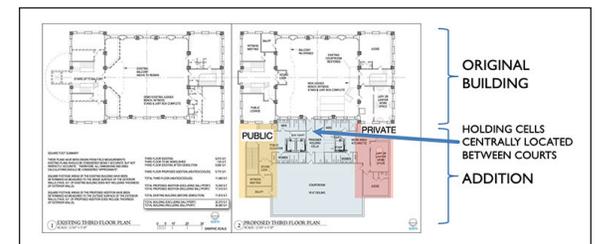
PROJECT VISION

The project aimed to maintain the integrity of the building's historic character while integrating modern amenities and technology to serve the community's evolving needs, ensuring its longevity as a cherished county landmark.

PROJECT DETAILS

The Mississippi County Courthouse in Blytheville, Arkansas was originally constructed in 1919 in the colonial revival style at approximately 18,000 square feet, 3.5 stories tall, and clad with brick and cut limestone. It was listed on the National Register in 1996. The plan was to not only repair the interior and exterior of the original courthouse but to construct an addition that would double the size of the facility allowing for the growing needs of the county and provide enhanced security for the public and staff.

The list of problems with the historic courthouse was long and included heavily damaged plaster walls and ceilings, non-ADA restrooms, outdated wiring and lighting, poor connectivity, and no separation between judges, the public, and detainees. The roof was in terrible condition and leaking. Building systems were outdated and inefficient. The building roof was replaced, and new storm windows were added to reinforce the older wood windows, reducing heat gain and noise from nearby trains. A highly efficient HVAC system was installed and allowed the design team the ability to add heating and cooling in spaces that would not allow for a traditional HVAC system. LED lighting and occupancy sensors were provided, including restoring original light fixtures in the marble lobby and public corridors.



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The 18,000-square-foot addition was blended with the historic courthouse by using similar brick and limestone building materials and incorporating the historic courthouse's horizontal lines and window proportions. A new curtain wall on the east side of the building was designed to allow natural light to fill the public stairwell and provides a sense of transparency—important in public buildings today. A major challenge for the design team was to reconcile the site restrictions inherent to building in the historic downtown location. One street was closed, and major power lines were moved to accommodate the building project. Landscaping around the courthouse was significantly improved, and a plaza was designed to invite the public from the new parking area to the new entrance of the courthouse which houses new art exhibits, including custom paintings and photography to showcase the history of Mississippi County, its people, its industry, and its culture.

ENHANCING OPERATIONS AND THE OVERALL BUILDING EXPERIENCE

The stunning renovation and addition to the historic courthouse seamlessly blended modern design elements with the building's classic architecture, creating a harmonious space that preserves historic charm while also providing necessary functions for the building's users. The building has improved security providing a safer environment for the staff and the public. Important highlights include the addition of new security technology systems, a sally port, and a dedicated detainee elevator and holding cells. Adding more space and consolidating multiple county services has provided easier public access to more services in one location. A healthier work environment has been provided through the restoration process by replacing damaged and moldy interiors and correcting the issues that led to the problems. Important historical county records, although needing to be within a controlled environment, can still be seen by the public through a transparent corridor connecting the new and old buildings.

