



Costs of Overbuilding and Unneeded Courthouses

Miami, Florida

- The GAO found that the Ferguson court complex in Miami, Florida, exceeded the needs of the judiciary by 238,000 square feet and had an excess cost to taxpayers of \$49 million in construction alone. Maintenance and operations of the bloated facility costs an extra \$3.8 million a year.
- The new Wilkie D. Ferguson United States Courthouse was originally proposed to supplement space at the neighboring David W. Dyer courthouse. However, once Ferguson was built, the courts abandoned the Dyer courthouse, leaving 180,000 square feet of historic federal property vacant at an annual cost to the taxpayers of \$1.2 million.
- The judiciary and the GSA have done nothing with the Dyer courthouse since it was completely abandoned in 2008.

Buffalo, New York

- In 2011, the judiciary opened the new Robert H. Jackson Federal Courthouse, a state-of-the-art, egg-shaped, glass paneled, \$137 million 10-story behemoth in Buffalo, NY.
- The old 7-story, 183,000 square foot Michael J. Dillon U.S. Courthouse, which is on the National Register of Historic Places and takes up an entire city block, was subsequently abandoned by the courts.
- The judiciary and the GSA have made no decisions on the fate of the Dillon Courthouse, which has sat vacant for the past two years.

Los Angeles, California

- The federal courts in Los Angeles, CA occupy two buildings – the Roybal Courthouse and Federal Building and the Spring Street Courthouse – while constructing a third.
- The judiciary cited an increase in the number of judges expected in Los Angeles as one rationale for construction of a new courthouse. However, that projection proved faulty, and Los Angeles has 22 fewer judges than it last expected.
- Nevertheless, the GSA is pushing forward with the construction of a new federal courthouse in Los Angeles, to the tune of \$400 million. The new courthouse will result in the LA courthouse complex having three buildings with 85 courtrooms for 59 judges.

Washington, D.C.

- The GAO found that the Bryant Annex to the E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse in Washington, DC, was overbuilt by 218,000 square feet and had an excess cost of \$56 million. The Annex also costs \$4 million in annual maintenance and operations costs. Again, the judiciary cited a growth in judgeships as a rationale for the new construction. Those projections proved inaccurate.
- As a result of the judiciary's continued reliance on projections that fail to materialize, there are 12 unassigned and empty judges' chambers in the Prettyman Courthouse.

Norfolk, Virginia

- In 2000, GSA was authorized to alter and construct an annex to the Walter E. Hoffman United States Courthouse in Norfolk, VA.
- GSA unilaterally determined the original site authorized no longer met the courts' requirements and decided to secure land west of the existing courthouse without seeking Congressional input or approval.
- Construction of a private mixed-use development, including a 31-story condominium and retail space, had already begun on the desired land.
- GSA attempted to purchase the land from the private developer and, when that failed, initiated condemnation proceedings. GSA was in turn sued by the developer.
- In the court battle that ensued, not only did GSA end up paying \$7 million more for the land than they had originally offered, but the agency then sought a reprogramming of funds of \$8.2 million to satisfy the judgment entered against them.
- The results of the Norfolk courthouse boondoggle are deplorable – private sector economic development was halted. There are no remaining funds available for the construction of the new courthouse. There are no construction or resulting retail or court personnel jobs being added to the area. The land in question remains a vacant lot.

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