

**Question:** Should the Juvenile Court be removed from the Historic Courthouse? If so, what are the primary adjacency considerations for a relocated facility?

**Answer:** Yes, the Juvenile Court should be removed from the Historic Courthouse. The new location should enhance the overall ability of the juvenile justice system to perform its work by strengthening the adjacencies among the three primary partners: court, probation, and detention.

**Background:** There is little debate among County and Court leaders that the current Juvenile Court accommodations at the Historic Courthouse are extremely deficient in terms of spatial adequacy and basic security.<sup>1</sup> As the Court considers moving additional operations out of the Historic Courthouse, it should review which functions may be best suited for migration. In general, it may prove to be more problematic to decentralize and relocate portions of either the general civil or criminal courts than it would be to relocate the Juvenile Court in its entirety.<sup>2</sup>

One of the distinguishing characteristic of Juvenile Courts nationwide is they typically offer a wider array of assessment and treatment services, and work collaboratively with more government agencies than do their general criminal and civil court counterparts. In fact, juvenile justice systems are often viewed as multi-agency government conglomerates. This characteristic holds true for Polk County where the Juvenile Court works in close partnership with the Juvenile Court Services Department<sup>3</sup> and the Polk County Youth Services Department<sup>4</sup> to form the structure of the Polk County juvenile justice system. In addition to these entities, the juvenile justice system interacts closely with other government agency partners including the Polk County Attorney Juvenile Bureau, the Polk County Public Juvenile Defenders Office and the Iowa Department of Human Services. These interrelationships have consequential implications for Juvenile Court facilities planning and how any relocation will benefit the overall juvenile justice system and ultimately improve service to the community. At the heart of question about relocation are adjacency considerations among the various interrelated functions.

#### ***Juvenile Court / Juvenile Court Services - Adjacency Considerations***

Interaction between the Court and Juvenile Court Service employees is a vital consideration when planning for the overall juvenile justice system. The investigation and assessment functions of Juvenile Court Services are the medium through which the Court

relates to and understands the needs of the children and families appearing before it. There are significant benefits to locating Juvenile Court Services in close proximity to the Court because of the high frequency that Juvenile Court officers are required to appear in the Court.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the historic courthouse facility utilization assessment for details regarding current conditions at the Historic Courthouse.

<sup>2</sup> See issue paper examining court decentralization of core court functions.

<sup>3</sup> The Juvenile Court Services Department is organized under the judiciary and administers intake, investigation and probation supervision.

<sup>4</sup> Polk County Youth Services is a County Government department and operates the Central Intake and Detention Center, the Youth Shelter, the In-Home Monitoring Placement and Community Tracking Program, and the Intensive In-home Supervision Appearance Program.

These court appearances include pre-trial hearings after the initial juvenile petition is filed; adjudication hearings; dispositional hearings; and review hearings. Currently, Juvenile Court Services is located at the Riverplace Complex, approximately 4 miles from the Historic Courthouse where juvenile adjudication services are housed. The distance between the two facilities places a noticeable operational strain in terms of time and travel costs.

***Juvenile Court / Detention and Shelter - Adjacency Considerations***

The location of detention, especially secure detention holding for delinquent youth, is a prominent design issue for juvenile court facilities as well. In Polk County there would be substantial benefits to co-locating the Juvenile Court and Detention Center regarding detainee transportation. There are additional benefits for co-locating the facilities in terms of building construction. If the Court were to be relocated adjacent to the Detention Facility, holding cells and sally port facilities would not be necessary within the Court as long as emphasis were placed on providing a secure passage between the Court and detention facilities. If detention is not sited adjacent to the Court facility, holding cells must be located within the Court and the design should also include a sally port and other perimeter security measures for transporting delinquent youth requiring security.

***Juvenile Court Services / Detention and Shelter - Adjacency Considerations***

Interaction among Juvenile Court Services, the Detention Center, and separate Youth Shelter also plays a key role in the operation of the overall juvenile justice system. Juvenile Court officers travel frequently to the Detention Center and Youth Shelter for their day to day business; most recurrently for the purpose of conducting intake interviews and completing delinquency risk assessments.

***Juvenile Court / Juvenile Public Defender (PD), County Attorney (CA) Juvenile Bureau, and private attorneys - Adjacency Considerations***

Presently, the location of the Juvenile Court within the same building as the adult criminal court is beneficial to the operations of the Juvenile PD, the CA Juvenile Bureau, and private attorneys who office in the downtown area.<sup>5</sup> Consideration for locating future juvenile facilities near the Historic Courthouse would certainly be convenient for the attorneys; however, for long-term planning purposes it may be possible for the Juvenile PD and CA Juvenile Bureau who work extensively in the Juvenile Court to relocate their offices closer to the Court if it is not sited downtown.

**Analysis:** Multiple sites were reviewed for possible relocation of the Juvenile Court. The project team considered both the operational and adjacency impacts for each site as well as the physical space and costs involved. The following are the project team's findings regarding relocation options. For a detailed analysis of potential sites refer to the individual facility assessments included in the overall report.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to their caseloads in the juvenile court, attorneys are often responsible for caseloads in the adult court for 17 and 18 year old juveniles accused of more serious crimes that result in prosecution under adult criminal jurisdiction. This split caseload requires attorneys to attend court in both the juvenile and adult criminal courts.

<b>Hull Avenue Campus (Co-location with Youth Detention and Shelter Services)</b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County owned land</li> <li>• Site is large enough to accommodate long-term space and parking needs;</li> <li>• New construction will allow for flexible programming and design;</li> <li>• Adjacency to Youth Detention and Shelter Services is a beneficial adjacency (see background considerations above);</li> <li>• There is space available on site to accommodate a potential long-term option to build space for the Juvenile Court Services Department creating a unified juvenile justice campus.</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adjacency to Juvenile Court Services.</li> <li>• Not a short-term solution</li> <li>• Clerical functions in the Clerk of Court's Office would need to be relocated as well</li> <li>• Court administration calendaring functions related to Juvenile Court would need to migrate to the new site</li> <li>• Additional building security would be necessary in stand-alone building</li> <li>• Parking may present some minor problems, but not insurmountable.</li> </ul>

<b>120 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Building</b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County owned building</li> <li>• Central downtown location</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adjacency to the Historic Courthouse, Juvenile Court Services, or Youth Detention and Shelter Services;</li> <li>• Insufficient space to address long-term needs (approximately 27,000 total square feet available on levels 1, 2 &amp; 3);</li> <li>• Higher cost per square foot than new construction;</li> <li>• Poor detainee transportation accommodations;</li> <li>• Limited parking.</li> </ul>

<b>Riverplace<sup>6</sup> (Co-location with Juvenile Court Services)</b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County owned building</li> <li>• Adjacent to Juvenile Court Services and Department of Human Services</li> <li>• Sufficient parking available</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adjacency to the Historic Courthouse or Youth Detention and Shelter Services;</li> <li>• Insufficient space to address long-term needs (Three or four court sets possible / approximately 18,500 total square feet available)</li> </ul>
<b>Riverpoint<sup>7</sup></b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is relatively close to downtown</li> <li>• Existing court functions are located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor (small claims court)</li> <li>• Space available for lease (approximately 28,000sf) is sufficient for 5 or 6 Juvenile Court sets.</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County does not own building</li> <li>• No adjacency to the Historic Courthouse, Juvenile Court Services, or Youth Detention and Shelter Services;</li> <li>• Space re-configuration will be problematic.</li> <li>• Insufficient space to address long-term needs (Three or four court sets possible / approximately 28,000 total square feet available)</li> </ul>
<b>801 University<sup>8</sup></b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location is close to a sizeable population of the juvenile population served by the court</li> <li>• Sufficient parking available</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County does not own building,</li> <li>• Insufficient space to address long-term needs (approximately 35,500 square feet available);</li> <li>• No adjacency to the Historic Courthouse, Juvenile Court Services, or Youth Detention and Shelter Services;</li> <li>• Building configuration will drive up costs of remodeling.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> An in depth facilities analysis was not completed for the Riverplace facility because the limited amount of space available is assumed to be unworkable for juvenile court utilization. Also, building a separate building adjacent to the Riverplace Complex was not considered due to cost and problems entailed with a floodplain location.

<sup>7</sup> An in depth facilities analysis was not completed for the Riverpoint facility because the configuration of the leased space is assumed to be unworkable for juvenile court utilization.

<sup>8</sup> An in depth facilities analysis was not completed for the 801 University because of lack of available space and poor adjacency considerations.

<b>Convention Center Complex – ‘Plex’ (Co-location with core adult criminal court functions)</b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County owned facility;</li> <li>• Building size and configuration is adequate for renovation for Juvenile Court use.</li> <li>• Co-location with adult criminal courts, as possible, would be beneficial for CA and PD attorneys.</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems in mixing of juvenile and adult detainee populations within same building</li> <li>• No adjacency to Juvenile Court Services or Youth Detention and Shelter Services</li> <li>• Significant costs to remodel</li> <li>• Existing loading dock not easily converted to use as a sally port</li> <li>• Parking continues as a cost.</li> </ul>

<b>Wellmark Building</b>	
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility could be used as a interim phase location for Juvenile Court</li> <li>• Building is physically adequate for Juvenile Court and its support services.</li> <li>• Existing loading dock could be easily converted for use as a sally port.</li> <li>• Downtown location is convenient for attorneys.</li> </ul>	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County does not own building;</li> <li>• No adjacency to the Juvenile Court Services or Youth Detention and Shelter Services.</li> <li>• Parking continues as a cost, although a sky bridge access to a nearby City parking garage is an advantage.</li> </ul>

**Advice:** The project team recommends that Court and County leaders consider the Hull Avenue site as the preferred long-term solution for relocation of the Juvenile Court. In addition, Court and County leaders may wish to consider a long-term planning strategy which would place all three of the major juvenile justice system components on the same site, thus creating a unified juvenile justice campus composed of adjudication, probation, detention and shelter functions. Most urban courts operate in this fashion. Regardless of the eventual location of the Juvenile Court, it is important that it retains an image of dignity and respect as to its housing. Planning should also ensure the Court is designed and operated with appropriate security and separate circulation patterns for the public, judicial officers and staff, and in-custody detainees.

Recognizing the current overcrowded and unsafe conditions at the Historic Courthouse, County and Court leaders would be wise to consider a short-term or temporary relocation of the Juvenile Court as an interim step prior to any Hull Avenue site construction. Although the Juvenile Court currently occupies five courtrooms in the Historic Courthouse, it may be possible for it to operate utilizing four courtrooms for the next three to five years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Since 2002 juvenile petitions have dropped by 57% and the weighted caseload study completed by the NCSC in 2008 estimates a workload demand of 3.6 judges. Although it can be expected that case filings will most likely increase again in the future, four juvenile judges may be able to absorb the anticipated workload for the next three to five years.