



Home
About Mercer County
Elected Officials
Departments
Boards and Commissions
Visiting Mercer County
Job Opportunities
Doing Business with Us
Request for Proposals
Information Center
Press Releases
Archive
Features
Publications
Announcements
Frequently Called Numbers
Calendar of Events
Useful Links
Contact us

[Home](#) > [Information Center](#) > [Press Releases](#) > June-2-10 Hughes, Officials Break Ground on New Criminal Courthouse

June-2-10 Hughes, Officials Break Ground on New Criminal Courthouse

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TRENTON, N.J.—Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes was joined today by officials from the judiciary, state and local government, and labor organizations in a groundbreaking ceremony to officially mark the start of the largest public project in County history, the construction of a new Criminal Courthouse.



[Full size photo](#)

Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes and officials break ground on new courthouse

The diverse crowd of approximately 80 who participated in the groundbreaking at the site of the new courthouse, South Warren and Market streets in Trenton, illustrated the significance of the multi-year project. The building represents a critical source of jobs for trade and labor organizations, a modern, safe working environment for the judiciary and hundreds of County employees, and a victory by Hughes after decades of inaction and delays by predecessors.

"This is a real success story of the partnership between County government and our many partners, including our honorable judiciary," Hughes told the crowd at the construction site. "This new courthouse is a promise made by my administration, and a promise kept. We are going to make sure this building goes up, ensure it provides jobs, and ensure it's the finest courthouse in New Jersey. Mercer County deserves nothing less."

The new structure will be erected behind the existing Criminal Courthouse, a classical Beaux Arts building constructed in 1903 which faces South Broad Street. The new, 141,000-square-foot building is expected to take two years to complete and will meet environmentally friendly LEED standards. It will cost \$80 million and the initial phases — demolition of a parking garage and preparation of the site for construction — have already been completed. Through the use of "Build America Bonds" under the federal stimulus package, the County was able to save taxpayers about \$3.1 million in reduced interest payments.

The advancement of the project comes after decades of stagnancy by previous Mercer County administrations that were unwilling or unable to design and finance a plan for a new courthouse, a sorely needed and heavily used public facility.

The condition of the current criminal courthouse became increasingly problematic, the victim of years of patchwork fixes and short-term remedies, until Hughes initiated discussions about a new courthouse shortly after being elected County Executive in 2003. What followed were several years of internal deliberations to find a permanent solution, which included the possibility of completely rehabilitating and renovating the existing courthouse, and several iterations of designs before a conclusion was reached. Ultimately, the Hughes administration and the Mercer County Improvement Authority, in partnership with The Honorable Linda Feinberg, Assignment Judge for Mercer Vicinage Superior Court, decided that a new building was the only viable option.

Feinberg called the decision to construct a new building "the right decision" and said courts are "a symbol of our democracy."

"On behalf of the entire Mercer County judiciary, from the judges and staff alike, I would like

to thank County Executive Hughes for his guidance and his unwavering commitment to planning and building this courthouse," Judge Feinberg said. "Quite frankly, if it were not for him, we would not be here today."

Aside from bringing the County's judiciary functions into the 21st Century, the new structure will also create 250 to 300 trade and construction jobs at a time when unemployment is hitting the region hard. For many skilled laborers, steady work has been difficult to come by, said Wayne DeAngelo, an assemblyman for the 14th District who is also the president of the Mercer/Burlington Building Trades Council and the assistant business manager for IBEW Local 269.

"Many people here today see a construction site. But the members of the building trades see hope, they see opportunity and the chance to put food on their tables and provide for their families," DeAngelo said.

Congressman Rush Holt (D-12th District) told the audience the new courthouse creates a modern gateway into the City of Trenton, and said construction will inject the County's economy with new life not only for workers at the site but many retailers, restaurants, and other businesses in the city.

"I'm delighted to see this day come. This is our Capital County, and this new courthouse is something a County of this stature needs and deserves," Holt said. "It will be a shot in the arm for the economy during construction, but more importantly, it will be a showpiece for generations to come."

Approximately 300 County and State employees will work in the building in agencies including, but not limited to: judiciary; Drug Court; Probation; Case Management; Records Storage; and the Sheriff's Office.

The building will stand four stories tall and its exterior features stone, masonry, and glass and metal panels. The basement level will house the Sheriff's Office and detainees who are scheduled for court appearances. The above-ground floors will house nine courtrooms, each with jury boxes and detainee holding areas and the associated judges' chambers and administrative offices. The courthouse will also utilize state-of-the-art security and safety measures; most prominently, three separate pathways through the building — one for the public, one for judges and their staff, and a third for prisoners and law enforcement. Detainees will also be transported to courtrooms via two prisoner-only elevator shafts.

To meet the United States Green Building Council's LEED environmental standards, the building will have efficient mechanical systems, water-saving plumbing, and reliance on large windows and skylights to maximize use of natural light. The roof will make use of solar reflectance materials to lessen air conditioning use, rainwater will be collected for use in flushing toilets, and construction materials will be selected from local sources to cut down on long, gas-guzzling deliveries.

Mercer County Freeholder Board Chair Ann Cannon lauded the County's pledge to meet LEED standards, saying the freeholders were involved with the project's development from the start and that environmental concerns were always at the forefront of discussions.

An adjoining parking area will contain 100 parking spots reserved for judges and judicial staff.

The architect for the project is Vitetta, a firm based in Philadelphia, while Earnest Bock & Sons, also of Philadelphia, is the contractor. Joseph Jingoli & Son, Inc. of Lawrenceville will serve as the construction manager.

MCIA Chairman John Thurber served as the emcee for the day's ceremonies and he was joined by all members of the MCIA Board of Commissioners.

Also in attendance were: County Freeholders Dan Benson, Anthony Carabelli, John Cimino, Pasquale Colavita Jr., and Keith V. Hamilton; Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman; Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein; Sheriff Kevin Larkin; County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello; County Surrogate Diane Gerofsky; County Prosecutor Joseph Bocchini Jr.; First Assistant

Prosecutor Janetta Marbrey; West Windsor Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh; Pennington Mayor Anthony Persichilli; Lambertville Mayor David DeIvecchio; Hon. Garrett E. Brown Jr., Chief Judge of the New Jersey District for the United States District Court; and Hopewell Township Police Chief George Meyer, president of the Mercer County Chiefs of Police Association.



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