

CITIZENS **JURY** **PROJECT**



KINGS COUNTY SUPREME COURT FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

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I. Introduction

The Citizens Jury Project (CJP) was created in 1995, following the recommendation of the Jury Project, a blue-ribbon panel formed by New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye to review and reform jury service in New York State. The CJP serves as an advocate for individual jurors in the courts, and strives to make systemic reforms that improve the conditions for all jurors.

The Citizens Jury Project was initially designed and continues to respond to ideas and concerns of jurors in New York courts through an ombudservice, operating booths located in or close to jury rooms at 60, 100, and 111 Centre Street in Manhattan, and 360 Adams Street in Brooklyn. CJP interns staff these booths and collect comments from jurors; with this data, the Project produces tri-annual reports that highlight court-specific and common juror issues and concerns. In collaboration with the Office of Court Administration, CJP has recently expanded upon its role in the courts by beginning to administer court facilities surveys to jurors throughout the State. Surveying allows CJP to assess a greater number and variety of courts, while also increasing the number and specificity of the comments obtained from jurors in each court. There are clear advantages to more closely examining jurors' ideas and opinions. As a cross-section of society, jurors bring a diversity of experiences and concerns to the courts and can effectively guide court response and reform. In order to continue to improve on the administration of justice in New York State, it is crucial for jurors' ideas and concerns to be heard and responded to.

The focus of the following report is the Kings County Supreme Court facilities, at 360 Adams Street in Brooklyn. For this assessment, CJP utilized our court facilities survey (Appendix A), which was developed with the generous assistance from the Office of Court Administration.¹ This report will present the results of 852 surveys collected from the Kings County Supreme Court for approximately a month, during this time period of February 3-21, and March 3-7.² These surveys were given to jurors in the assembly room, and collected from jurors prior to their dismissal from courtrooms or the general assembly room.

In order to contextualize the data, the first part of this report will provide an overview of Kings County, the history of the court facilities, and the number and character of cases that are filed and brought to courts. The second part of this report will present the results of the statistical analysis of jurors' ratings of the facilities, and the written comments jurors provided on the surveys. The report will look generally at the comments, and then specifically by court area, providing recommendations following each analysis. Finally, the report will conclude with general recommendations in regard to the existing facility and the new court facility, which will house the Kings County Family Court and part of the Supreme Criminal Court, and is projected to be completed by 2005.

¹ CJP would like to extend special thanks to Guldem Gokcek, for designing a program to analyze the survey data and for her assistance in analyzing the data. CJP would also like to thank Tony Manisero for his assistance in developing the court facilities survey.

² Surveying was delayed for one week, due to the need to order and receive additional surveys.

II. The Kings County 360 Adams Street Court Facilities: An Overview

(A) *The 360 Adams Street Courthouse*

In 1941, Brooklyn's City Planning Commission developed a plan to improve the City, spurned by a report released by the Mayor's Committee on Property Improvement. This report noted that, at the time, Brooklyn was a borough with only one-fifth of the downtown buildings erected since 1900, while "2,000,000 square feet of land was vacant, and an additional 1,600,000 square feet contained abandoned and boarded-up buildings."³ With the space and need to develop a strong infrastructure of buildings to serve the general public, the Planning Commission proposed architectural and engineering endeavors that were both symbolically and practically beneficial. The Commission instituted projects such as the expansion of the Navy Yard, the construction of the Raymond Street Jail, Fort Green Houses and, as part of the plan to transform the Brooklyn Civic Center in Borough Hall, the Commission also decided to build a courthouse: the King's County Supreme Courthouse at 360 Adams Street.

Grand ideas fueled Brooklyn's development project. In 1944, the city's comptroller, Joseph D. McGoldrick, stated that the development project was a "test case in rehabilitation." He noted: "While we cannot hope to 'rebuild' the city as a whole in one grand rush, we can prepare for gradual improvement by administering radical treatment to blighted areas, so common to American cities, and by grasping the relationship of these districts to the whole." He understood the program as one "of complete rejuvenation as well as the removal of the blight from this mongrel area...[the program] would constitute the first continued attack upon the problem of slum clearance and total or integrated civic improvement...The importance of the plan and techniques lies not alone in its possibilities for Downtown Brooklyn but in its possibilities for wider application."⁴

The idea that the environment—whether architectural or natural—shapes people's perception and actions is perhaps most clearly adopted by the justice system. Whether the symbols are pillars or bars, and the setting is a courtroom or a holding facility, messages created and conveyed by the environment clearly affect peoples' experiences within it.⁵ In 1949, Shreve, Lamb, & Harmon, the architects who designed the Empire State Building, submitted designs for the Supreme Court at 360 Adams Street. The building, which was designed as a civil courthouse, was completed in 1958. And despite the attention drawn to the development scheme, the building was not met with

³ Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, David Fishman, New York 1960, 896 (1995).

⁴ Joseph D. McGoldrick, "Downtown Brooklyn: Test Case for Rehabilitation." *Housing and Planning News* 2, 3 (December, 1944). Cited in ROBERT A.M. STERN, THOMAS MELLINS, DAVID FISHMAN, NEW YORK 1960, THE MONACELLI PRESS (1995).

⁵ See, for example, JONATHAN D. ROSENBLUM, *SOCIAL IDEOLOGY AS SEEN THROUGH THE COURTROOM AND COURTHOUSE ARCHITECTURE*, 22 COLUM, ULA J.L. & ARTS 463 (Winter, 1998).

accolades. The Supreme Court building was analogized to “an old transatlantic liner with the prow and stern and funnels cut off, every line made straight, planted on open land. The building looks incomplete, with ribbons of black stone joining the windows, a gigantic flower planter without flowers.”⁶ But the courthouse has withstood criticism, and the less-ephemeral test of time, to serve the dynamic community of Brooklyn for almost 50 years.

(B) The Evolving Communities of Brooklyn

In the past century, shifts in the population and its needs have been dramatic throughout the nation, and in some respects, particularly in urban environments. In the beginning of the twentieth century, immigrants comprised more than a third of New York City’s population. In the 1920’s, Brooklyn began to replace the Lower East Side as a home for new immigrants, who were drawn to Brooklyn’s less-crowded neighborhoods, healthy real estate market, and modern architecture.⁷ Seasoned immigrants also left Manhattan’s older neighborhoods for Brooklyn, a city rich with symbols and stories that to this day pervade the thoughts of even those with a lot on their minds:

“The smell of a Nathan’s hot dog was the equivalent of a national anthem for Brooklyn. We didn’t have a borough song, we had a borough scent and taste.”⁸ -Larry King



Photo: Brooklyn Historical Society

⁶ Stern, Mellins, Fishman, New York 1960, 907 (1995).

⁷ “In Brooklyn alone, immigrants or their children of foreign-born parents made up an estimated 1,235,000 of the total population of 1,700,000 in 1920. ILANA ABRAMOVITCH & SEAN GALVIN, Jews in Brooklyn, 21 (2002).

⁸ *Id.* at 8.

In the mid 1900's Brooklyn was the fastest growing city in the nation, with a population that peaked in 1950 at 2,738,175.⁹ The subsequent decline in population has been portrayed as result of a general national shift away from urban environments, and the increase of demographic diversity in Brooklyn. The post-war revitalized economy encouraged migration from the southern to eastern and western states, while the increased saturation of Harlem and improved public transit system also led to the migration of Black and Puerto Rican populations to Brooklyn. As a result, between 1940 and 1950 the Black Brooklyn population living in Brooklyn doubled from 108, 263 to 208,478.¹⁰ This portentous growth continued in the 1960s, when the Black population increased 78% to 371,405, and the Puerto Rican population quadrupled from 40,199 to 180,114. Concurrently, the inverse was reflected in the non-Hispanic white population, which decreased by 17%.

As of 2000, King's County comprises the majority of the population living in New York City, the most populated city in the nation. Indeed, Kings County is 7th most populated county in the nation,¹¹ and remains one of its most diverse. The changing needs—and changing awareness of the needs—of Brooklyn communities are reflected in the diversity of courts now present in the 360 Adams Street courthouse. In addition to the Kings County Civil and Criminal Courts, and Surrogate's Court, 360 Adams now also houses a Domestic Violence Part, and the Brooklyn Treatment Court.

(C) Cases Brought to the 360 Adams Street Courthouse

The broad range of courts present in 360 Adams are affected by the communities and population of Brooklyn, and national and local socio-economic trends, such as the crime rate. 2001 marked an end to the national trend of declining crime rates, with the FBI reporting, "The number of thefts, assaults, murders, and rapes is up in all regions of the country except for the Northeast."¹² And indeed, within the Northeast, New York is rather exceptional. While Boston suffered from a 67% increase in homicides in 2001, homicides fell in New York, the city whose population and density are incomparably higher than any other city in the nation.¹³ Brooklyn has followed New York's trend of a marked decrease in the number of reported crimes. As the following charts provided by the Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation illustrate,

⁹Life in Brooklyn: 150 Years of History(visited on May 22, 2003)

<<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Ranch/7589/history.htm>>

¹⁰ HOWARD X. CONNOLLY, A GHETTO GROWS IN BROOKLYN, 129 (1977).

¹¹ United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 (visited on May 22, 2003)

<http://www.census.gov/population/cen_2000/phc-t4/tab02.xls>

¹² Alexandra Marks, *US Crime Rate Up, Ending Decade of Decline*, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, June 25, at 2.

¹³ The deaths resulting from 9-11 are not factored into the reported homicide rates, and could be correlated with the decline: "While no studies have been done to correlate the impact of the attacks on the crime rate, several theories have arisen. One postulates that the terrorists created a sense of community that discourages crime. Another is that they simply limited the opportunities for criminals to strike." *Id.*

between 1993 and 2001, reported crimes dropped by approximately 60 percent.¹⁴

Reported Crime Statistics for Brooklyn North, 1993, 1996, and 2001

Brooklyn North*					
Crime	1993	1996	% Change	2001	% Change vs. 1993
Murder	474	203	-57.10%	165	-65.10%
Rape	594	555	-6.50%	362	-39.00%
Robbery	16,845	8,908	-47.10%	5,225	-68.80%
Felony Assault	8,390	5,868	-30.00%	4,569	-45.50%
Burglary	12,111	7,362	-39.20%	4,262	-64.80%
Grand Larceny	6,928	4,377	-36.80%	3,929	-43.20%
Grand Larceny Auto	9,578	4,657	-51.30%	3,414	-64.30%
Total	54,920	31,930	-41.86%	21,956	-60.02%

* **Brooklyn North** consists of a number of communities including: Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Cypress Hills, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick and Ridgewood.
Source: NYPD CompStat Unit

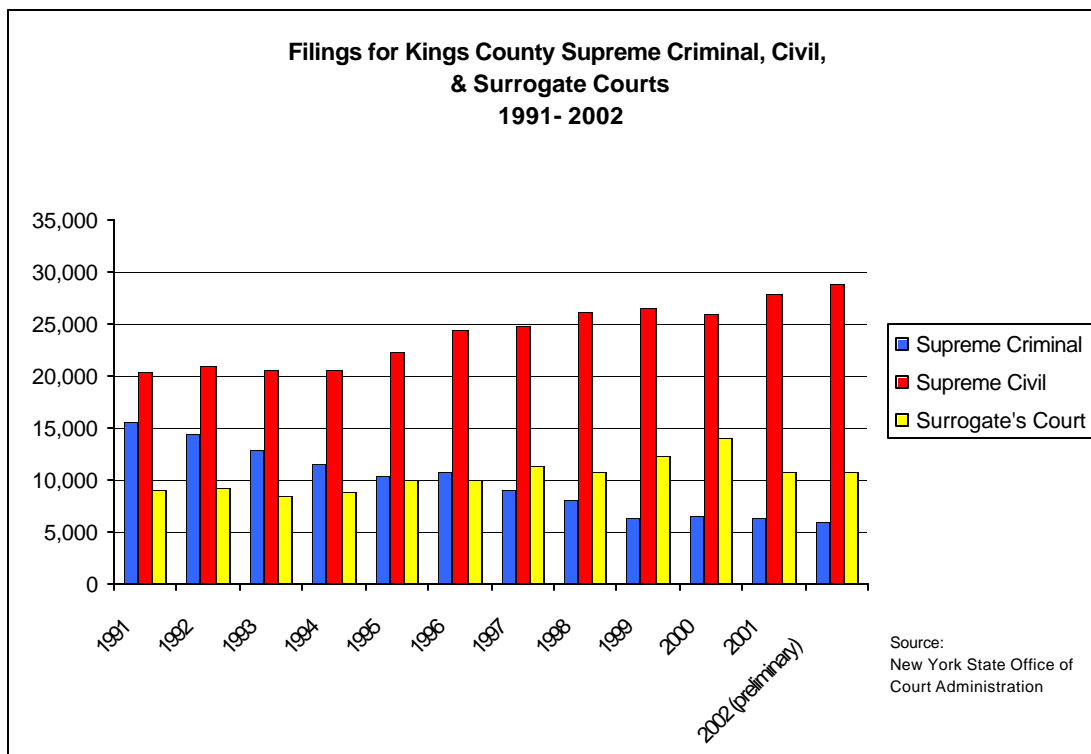
Reported Crime Statistics for Brooklyn South, 1993, 1996, and 2001

Brooklyn South					
Crime	1993	1996	% Change	2001	% Change vs. 1993
Murder	247	138	-44.10%	89	-63.90%
Rape	548	450	-17.80%	352	-35.70%
Robbery	13,971	8,010	-42.60%	5,182	-62.90%
Felony Assault	6,653	5,262	-20.90%	3,717	-44.10%
Burglary	18,786	11,387	-39.30%	6,689	-64.30%
Grand Larceny	8,939	6,398	-28.40%	5,884	-34.10%
Grand Larceny Auto	23,203	11,783	-49.20%	5,773	-75.10%
Total	72,347	43,428	-39.97%	27,686	-61.73%

Brooklyn South includes: Coney Island, Sheepshead Bay, Bensonhurst, Flatbush, Mill Basin, Marine Park, Borough Park, Bay Ridge, Canarsie, Kensington, Ditmas Park, Crown Heights, Sunset Park, Red Hook, Prospect Park, Carroll Gardens and Park Slope. Source: NYPD CompStat Unit

¹⁴ This certainly does not suggest that New York is immune to significant increases in reported crimes. Criminologists and police chiefs warn that there is currently an increased number of teens who have reached their peak crime committing years, and that the drug dealers and gang members of the 1980s are now returning to the streets. These factors, coupled with the declining economy and cuts in state and federal prevention programs, suggest that no city in the United States is impervious to increased reported criminal activity. *Id.*

The drop in crime is reflected in Kings County criminal filings, while the growth in civil court filings is also evident. The increase in civil court filings from 20,297 in 1991 to 28,799 in 2002, a difference of 8,502, is only surpassed by the growth of filings in the Kings County Family Court, which increased from 50,441 to 61,574, a difference of 11,133. The growth in filings and cases brought to 360 Adams is part of the impetus behind the construction of the new Kings County courthouse. This courthouse will house the family court, and share the supreme criminal felony cases with the criminal courthouse at 120 Schermerhorn. Removing criminal courts from 360 Adams will not only compensate for the increase demand for courtrooms, but also promote safety and good procedure.¹⁵



¹⁵ 360 Adams was initially designed to serve as a civil courthouse, and thus lacks proper prisoner transportation and circulation routes.

III. Jurors' Ratings of the Kings County Supreme Courthouse

(A) Frequency Analysis

On the front and backsides of the first page of the Citizens Jury Project survey (Appendix A), jurors were asked to rate various areas of the Kings County court facility as excellent, good, fair, or poor. A total of 852 surveys were collected from the Kings County Supreme Court for approximately a month, during the time period of February 3-21, and March 3-7. The data provided in this report was analyzed in its totality, without distinctions between juror characteristics or the dates in which each juror was surveyed.

The data collected from the Kings County court facilities has been statistically analyzed to find the frequency, or how often a value occurred (such as the rating "good" within a series of values excellent, good, fair, not applicable) for each question on the survey. The percentage of each frequency, the cumulative frequency, and the cumulative percent were also calculated; each is illustrated in the table below.

Lobby & Security Question: Do you feel safe/comfortable/secure?

Rating	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	297	31.87	297	31.84
Good	508	54.51	805	86.37
Fair	111	11.91	916	98.28
Poor	13	1.39	929	99.68
N/A	3	.32	932	100.00

The following tables of the "positively-rated areas" are the five areas that received the greatest cumulative percentage of "excellent" to "good" ratings, and the "critically-rated areas" are the ten areas that received the largest cumulative percentage of "fair" to "poor" ratings.

Top Juror Facilities Ratings- Kings County Supreme Courthouse (N=852)	
Top 5 Positively-Rated Areas: Highest % of "excellent" & "good" ratings	Cumulative Percent
Lobby and Security: Feel Safe/Comfortable/Secure	86.37%
Lobby and Security: General Conditions	84.02%
Hallways: General Conditions	82.17%
Lobby and Security: Public Address System	81.57%
Assembly Room: General Conditions	77.84%

Top 10 Critically-Rated Areas: Highest % of “fair” & “poor” ratings	Cumulative Percent
Bathrooms: Supplies Provided	38.4%
Assembly Room: Juror’s Lounge	36.82%
Assembly Room: Seating	36.33%
Bathrooms: General Conditions	36.09%
Hallways: Seating	35.5%
Assembly Room: Carpets/Floors	30.53%
Assembly Room: TV	30.32%
Assembly Room: Air Quality/Temperature	30.02%
Hallways: Air Quality/ Temperature	28.99%
Bathrooms: Easily Accessible/Not Crowded	28.92%
Hallways: Windows (Cleanliness)	25.48%
Hallways: Water Fountains/Coolers	25.41%

The chart above illustrates that jurors found the general conditions of the lobby, the hallways, and the assembly room acceptable. Jurors also found the security system and personnel provided to be adequate. Specific aspects of the assembly room, such as the juror’s lounge, seating, and air temperature, received the majority of the critical ratings, while the conditions and upkeep of the bathrooms received the poorest ratings.

(B) Jurors’ Written Comments

The frequencies obtained from the analysis are best understood in relation to the written comments that jurors provided on their own accord. On the backside of the survey, jurors were asked to provide written comments addressing “additional comments”, “specific suggestions”, and were asked to “indicate the topic area most in need of attention” (See Appendix B). A considerable amount of jurors provided written comments: 310 of the 852 surveys (or 36%) contained comments. Parallel to the survey ratings of the facility, in their written comments jurors most negatively criticized the bathrooms. Interestingly, the second-most common concern has little to do with the facility: sixty-five jurors complained about the long waiting time that service can entail, and voiced that their time is being wasted in the process. The following jurors’ quotes reflect the concern and frustration jurors feel about their time being wasted:

“Avoid wasting citizens’ time. I don’t mind fulfilling my social obligation, but resent the way that we are required to sit around for hours waiting for no good reason.”

“This system is very slow and inefficient. I have been sitting in the assembly room for over 7 hours now, without my name being called. I have a classroom full of handicapped children who could have benefited from the time I wasted here.”

These comments suggest that the recently established Commission on the Jury, a commission that will delve into the question of how to better utilize jurors, is both timely and necessary. Improving juror utilization not only improves the administration of justice, but also jurors' experiences and impressions of the system.

Top Juror Written Comments— Kings County Courthouse 2/3-2/21/03, 3/3-3/7/03 (N=310)	
Top 5 Appreciative Concerns	Count
Experience serving as a juror is positive	23
Staff are polite/informative/accommodating	14
General building conditions have improved	13
The process of serving has improved	5
Security is effective	3
Top 10 Critical Concerns	Count
Bathrooms need attention/improvement	80
Time wasted/long waiting time	65
Seating is cramped/uncomfortable	64
Temperature needs to be moderated	40
Visual equipment needs attention/improvement	36
Announcements & audio equipment need to be improved upon	34
Improve process of service	23
Assembly room needs attention/improvement	22
Provide more information to jurors prior to and during service	21
Improve security/ security waiting time	17

Jurors' positive written comments reflect their appreciation for the procedural improvements that have been made to the process, and court-specific facilities improvements. The following quotes encapsulate the general positive remarks that jurors expressed, from both individuals serving for the first time, and from more seasoned jurors:

“I am proud to be a US Citizen. I was able to participate in jury duty and have learned a lot. I was thankful to the United States for allowing me to become a citizen and for giving me the opportunity to participate in the court system. Thanks again.”

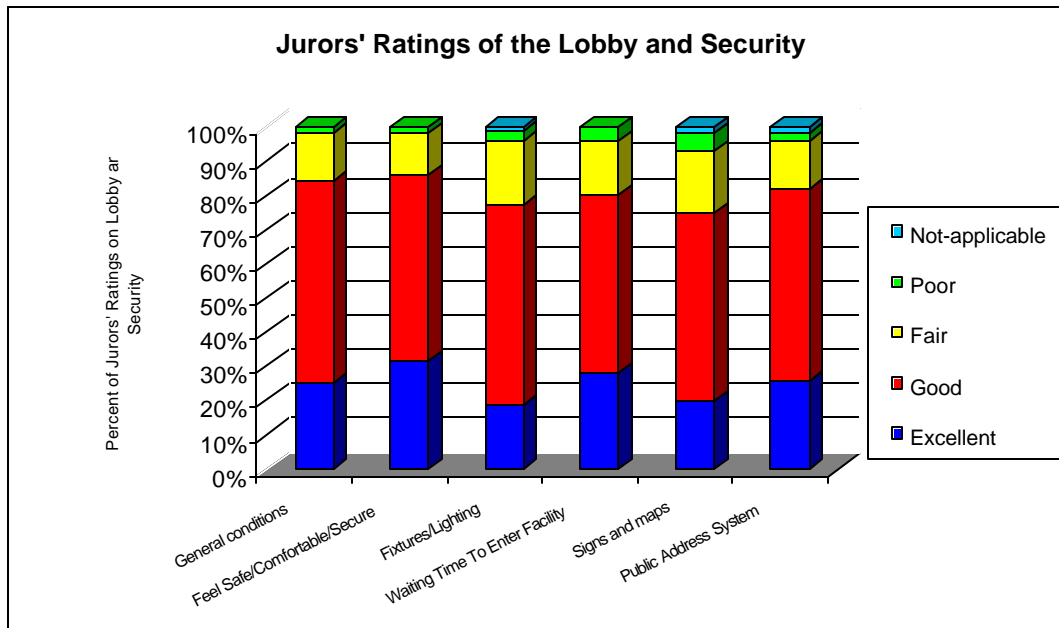
“I think that efforts are being made to make jurors feel comfortable. This was my first experience and it was more pleasant than I expected it to be.”

“I appreciate improvements in all areas over the last 5-10 years. Keep it up!”

IV. Area-Specific Analysis

(A) Lobby and Security

Jurors’ ratings of the lobby and security were generally favorable, ranging from “good” to “excellent”, as the following graph illustrates. The public address system and the signs and maps received the poorest ratings, while the general conditions received the most positive ratings. Please note that each area-specific graph provided in this section is based on the percent frequency of jurors’ ratings for each court facilities area.



In their written comments, jurors expressed some concern about the fact that jurors’ identification is not examined when they enter the courthouse. Undoubtedly, one reason security guards do not check identification is jurors’ second-most common written concern: the waiting time in the security line is too long. The balance between safety and efficiency is difficult to gauge, and must be continually assessed. CJP recommends faulting on the side of safety; efficiency can be promoted throughout the process, without sacrificing procedures that ensure that those who enter the courthouse have a legitimate reason to be there.

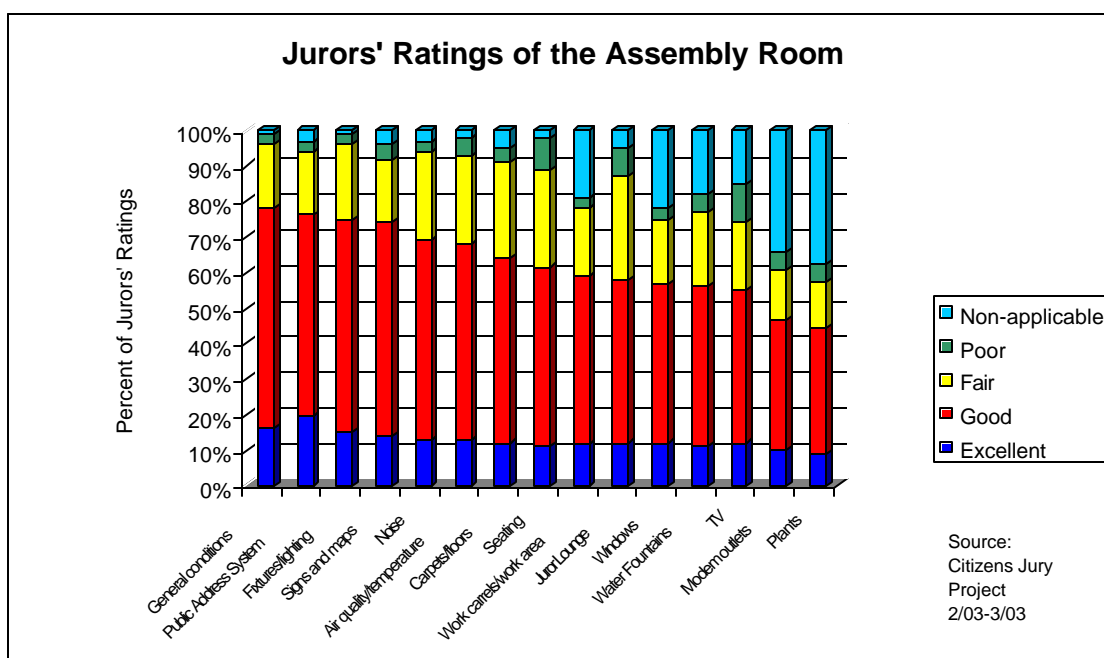
360 Adams: Lobby and Security	
Security should check jurors’ identification cards	6
Waiting time in security line too long	5
Security area is too crowded	4
When it’s cold outside, jurors should be able to wait in the security line indoors	2

Recommendations:

- Continue to assess and reassess the security procedures and equipment in the building. Security assessment is an ongoing process, particularly in courthouses, which host a wide-spectrum of society, converging to play a variety of roles. If additional safety measures (such as checking jurors' identification cards as they enter the building) can be added without considerable administrative burdens, CJP recommends instituting such measures.

(B) Assembly Room

Brooklyn jurors had a lot to say about the assembly room, the area of the courthouse that was the subject of the majority of their written comments.



Jurors' written comments on the assembly room reflect the less positive aspects of these areas in the facility. Although the general conditions received the most positive ratings on the survey, jurors' written comments indicate that there is room for improvement, particularly in regard to its maintenance of the assembly room, and that lack of viable workspace:

“I think that there should be an area in which jurors could type, write, and do work; it would be considerate and fair.”

“Fairly depressing room. No windows and uncomfortable seating, in which we spend the entire day.”

“It’s no wonder people dread jury duty so much! The service itself is terrible, and I understand that people have to wait around, but couldn’t something be done to make it a better experience? Windows? Plants? Food/beverages? Comfortable seating? Desks to work on? No

fluorescent lights? Some of these wouldn't be so costly, but it would make the experience much better."

"There were ROACHES in the jury room and bathroom."

Assembly Room: General Environment	
Conditions of the area are in need of attention	10
The assembly room needs desks and a work area	7
The assembly room is dirty	5
The assembly room needs a paint job	5

The air quality/temperature written comments provided by jurors indicate that, at the time of this assessment, the temperature was not moderated appropriately. Some jurors also noted that the ventilation in the building is poor, partly due to the need for the ventilation ducts to be cleaned:

"Ventilation ducts/screens need cleaning—allergy sufferers beware!"

The following quotes indicate that extreme temperatures in the courthouse—either too hot or too cold—should be avoided:

"It's too cold in the assembly room and the lounge area. Most have their jackets on."

"In the wintertime, please lower the heat in all areas! It's really uncomfortable!"

Assembly Room: Air Quality/Temperature	
Temperature of courthouse is too cold	16
Temperature of courthouse is too hot	11
Temperature needs to be moderated	10
The air is full of dust/poor ventilation	5

Seating was the subject of jurors' third most common written concern. Jurors complained that the seating is cramped and uncomfortable, that it puts a strain on their backs and knees (particularly for individuals with injuries), that it is inaccessible for people with disabilities, and again, that there should be seating and desks available for jurors to work while they wait to serve.

"Seating as "church pews" is too confining—accessibility for non-handicapped people is awkward, and is impossible for those in a wheel chair. It is uncomfortable and not safe to have continuous seating in the assembly room, with no aisle in the middle center."

"Seating is very uncomfortable due to the fact that there is no leg room, so people can't stretch their legs. We feel very confined."

“The seating is no good for a bad knee.”

Assembly Room: Seating	
Seating is cramped	31
Seating is uncomfortable	19
Seating is difficult on my back/knees	8
Seating is dirty or in disrepair	4
Seating should accommodate jurors who want to work while waiting	3

In regard to the acoustics in the assembly room, jurors wrote that the public announcement system does not work well, making it difficult to hear court officers addressing the jurors. Jurors’ comments reflect how poor acoustics are not only tedious for jurors, but are a safety concern and can affect their ability to comprehend if and where they should report:

“During a fire drill we could not hear the instructions.”

“The PA in the assembly room does not work well and should be fixed. It’s obvious that it doesn’t work and someone who works here should take the initiative to get it fixed.”

“The public address system is not up-to-date. It’s difficult to hear names. High frequencies seem muffled. Money spent on equipment would be well worth the benefit.”

Jurors also commented that the court officers who announce jurors’ names do not pronounce the names properly, and with little effort:

“People who call names should learn to pronounce them properly and not laugh at names that they have trouble pronouncing. If it is their job to call names, they should take the time to pronounce them correctly or close to the actual spelling.”

In the past two trimester reports, CJP has recommended that the audio system be improved, and that the individuals making the announcements should be trained and able to adequately pronounce jurors’ names. In response to these recommendations, the court has agreed to install better-quality speakers and to assign better trained/more experienced clerks to make the announcements. CJP encourages the court to proceed with these steps, which will facilitate the communication between the court and jurors.

Assembly Room: Acoustics	
P.A. system is inaudible/unclear	12
Announcements of jurors’ names and information are made poorly	12
P.A. is in need of attention/replacement/repair	6

In addition to acoustical improvements, jurors also suggested that improvements could be made to the audio-visual equipment, and simply that the equipment should be used more frequently:

“Waiting to be selected is boring. Maybe there could be a T.V. with news, health, and information channels.”

“Make use of the screens—instead of announcing, post names on the screen.”

“Turn the T.V. off or provide ½ room with them on and ½ with them off.”

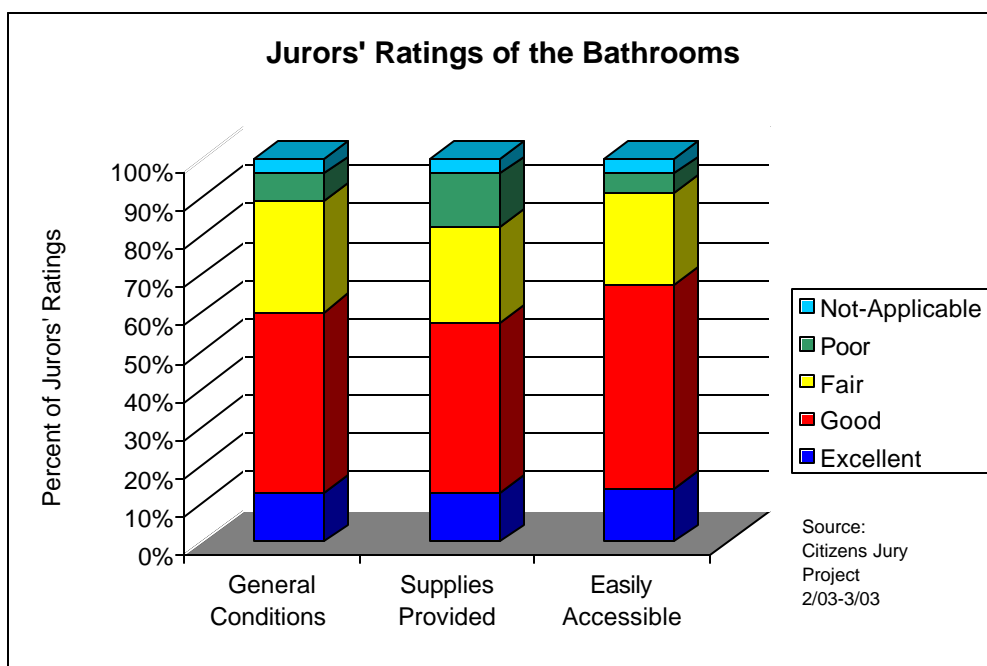
Assembly Room: Audio Visual Equipment	
T.V. should be on and used for programming or for videos	15
Improve/fix televisions	7
Don't use the televisions	4
Names of jurors should be posted on televisions	3

Recommendations:

- Clean and exterminate the assembly room frequently.
- Consider ways in which to decrease the waiting time in the assembly room, such as calling jurors punctually and not conducting voir dire if the trial cannot be assigned promptly. The seating in the assembly room is uncomfortable and inaccessible for a variety of jurors, particularly individuals with disabilities or injuries. Decrease waiting time will lessen jurors' discomfort.
- Provide a quiet work area for jurors. If possible, provide jurors with work carrels.
- Install better-quality speakers in the assembly room, and assigned better-trained and more-experienced clerks to make the announcements to jurors.
- Moderate the air temperature within the assembly room, and clean the ventilation ducts regularly.

(C) Bathrooms

The proper maintenance of the bathrooms is a residual and difficult issue in both Kings and New York County courthouses, due to the large amount of jurors summoned each day. The bathrooms received the largest number of critical written concerns, and the highest percent of “poor” and “fair” ratings.



Jurors critical concerns related to bathrooms in the assembly room and on various floors throughout the building. Jurors were primarily critical of the lack of amenities within the bathrooms, and the uncleanliness. Jurors also commented that aspects of the bathrooms are in need of repair.

“Bathrooms are very dirty, including roaches.”

“Only one bathroom is working properly for eighty-five jurors in the room [the jurors’ lounge].”

“In one of the women’s restrooms off the lounge, only one stall has a coat hook on the door, which will barely stay closed, so you have to wear/hold all of your belongings and hope that nobody comes in.”

“Bathrooms need constant, regular oversight.”

“Bathrooms need supplies. First floor was out of paper by noon!”

360 Adams: Bathrooms	
Amenities need to be made available/replenished	27
Bathrooms are dirty	21
Bathrooms need repair	17
Bathrooms are an area in need of attention	15

Recommendations:

- Clean and maintain the bathrooms on a regular basis—a least two to three times daily.

- Repair aspects of the facilities, such as bathroom doors, that are in poor condition.
- Maintain an adequate number of cleaning staff in the bathrooms and throughout the building.
- Assess the accessibility of the bathrooms for individuals with disabilities. Jurors and lawyers report that the restroom in the jury room is the only accessible restroom in the entire court facility. Disability accessible restrooms should be provided throughout the courthouse.

(E) Courtrooms and Deliberation Rooms

The courtrooms and deliberation rooms are not specifically addressed on the court facility survey, but were addressed by jurors in their written comments. Less jurors wrote about courtrooms and the deliberation rooms, but the expressed concerns parallel concerns jurors wrote about in regard to the assembly room and bathrooms. Jurors suggested that the deliberation and courtrooms should be cleaned more regularly, and some suggested that the seating in the courtroom could be improved.

“The courtroom is dirty. A wrapper on the ground was left there for the whole trial (6 days).”

“Keeping people seated for four or five hours requires comfortable seating.”

360 Adams: Courtrooms	
The courtrooms are dirty	5
The seating is uncomfortable	2
The lighting should be improved	1

“Roaches are in the deliberation room; little cleaning is done. Crumbs from the previous day were still present.”

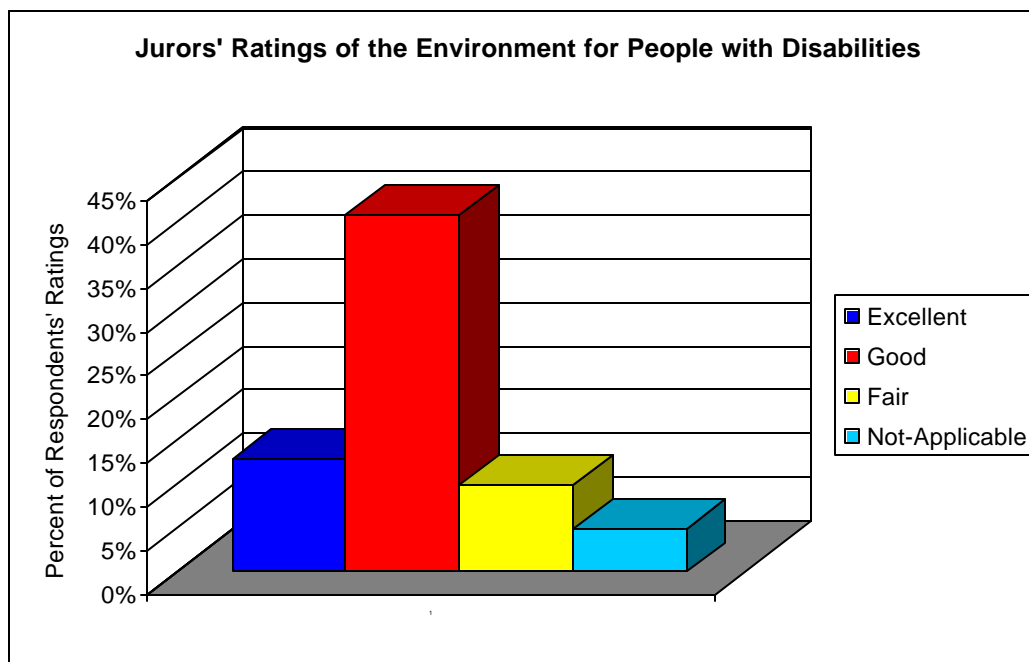
360 Adams: Deliberation Rooms	
The rooms are very dirty/should be regularly maintained	5
The rooms are in need of extermination	2

Recommendations:

- Clean and maintain the courtrooms and deliberation rooms on a regular basis.
- Ensure that the seating is comfortable and the lighting is at an appropriate level in the courtrooms and deliberation rooms.

(D) Court Facilities Environment for People with Disabilities

Although nearly one in five individuals has a disability in the United States, often they are underrepresented in surveys of the general population. CJP's survey results were no exception: only 121 jurors (or 14%) responded to the survey questions related to the environment for people with disabilities.



Certainly, a more valid and detailed assessment is needed in order to accurately assess the general conditions of the court for people with disabilities. However, jurors' written comments on accessibility do shed some light on areas in need of improvement. One juror commented on the difficulty he had in traveling to the courthouse:

“I had a problem getting here by train. The Court Street station has no elevators or escalators and the steps are way too much.”

Three jurors also commented on the assembly room being too crowded for jurors, and that the seating inaccessible for jurors with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- Consider means by which to make the assembly room more accessible for jurors with disabilities.
- Provide information for jurors with disabilities throughout service.
- Conduct regular assessments of the accessibility of the courthouse, assessments that consider the full range of disabilities.

(E) The “Wasted Time” Concern

The issue of “wasted time”, though outside of the scope of a court facilities survey, was the second-most common comment addressed by jurors in their written comments. Many jurors expressed frustration that they spent their entire service waiting in the assembly room instead of serving as a panelist in a trial:

“...I am feeling worthless because I didn’t get a chance to serve on a trial nor even get a chance to do so. This is not a new process nor is it a process that occurs a few times a year. Jury duty happens every day, and it seems that a more efficient system should already be in place. It is unbelievable that this process is so inefficient in this highly developed and great city. I expected more.”

Jurors also expressed annoyance about the fact that they are summoned to the court early, but the process does not start punctually:

“If you ask jurors to be at the courthouse by 8:45 AM, why do you (clerks and officers) begin at 10 AM? I feel that it’s a waste of time and very inconsiderate.”

Jurors often suggest that one way to ameliorate their discontent, and the feeling that service is a waste of time, is for court officials to provide information to jurors in the assembly room about the process and the reason for the delay:

“The wait when we come in is horrible. I wish we could be informed of what’s going on while we wait for the next thing to happen.”

Although a majority of the written “wasted time” comments centered on jurors who spent their time waiting in the assembly room, impaneled jurors also expressed the need for jurors to be provided with information and for the trial to start punctually:

“Do not make the impaneled jurors sit in the main jury room. Some people here (Tuesday) were impaneled last week. They aren’t hearing a case, but they are here day after day—clearly not a two day limit.”

360 Adams: Wasted time	
My time was wasted waiting	58
Time was wasted during voir dire	6
Service/trials should start punctually	5
Lunch should be shorter	2

Recommendations:

- Provide jurors with information throughout service. It is essential that jurors have knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, knowledge that can decrease jurors’ feeling

- that they are uninformed or their time is wasted. Information about the court process and the reasons behind delays can also placate jurors, whose resentment mounts as they wait.
- Begin calling jurors to voir dire early in the day, and start cases punctually.

(F) Voir Dire

Of all the court processes commented on, jurors’ written comments were most critical of voir dire, particularly that time was wasted during the process. Some jurors complained about waiting for a court official or lawyers:

“We wasted an hour waiting for the Judicial Hearing Officer to come to the impaneling room.”

Other jurors felt that their education, work, or personal experience will exclude them from being chosen as a panelist:

“I’ll be rejected because I have a PhD. It would be nice not to waste my time.”

During voir dire, some jurors wrote that lawyers wasted time by, for example, asking questions outside of the scope:

“Lawyers ask some stupid questions during the impaneling process, which drags it out and makes the inconvenience of jury duty more irritating. Generally, they should just get to the point.”

Jurors’ comments also suggest that providing jurors with information about the time frame of the trial during voir dire, and commencing the trial shortly thereafter, can facilitate the process and lessen jurors’ impression that their time is being wasted:

“In a tort case, it would help if jurors could start on the day that they are picked. If that’s not possible, the attorneys and judge should determine a start date before the jury is sworn in.”

360 Adams: Voir Dire	
Voir dire inefficient/too much wasted time	10
Lawyers waste time in civil voir dire	3
Juror will not be chosen due to profession/life experiences	3

Recommendations:

- Ensure that a judge or J.H.O. sit in on the commencement of voir dire in all civil trials, and provide the option of overseeing the entire process.¹⁶
- Encourage punctuality among all court actors and encourage lawyers to keep questions to the venire within the scope.

(G) Lack of Information & Wasted Time for Non-English Speakers

Non-English speakers are the population most recognized by fellow jurors as the group whose time is wasted during service. Jurors comment that Non-English speakers are not provided with adequate information prior to service, and often end up waiting through orientation and the movie, regardless of their facility with English:

“People who are ineligible due to an inability to understand English were kept waiting a long time for no apparent reason. Could they be met with before the endless movie?”

Jurors suggested, and CJP has consistently recommended, that the court system should provide multi-lingual information for non-English speaking jurors, who often must rely on their children, friends, or relatives to take time from school or work and serve as a translator for them:

“You will probably need literature in several languages now. Some people were bringing their children to interpret for them.”

“Bilingual or trilingual signage would really help some non-English speaking jurors. They’re lost without it.”

360 Adams: Concern for Non-English Speakers	
More bilingual employees are needed for non-English speaking jurors	4
Multi-lingual information and signage should be provided	4
Non-English speakers’ time is wasted	2
A multi-lingual person should announce jurors’ names	1

Recommendations:

- Provide multi-lingual information for jurors prior to service. This can include juror website information in the predominate languages other than English, and toll-free information lines with recorded instructions for summoned non-English speakers so that they may learn about service and how to seek a postponement/dismissal prior to service.
- Create basic information fact sheets for jurors in languages other than English, which are made available for jurors in the courthouse.

¹⁶ 22 NYCRR § 202.33 (e) requires that a judge sit in on the commencement of voir dire in all civil trials, and provide the option of overseeing the entire process.

V. Recommendations and Conclusion

...American architecture reflects distinctly American ideals and values. Nowhere is this reflection more easily seen than in the American courtroom and courthouse—two of the most significant and integral pieces of our public architecture. Since the days of *Marbury v. Madison*, the courtroom and courthouse have played a significant role in governing our society. They have become symbols of law, serving the indispensable function of influencing the manner in which fundamental aspects of American legal ideology are practiced, debated, and decided.¹⁷

The New York State Court Facilities Act, adopted in 1987,¹⁸ signals the State's recognition that the architecture of a courthouse, and the environments created within it, embody our conceptions of justice and influence how the system both functions and is perceived. In a state with 275 buildings in 118 jurisdictions outside of New York City and trial court filings (excluding town and village courts) that exceed all of the federal trial courts in the nation combined,¹⁹ providing and maintaining adequate facilities is an arduous but necessary task. In 1981, the New York State Court Facilities Task Force found that the size of the system and the demand for the courts put a strain on the State's facilities, more than one half of which were in great disrepair and in need of basic maintenance and refurbishment.²⁰ Since that time, over forty new court facilities have opened, and more than fifty have undergone substantial court renovations and expansions.

As Kings County proceeds through the steps of its capital planning process, which include both building the new court facility and renovating existing facilities, CJP recommends examining the strengths and deficiencies of the current court facilities, and the needs and projected needs of the communities within Brooklyn. Jurors, as representatives of the communities within Kings

¹⁷ JONATHAN D. ROSENBLUM, *SOCIAL IDEOLOGY AS SEEN THROUGH THE COURTROOM AND COURTHOUSE ARCHITECTURE*, 22 *COLUM. ULA J.L. & ARTS* 475 (Winter, 1998).

¹⁸ The Court Facilities Act stemmed from the 1981 report by the New York State Court Facilities Task Force and a subsequent proposal issued by former Chief Judge Sol Wachtler and former Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Bellacosa in 1985. This proposal suggested that significant legislative action was needed to assist local governments' financing of court facilities repair, planning and construction. The proposal recommended that an existing state agency assist local governments in considering funding alternatives and that the state assume some of the cost, which could be offset by raising court-related fees, identifying alternative revenue streams, and by capping and time-stretching projects. In order to promote local compliance, the proposal also suggested that the court system discourage and penalize non-cooperative local governments. After two years of debate, the Court Facilities Act was enacted, with the essential elements and recommendations suggested in the initial proposal, including a capital planning process, involvement of the State Dormitory Authority, court fee increase, and a revised penalty provision. MATTHEW T. CROSSON, *COURT FACILITIES PLAN SEES JUSTICE UPGRADED*, *N.Y. LAW JOURNAL*, Jan. 17, 1990 at 39.

¹⁹ QUINTIN JOHNSTONE, *NEW YORK STATE COURTS: THEIR STRUCTURE, ADMINISTRATION AND REFORM POSSIBILITIES*, 43 *N.Y.L. SCH. L. REV.* 915 (2000).

²⁰ HON. E. LEO MILONAS, *STATE COURTS: GRACE UNDER PRESSURE; FACILITIES HAVE IMPROVED, BUT MORE PROGRESS IS NEEDED*, *N.Y. LAW JOURNAL*, Jan. 24, 1994 at S1.

County, reflect some of these needs. The following summary of jurors' recommendations can provide guidance to both existing and future courthouses:

? **Clean and maintain the courthouse.** Juror facilities—particularly the juror assembly room—are heavily populated areas that require consistent and regular cleaning. Jurors' impressions and comfort within the courthouse are improved when the courthouse is cleaned regularly and well maintained. To that avail, CJP recommends:

- Consistently staffing the assembly room with one employee whose sole responsibility is cleaning and stocking the assembly room and bathrooms regularly.
- Regularly evaluating how well the court plumbing, equipment, and furniture function, and promptly reporting malfunctioning aspects of the facility. For work orders to be processed expeditiously, CJP recommends first establishing routine evaluations of what needs to be fixed, and point people who work for Brooklyn's Department of General Services and can quickly order and execute repairs.

? **Continually assess the accessibility and safety of the court facility.**

Disability accessibility and courthouse security are integral aspects of a good court facility. Ongoing responsiveness to the needs of people with disabilities and potential safety or security threats is vital in maintaining a safe, efficient, and inclusive courthouse environment.

? **Provide jurors with comfortable seating.** The role of a juror is certainly a mental, but not physical, exercise. Jurors simply must sit for long periods of time; comfortable seating allows jurors to focus on their pivotal role in the courts, rather than the court furniture. The "pew" seating at 360 Adams consistently receives poor ratings, while individual seating, such as that available in New York County courts, is appreciated. Prior to investing in court furniture for the new Kings County courthouse, CJP recommends examining other county's furniture, and possibly testing various models of furniture on jurors in 360 Adams, who will assuredly share their opinions.

? **Create quiet work areas in the juror assembly rooms.** Employment concerns are one of the primary reasons that people are resistant to serve. Creating work areas within the assembly room allows jurors to work while they wait, and lessens the hardship created from taking time away from work.

? **Communicate with jurors using adequate technological equipment, and employing well-trained staff.** While the better-quality speakers are being bought and installed in 360 Adams, CJP recommends training the staff who make announce names and rooms for jurors to report to. The speakers and training will facilitate the communication between the court and jurors and expedite the process.

? **Equip the facilities with adequate ventilation systems, and moderate the temperature accordingly.** Jurors indicate that the current ventilation system is impeded by the amount of dirt and dust evident in the system. The system should be thoroughly cleaned and temperature extremes (particularly evident in the hottest and coldest months) should be avoided.

? **Consider ways in which to decrease jurors' waiting time.** Long security lines and over-crowded, unclean assembly room can be the product of too many jurors called and waiting to serve. Staggering call times, and greater responsiveness to non-English speakers early in the process, are examples of constructive ways to decrease jurors waiting time.

In addition to addressing jurors' recommendations, CJP encourages Kings County to examine and learn from other counties' experiences in the capital planning process, such as Queens County, a county that has largely completed the process of building a new court and renovating other court facilities. Although each county faces unique challenges, each also must face similar community, funding, architectural, and procedural concerns. Indeed, the Court Facilities Act serves the purposes of promoting dialogue and comparisons between counties, while also enforcing the need for county involvement and accountability. A decision to invest in court facilities fosters local involvement and pride in the courts, which allows the courts to define the parameters of justice and effectively arbitrate within the communities of New York.

Bathrooms

Excellent Good Fair Poor N/A

General conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easily accessible/not crowded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supplies provided, i.e., soap, paper towel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Environment for people with physical disabilities

If you have a physical disability, please rate the accessibility of the facility here and provide specific comments and suggestions below.

General conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Written Comments

Additional Comments:

Specific Suggestions:

Indicate the topic area most in need of attention:

THANK YOU!



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