

Garfield Heights Municipal Court Courthouse Information

The building housing the Garfield Heights Municipal Court has ended its useful life as a courthouse. The Judges have reviewed the following alternatives.

- Renovate the current courthouse
- Build a new courthouse on the existing or new site
- Request the Court's dissolution and reallocation of its municipalities among the three contiguous courts, Cleveland, Bedford, and Parma.
- Relocate to a new building in the Village of Newburgh Heights and conversion to the Newburgh Heights Municipal Court.

THE STATUS OF THE CURRENT COURTHOUSE

- No sprinkler system and no functional fire alarm;
- No ADA-compliant washrooms. People in wheelchairs and walkers do not have access. The building entrance has a ramp but requires assistance to enter the building;
- Persistent black mold. The basement jury room is unusable due to mold;
- Inconsistent heating and air conditioning. Portable heaters are used in many parts of the building, which enhances fire risk. The air conditioning works in some but not other areas.
- No ventilation system exists in the building, which makes disease management difficult and creates an unhealthy working environment.
- Insufficient electrical service. Using electricity in some areas of the building shorts out equipment in other places, which enhances fire risk.
- Lack of security and compliance with basic security standards. The Court's security plan is not a public document and cannot be disclosed for the safety of all court users and employees.
- Rain frequently leaks into one courtroom with buckets strewn around during court proceedings. Rain flowing down the elevator shaft has caused flooding. Broken water pipes have flooded the basement storage areas, resulting in the loss of court files. The

Court pays \$1200.00 per month for secure storage because the Court storage cannot be used.

- Broken water and sewer pipes have caused the Court to shut down, as washroom facilities cannot be maintained.
- Insufficient office space for staff

Available Alternatives

Renovate or Build a New Courthouse-Preferred but Not Financially Possible

The City of Garfield Heights has not been financially able to remodel or build a new courthouse for 30 or more years. It does not appear that its financial position will change before the building fails. Financing a renovated or new building would seriously impair the City's ability to provide police, fire, and human services. No current financial statement is available, and no other information is available to the Judges.

Request the Court's Dissolution -Not Preferred when an Alternative Location within the Court District Exists.

- Integrating court constituents into two or more other court districts requires an evaluation by each community and each new court district, which would be time-consuming and costly for each entity.
- In 2004, the court converted to digital records to continue operations in the inadequate space available. None of the court districts that would incorporate our constituents are digital or have compatible case management systems. The initial merger would be difficult and result in reduced access by the constituents after completion.
- Each community and new court district must evaluate mergers' financial and operational impact. The outcome is unknown at this time.
- Potential loss of employment for 37 court employees.
- Possible reduction of services and extended litigation times for court users.

Relocate to a New Building in the Village of Newburgh Heights and convert to the Newburgh Heights Municipal Court-Preferred Alternative.

Factors considered:

- Approval by the Ohio Supreme Court and General Assembly is required.
- The Village has available vacant land.
- The Village can finance, within limits, a new building.
- The Village successfully built a 22,000-square-foot building in 2016.
- The Village Council and Mayor are willing to host the Court as it now has the largest caseload with the Court.
- The Village has agreed to provide court security and transport prisoners to the County Jail, thus alleviating the burden on other police departments.
- A comparison of management systems shows that the Village and Court systems are compatible with bookkeeping, payroll, purchasing, and banking.
- Benefits to Garfield Heights
 - The City needs a new police department in the same failing building as the court. Moving the Court will enable the City to dedicate any funds it can obtain for a new police department.
 - The City finance department can focus on financial recovery without the added services to the Court.
 - City monies used to maintain a crumbling courthouse can be rededicated to City operations.
- Mayor's Courts
 - The Village would lose a Mayor's Court.
 - The City could create a Mayor's Court with approval by the State Assembly
 - The Court caseload would be reduced by approximately 1086 traffic and 1512 parking tickets if the City created a Mayor's Court.