

Records Division Space Utilization Study

Flagler County
Clerk's Office

June 4, 2019



Prepared By:
Fentress Incorporated



Overview



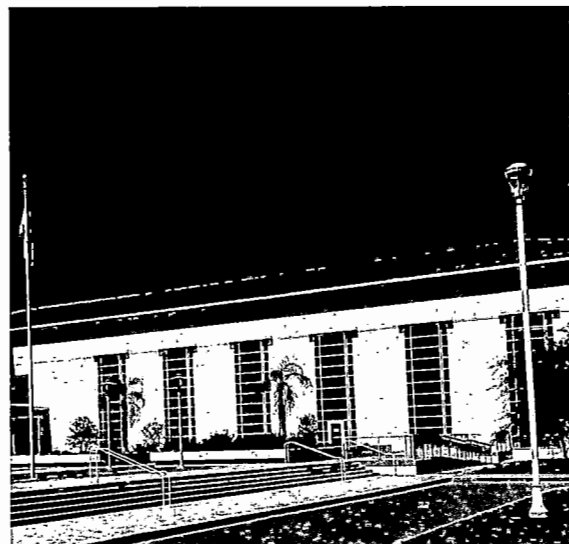
Kim C. Hammond Justice Center

The Flagler County Clerk of the Circuit Court is located at 1769 E. Moody Blvd, Building #1 - Kim C. Hammond Justice Center, Brunnell, FL 32110. The Clerk's Office currently has space on the first and second floors of the west wing of the facility. This study focuses on the first floor space, which primarily serves as a public intake area and records storage.

THE FOCUS OF THIS REPORT IS TO REVIEW THE SPACE "FOR ITS REASONABLENESS" AND TO COMPARE THE CLERK'S SPACE TO "COURT DESIGN STANDARDS."

The focus of this report is to review the space occupied by the Clerk's Office on the first floor for its reasonableness in terms of office layout and space functionality.

The space will also be compared to court design standards to ensure that the Flagler County Clerk's Office has an appropriate allocation of space based on the 2005 *New Justice Facility Operational and Spatial Program*.



Two Story West Wing

Current Space



Intake Area



Records Area



Records Storage

The Records Division is the central depository for all documents recorded in the Official Record Books of Flagler County as required by Florida Statute. Public access is available Monday through Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. The Records Division is conveniently located on the first floor in close proximity to the building's main entrance. The location is clearly defined by directional signage from the main entrance, and its main entry doors are located at a prominent intersection of two public corridors.

The Records Division provides a customer service function, serving members of the public who are seeking information regarding records, including deeds, mortgages, assignments, satisfactions, subdivision plats, deed restrictions, agreements, claims of lien, notices, tax warrants, final judgments, probate documents and other instruments relating to the ownership, transfer, encumbrance of or claims against real property. In addition, other records include declarations of domicile, court records and filings, military service discharge records, and federal instruments.

Upon entering the Records Division, the public is provided document preparation areas and an ample queuing area for customer service. Each customer service transaction window contains a work area for customer service staff to interact with members of the public who are requesting information. The customer service work area is separated from the public area by a glass partition, and is restricted from public access. The records storage and plat rooms are within secure areas and located so that staff members can efficiently access them directly from the service counter area.

Space Assignment

The Records Division is comprised of the following functional areas (USF is usable square feet):

PUBLIC AND STAFF AREAS

Public intake area and queue space

- Queue space for up to approximately 125 people

Customer service area

- Staff work areas for up to 11 customer service staff
- Expansion space for 3 customer service staff

RECORDS STORAGE AREAS

Records room

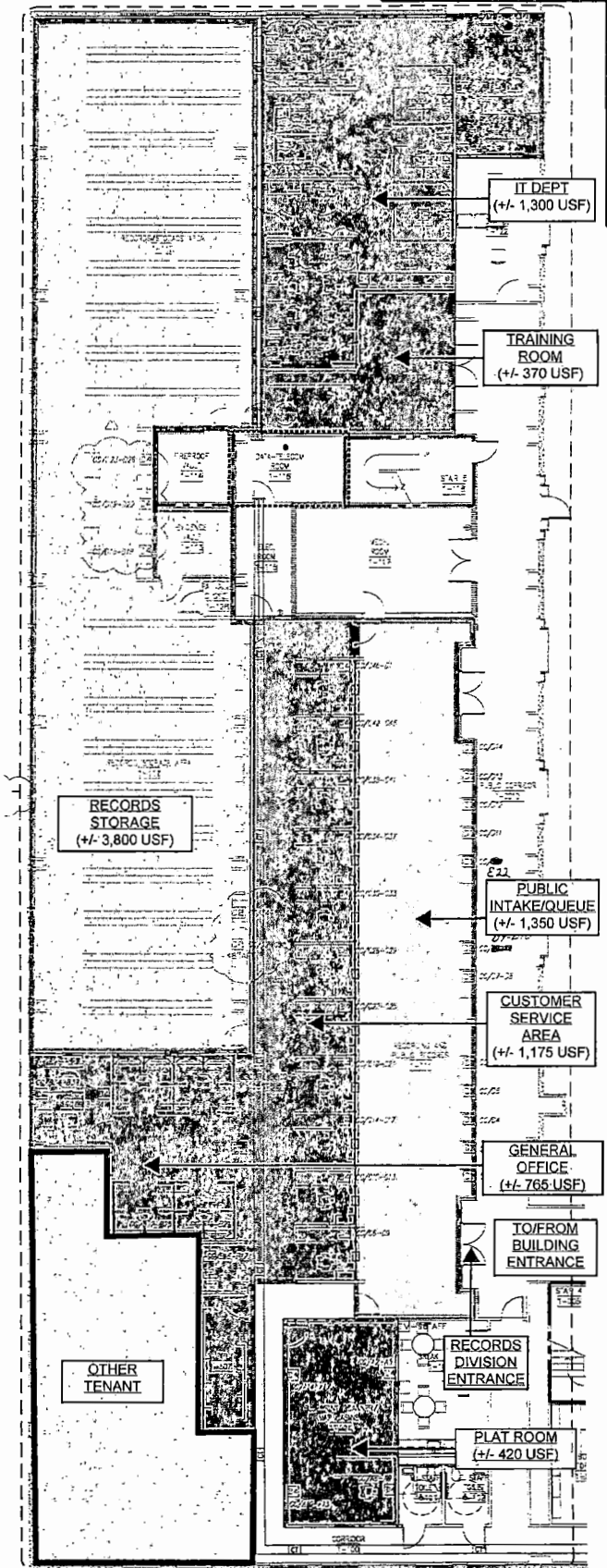
- Secure storage of county records

Plat room

- Within secure areas
- Storage for land ownership information, as well as survey records for Flagler County
- Contains financial vault

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

- Office and work stations for 4 IT staff
- Training work area for up to 5 staff



Population Trends

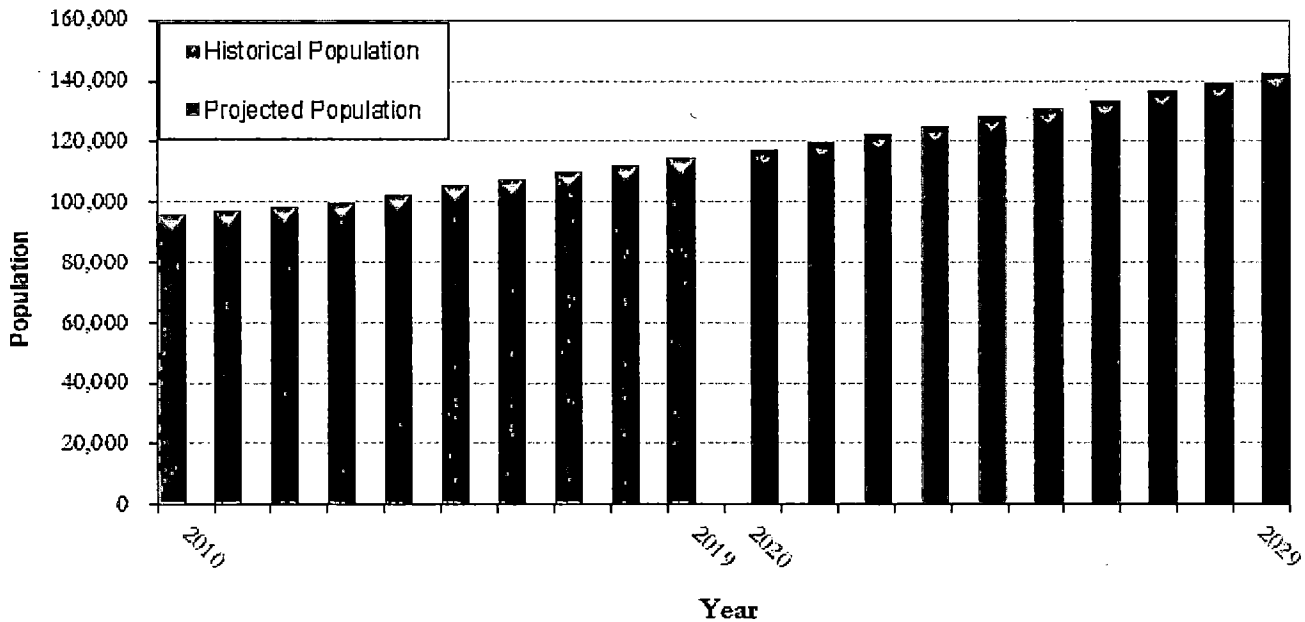


CHART 1. FLAGLER COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS

Source: Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.

- The population of Flagler County increased by 19.65% between 2010 and 2019, compared to population growth of 13.91% in Florida as a whole during that time period.
- Home to a large number of migratory retirees, Flagler County has an aging population. The median age is 50.3 compared to the nationwide median age of 38.1.
- Population growth of 23.98% is projected for Flagler County between 2019 and 2029, while only 15.47% population growth is projected for the state of Florida during the same time period.
- The county is becoming increasingly ethnically and racially diverse, with growing black, Hispanic, and Asian populations.

Source: Flagler County Florida Department of Economic Opportunity website

The current county population was also compared to the projections contained in the 2005 *New Justice Facility Operational and Spatial Program*. This study defined the needs for the Records Division. The study projected a population of 99,900 by 2020. The 2019 population estimate provided above is 114,957. From this comparison, the 2005 study was reasonable, if not conservative, on the population forecast.

Employment Trends

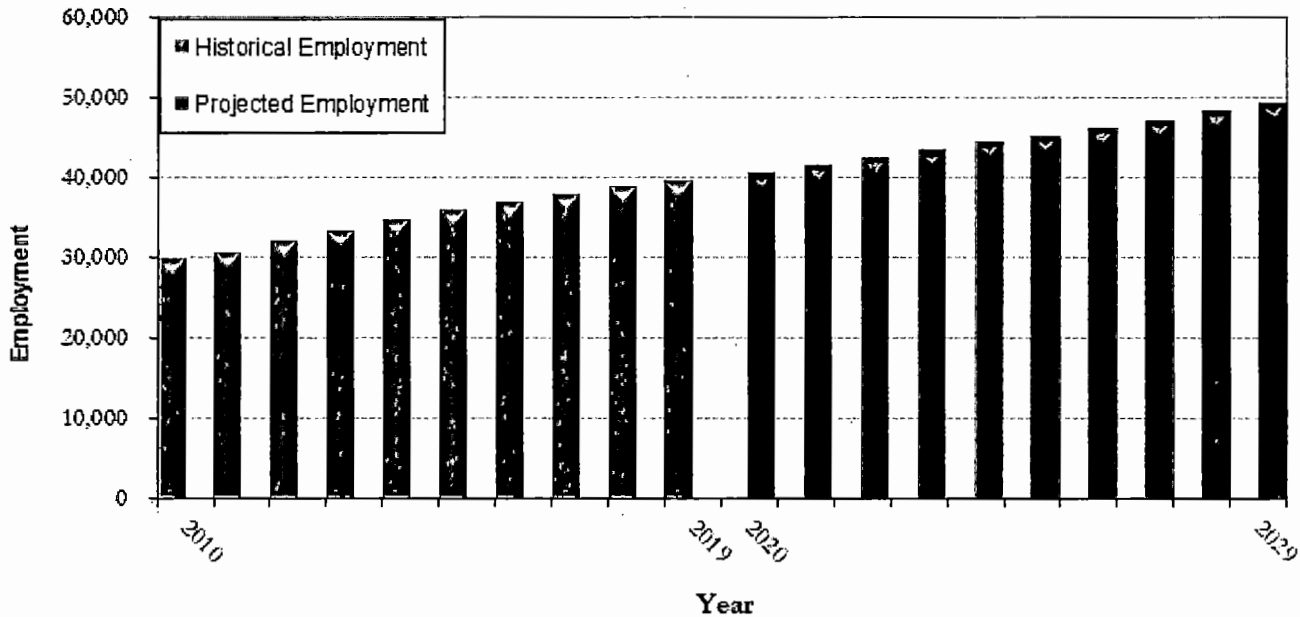


CHART 2. FLAGLER COUNTY EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Source: Woods and Poole Economics, Inc

- Employment in Flagler County increased by 32.52% between 2010 and 2019, compared to employment growth of 23.69% in Florida as a whole during that time period.
- Employment growth of 24.12% is projected for Flagler County between 2019 and 2029, while only 17.9% employment growth is projected for the state of Florida during the same time period.
- With leading industries including advanced manufacturing, agriculture, aviation/aerospace, life sciences, high technology, and corporate services, Flagler County has a diverse economy.
- Situated along Florida's High Tech Corridor and providing convenient access to a multi-modal transportation network, Flagler County's location provides a competitive edge for businesses.

Source: Flagler County Florida Department of Economic Opportunity website

Staffing Growth

As the previous two pages show, population and employment are experiencing a pattern of growth in Flagler County. Although changes in population and employment do not directly correspond to changes in court workload, larger population centers with larger workforces typically yield a larger workload for the court.

The growth in the county has generally led to an increase in the workload of the court, which has generated the need for a new judge. Flagler County currently has the following judges:

- 2 full-time circuit court judges
- 1 full-time county court judge
- 3 part-time magistrate judges
- 1 part-time senior judge
- 1 part-time probate judge

Due to growth in the county and court workload, Flagler County was authorized a new county court judge in May 2019 during the current legislative session. The judgeship is awaiting approval from the governor.

Flagler County Court has been routinely identified as a court that is most underserved in Florida and the need for an additional judgeship has been well documented.

- *The Florida Supreme Court certified the need for a second full-time county judge in Flagler County in December 2016.*
- *A state representative and state senator have lobbied for an additional judge in Flagler County for the past 3 years.*
- *The legislature allocated \$152,000 in 2018 for Flagler County to retain senior/retired judges to assist with the workload. This is a temporary, stop-gap measure that will expire in July 2019.*

The addition of the new judge will impact the Clerk's Office staff. In recent years, the Clerk's Office has been fiscally conservative by not hiring additional staff; however, it plans to hire the following staff in the short term:

- 2 staff to support the new judge
- 2 to 3 staff over the next 3 years to handle specific facets of the workload that are growing. At least 2 of these positions will be housed on the first floor to support public intake and records filing.

Because Flagler County is undergoing a period of population and economic growth, the Clerk's Office will require additional filing space. The Records Division has expansion space built into the existing office that will accommodate the short-term growth in both staffing and records.

When the facility was designed, it was based on a 20-year plan. The Records Division is approximately halfway through this time period and appropriately utilizing the space for its needs. The extra capacity is a sign of a well designed office that has room to grow.

Flagler County currently has four circuit and county judges (including the judgeship recently authorized by the legislature). The judge projections contained in the 2005 *New Justice Facility Operational and Spatial Program* estimated the need for 4.7 judges in 2020. The projections provided in the 2005 study were reasonable in comparison to actual 2019 values.

Space Needs Analysis

The space needs analysis and comparison tables below are based on courthouse planning best practices, as well as information provided by the Flagler County Clerk's Office.

The space needs analysis calculates the size of the space needed on the first floor based on reasonable court design standards.

SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS

SPACE	TYPICAL NSF	MEASUREMENT	QTY.	USF
<u>PUBLIC/STAFF</u>				
Intake	15 per person including prep		75	1,125
Customer Service	56 per person		11	616
Supervisor Office	120 per person		1	120
General Office	56 per workstation		4	224
Training	36 per person		10	360
			PUBLIC/STAFF Subtotal	2,445
			Circulation	25%
			PUBLIC/STAFF USF	3,056
<u>STORAGE</u>				
Records Storage - shelves	15 per shelf (7 high)		96	1,440
Records Storage - boxes	9 per box (assume on 7 high shelf)		245	2,205
Plat Room	400 per room/ mid-size county		1	400
Vault	50 currently in Plat Room		1	50
			STORAGE Subtotal	4,095
			Circulation	10%
			STORAGE USF	4,505
			TOTAL USF REQUIRED	7,561

Comparison Analysis

The analysis below compares the results of the needs analysis from the previous page with the existing space occupied by the Records Division on the first floor.

COMPARISON OF SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS TO EXISTING USE

	SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS USE	EXISTING USE
PUBLIC/STAFF SPACE	3,056	3,660
Intake		1,350
Customer Service		1,175
Other Office		765
Training		370
STORAGE	4,505	4,220
Records Storage		3,800
Plat Room		420
TOTAL	7,561	7,880

The needs analysis estimated a total of 7,561 USF for the functions identified in the Records Division. In comparison, the Clerk's Office currently occupies 7,880 USF, with a difference of 319 USF. This implies that the sizes of the spaces for the functions in Records Center align with reasonable court standards and design practices.

To the benefit of the Clerk's Office, the space has been planned with the capacity to add more staffing and records. Designing a new courthouse with capacity is appropriate and will enable the Records Division to have room for growth without having to sacrifice space functionality.

Recommendations

LOCATION WITHIN THE COURTHOUSE

- The Records Division is located on the first floor in close proximity to the public entrance. This is an important adjacency in courthouse design as the public foot traffic to the Records Division is high.
- The Records Division is in the most advantageous location in the building as those in need of customer service should not be required to circulate throughout the building and onto courtroom floors.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Records Division remain in its current location. This location is an ideal arrangement for the courthouse.

ADJACENCIES AND SECURITY

- The adjacencies within the Records Division provide efficient operations. Customer service areas are properly located so staff can easily access records and meet with customers.
- Security within the Records Division is clearly defined by the layout. There is no circulation conflict between public, restricted, and secure areas.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the existing adjacencies remain intact. Any re-organization of the Records Division could potentially compromise the existing secure conditions and efficient operations.

Recommendations

SPACE NEEDS

- A Space Needs Analysis of the Records Division was conducted based on best practices in courthouse design and the Flagler County Clerk's Office's stated requirements for existing operations needs and projected growth. Verification of the existing space conditions and usage was not conducted as part of this analysis.
- The Space Needs Analysis was then compared to the approximate square footage currently occupied by the Records Division. The result of this analysis concluded that the existing Records Division is nearly identical (approximately 4% above) to the recommended space that was independently calculated in the needs analysis.

RECOMMENDATION: The Records Division contains an adequate amount of space to meet its current and projected needs, and it is recommended that the office not be reduced in size. Any reduction in space would compromise the functionality of the operation and reduce the ability of space to accommodate future growth.

The only real opportunity to downsize the Records Division would be to implement a document scanning effort and digitize all existing records. It is our understanding that this has been investigated and has been deemed cost prohibitive at this time.

About Fentress

Fentress Incorporated is a small business specializing in facility planning and analytics. We have an expertise in courthouse needs assessments and space programming. Since our founding in 1988, we have performed facility planning on over 1,000 court facilities, including federal, county, and municipal facilities.

In the State of Florida, we have assessed court facilities in Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Fort Pierce, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Key West, Miami, Ocala, Orlando, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Tampa, and West Palm Beach.