

City Court Finds New Home

by Denice R. Shepard

In less than one year, the Tucson City Court will move into new facilities in the Alameda Plaza building, according to Chief City Court Magistrate Tom Martin. The new facility has the potential to provide over five times the space the Court currently occupies.

The new facilities at 100 E. Alameda will provide the city with nearly 100,000 square feet while the current location at 166 West Alameda provides only 17,000 square feet. Court facilities will require approximately half of the available square footage. Plans for the city court move indicate the new facilities will be operative before July 1, 1987.

Courtrooms and related offices would be found in the first three floors of the building, Martin said. The Tucson City Prosecutor's office would be given space on an upper floor, as will other court-related services.

Martin said city authorities have not decided whether office suites can be offered to two private law firms who have contracted with the City to provide defenses for indigent defendants, though the possibility exists. "We would hope all our related services would be put there," he said.

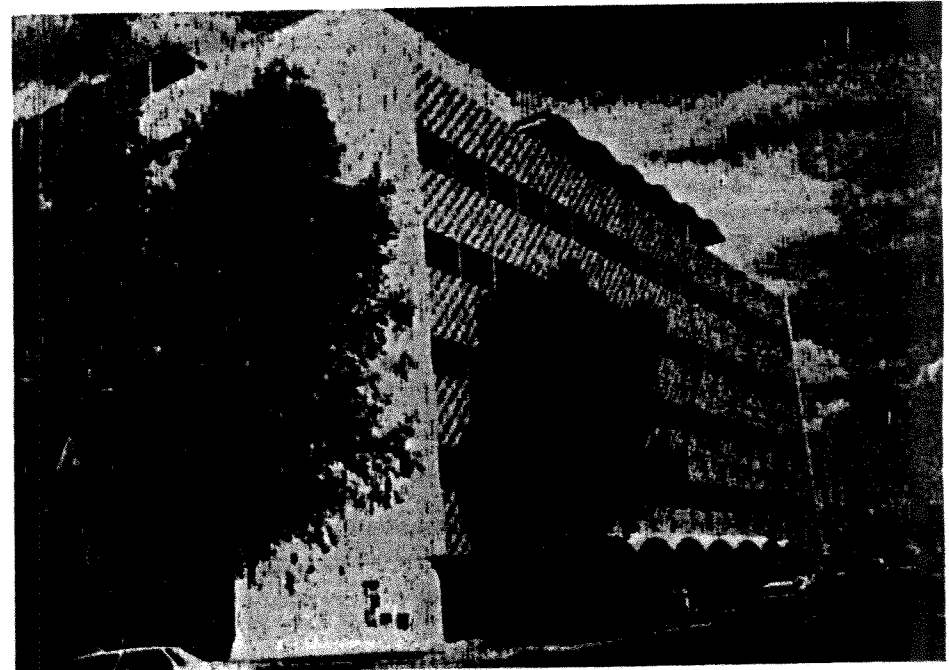
The Alameda Plaza was originally built as a parking garage, but has undergone a series of renovations, Martin said. An initial architectural study indicated the building could easily be renovated into appropriate-sized rooms.

Currently, the building houses offices for Mountain Bell and some public, social service offices.

The city has purchased the building for \$3.5 million, Martin said. Another \$1.96 million will be spent for remodeling.

City officials viewed other sites before deciding upon Alameda Plaza. One location at John H. Springs Elementary School was rejected for a number of reasons, Martin said. The building was an inconvenient location and would have required extensive repairs and modifications, he explained. Apparently, special procedures would have been required to make the modifications and repairs since the original structure contained carcinogenic, asbestos-based materials, he said.

A proposed location at the Westerner was also rejected by officials, Martin said, because of a lack of available parking.



Alameda Plaza

The Alameda Plaza location has at least 200 parking spaces. Martin said he hoped at least 100 spaces would be reserved for court personnel with a specified percentage reserved for persons having business with the court.

City officials expect to gain over \$300,000 annually in lease revenues from building space not utilized by the courts from the parking garage. (Continued on Page 11)

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The new facilities will include at least two large arraignment courtrooms, eight to ten full-sized courtrooms capable of accommodating jury trials, and several hearing rooms.

By comparison, in the present facilities there is one arraignment courtroom, six full-sized courtrooms, one hearing room and three small offices being used as additional hearing rooms. Traffic court is frequently held at a booth in the main hallway.

The new facilities would meet federal recommendations for space required per employee, Martin said. Currently each City Court employee has approximately 11 to 12 square-feet-per-person. Federal recommendations suggest each employee have 100 square-feet-per-person.

Alameda Plaza would provide enough space for each city magistrate to have a private office. Currently two magistrates are required to share the City Court library as their office.

Judges' bailiffs would also be provided with office space near their assigned judge, Martin said. Bailiffs would share offices, with two or three in each office. Currently, 11 bailiffs are sharing one room as office space. The new facilities would also provide conference rooms, jury deliberation rooms and holding cells for in-custody defendants, he said.

In the present facilities, juries must deliberate in the same courtroom in which they were presented evidence, sometimes occupying courtrooms for hours while they privately deliberate.

Alameda Plaza is already equipped for handicapped access and would provide more public and private restrooms than the current facilities which houses two sets of private and one set of public bathrooms.

Denice Shepard is a partner in the firm of Dunscomb and Shepard. This is her first contribution to The Writ, but we hope she will continue to write in areas of interest to her.