

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 28, 2022

Delaware Family Court holds groundbreaking ceremony for new Sussex County Family Court Courthouse in Georgetown

A groundbreaking ceremony was held Tuesday, June 28, 2022 in Georgetown on the site of what will be the new Sussex County Family Court building at the corner of Race and Market Streets, across from the Sussex County Courthouse.

“This is a great day for the Family Court of the State of Delaware and the citizens of Sussex County who access the Court. This new building will provide a safe, dignified, and appropriately spaced courthouse for our employees and litigants” said Delaware Family Court Chief Judge Michael K. Newell. “This new courthouse reflects our continued commitment to provide fair, efficient and equal access to justice to Delaware families.”

“State workers in each branch of government work hard every day, and they deserve to go to work in facilities where they can do their jobs well,” said Governor John Carney. “That’s why we’ve made it a priority to include in our budget funding for a secure and modern Sussex County Family Courthouse. Thank you to Chief Judge Newell for leading this effort, and to everyone involved in this project that will better serve Delaware families.”

The new \$115 million 107,800 square-foot courthouse replaces an outdated 30,000 square-foot building on the Circle in Georgetown that was built in 1988. Studies dating back decades showed the existing facility was unsafe by modern court standards and caused issues for litigants and court staff. Among other issues, the waiting areas and courtrooms in the current courthouse do not allow for adequate and appropriate distance between litigants, and court staff have to share elevators and hallways with detainees, rather than each having their own secure areas.

“We are grateful for the support from the Governor and the General Assembly for the new Family Court facilities which are so urgently needed,” said Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr.

The Delaware Judiciary made it a priority to keep the courthouse in downtown Georgetown as part of its ongoing commitment to keep city and town centers in Delaware thriving. Furthermore, the Judiciary worked with Georgetown on design elements of the building to ensure it met community standards and blended in with the historic nature of the town.

The new facility will have more courtrooms – eight as opposed to the current six – and those courtrooms will be more than twice the size of the existing courtrooms (1,400 to 1,800 square feet in the new building versus an average of 600 square feet in the existing courthouse). These additional courtrooms will allow Family Court to better handle the volume of cases in Sussex County, which has nearly doubled since the existing Family Court Courthouse opened in 1988. The new building will also have additional space for the Department of Justice, Office of Defense Services, Office of the Child Advocate and other court system partners and a 300-car parking garage.

In addition to Chief Judge Newell, Governor Carney and Chief Justice Seitz, other speakers at Tuesday's groundbreaking included State Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, Georgetown Mayor Bill West and Family Court Judge Peter B. Jones.

The ceremony concluded with a presentation by building architect William J. Lenihan of Tevebaugh Architecture and Bud Grove, a senior vice president of Wohlsen Construction, that will carry out the construction.

The construction is expected to begin in the fall and be completed in late 2024.

[See renderings of the new Sussex County Family Court Courthouse.](#)