

**State Bar of Arizona Task Force on Persons With Disabilities
Accessibility Committee Site Visit
Yuma County Superior Court
Yuma, Arizona**

SURVEY BACKGROUND

Facility: Yuma County Superior Court, 168 S. 2nd Avenue, Suite E, Yuma, AZ
85364

Date: March 12, 2004, approximately one hour tour

Team: Emily Johnston (team leader, Board of Governors, State Bar of Arizona);
Jimmie D. Smith (Board of Governors, State Bar of Arizona); Cristyn E. Weil, Yuma

Court Personnel: Chief Judge, Tom Cole, Judge Nelson, and Justice of the Peace
Donato, Head of Security Donnie Jobe, Essie Gonzales, administrator



Overview

This older landmark facility houses several courtrooms. Generous hallways and tall ceilings give the impression of spaciousness. The justice court is housed on the first floor of the building. The hallways are wide and easily accessible to the public. Older bench style seating allowed ample room for wheelchair or pedestrian access and maneuverability. In the main floor court room, benches were placed in such a way as to accommodate a wide turning radius. One nice point is that the courtroom is easy to get in and out of-- located near the front of the building. It appears to be the most heavily used.

The entire complex is relatively compact. The public information areas are easy to find. While the filing window in the front is high, there are many court employees available for assistance.

Future

Currently, a new Yuma Justice Complex is under construction. It is located directly adjacent to the old court. Court Staff have been studying design plans and intend to have court rooms which will be ramped from the back, for judicial access to the bench. It is planned that in the new building permanent ramps will be constructed from the well of the court rooms.



Parking

Street parking appears to be adequate around the exterior of the courthouse, which is situated at the crossroads of two large streets. Sidewalks approach the building from both directions.

Signage

Visible signs were posted for ramps, parking and elevators.

Entrance and Exits

Front

The front door is oriented to the center of the building and is easy to identify as the main entrance. Security is located close to the door. The front door is heavy to open, but we observed ready assistance available via a posted security guard.



Side/Back

While under construction, a series of wheelchair ramps have been constructed to access the lower rooms of the court house. This temporary accommodation is easily accessible for wheelchair use, although for those with limited strength, might seem the long way around the building. In this old building, it was a good solution to an alternate entrance.



Elevator

It was installed 10 years ago. It is adequate for wheelchair use.

Restrooms

The courthouse has older bathrooms, without remarkable distinguishing features, except there are some accommodating low sinks installed and additional low towel racks for wheelchair use.



Courtrooms

The Courtrooms were generally accessible to the public.



Juror Facilities

The jury deliberation room is located downstairs. Many jury rooms could use more space; this one is no different, especially for persons using a wheelchair.

While the jury boxes not wheelchair accommodating, a witness would have room for a wheelchair in front of the witness box.

Chambers

The chambers were very accessible.

Other Facilities

One employee using a wheelchair needed access to the lower level employee offices. The court found a way to remove part of a stone wall in order to allow access to the entire lower level, which was formerly inaccessible. This was an extremely creative solution, which was further supplemented by portable wheelchair ramps to allow a person using a wheelchair to travel between differing levels in each adjacent office.



Conclusion: While the Yuma County Superior Court is a generally accessible facility, the new Yuma County Superior Court facility is almost certain to be state of the art in its accommodations for persons with disabilities.