

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE BUILDING

Internal Investigation

GJ05-057

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury visited and inspected buildings in the county that were built prior to 1950.

After inspecting the buildings located at 515 & 525 Main Street in Placerville, it was determined that the Office of the District Attorney, housed at the above addresses, required further attention.

Scope of the Investigation

Members of the Grand Jury toured the District Attorney's Office by appointment on October 13, 2005. We were given a history of the building and briefed on the operations of the District Attorney's office.

People Interviewed:

- District Attorney Personnel
- Court Executive Officer
- Court Operations Managers
- Administrative Personnel
- General Services Personnel

Documents Reviewed:

- Prior Grand Jury Reports regarding the District Attorney's Office Building
- Letters between the Grand Jury and CAL OSHA regarding the condition of the District Attorney's Office Building
- General Service's Interdepartmental Memo
- Board of Supervisor's Agendas, May 22 and June 12, 2001 regarding the District Attorney's Office Building

Background

The building which houses the District Attorney's Office is one of historical significance. It was first built and used as a Post Office.

To enter the District Attorney's Office one must walk up several stairs to the door. There is no sign advising citizens with disabilities how to enter the building. Upon entering the office it is apparent that space is limited and that employees have outgrown the space allotted to them. The aisles are congested with boxes of files. The lighting in the main "support staff" area is dated, yellowed and does not appear to give sufficient light to the employees. Most employees have additional lighting on their desks. Numerous fans throughout the office are used by the personnel to cool and move the stale air.

The basement of the District Attorney's Office at 515 Main Street was flooded on October 9, 2000, resulting in a mold problem; all mold has been removed at great expense. The Board of Supervisors issued an action item in June, 2001 that stated employees could not work permanently in this area. This level is used for storage, a conference room, a photo enlargement room, IT work area, and a make-shift workout area with shower. There is no elevator to this area. It is dark, damp and the air smells musty.

Clearly this building has served the community well in the past, but it is no longer able to comply to certain codes (i.e. fire sprinklers, ADA) and it would not be wise to spend money to retrofit the building into compliance, or to try to expand office space into the basement.

Facts

1. 515 Main Street is an old building that is of historic significance.
2. There is no sign at the street entrance directing persons with disabilities to enter at the rear of the building.
3. Parking is insufficient for current as well as future needs.
4. The employees of 515 Main Street are allowed to use only the main floor for office space.
5. There is insufficient room for the current staff with no room for growth.
6. Aisles are congested with boxes for storage.
7. Old PC hardware is stored in numerous areas, under desks and on file cabinets.
8. Lighting in the support area is inadequate.
9. Due to the age of the building, overhead fire sprinklers are not legally required; however, there are important, original, irreplaceable documents and evidence that can be destroyed in the event of a fire.
10. As of the date of our inspection fire drills had not occurred, although procedures are in place.
11. Ceiling tiles at the main level are water stained from either current or previous roof leaks.
12. Repairs to the lower level of the office building will not solve the myriad of other significant deficiencies.
13. There is no elevator between floors in the building.
14. The ceiling in conference room in the lower level is peeling and does not appear to have been repaired since the Grand Jury report of 2002/2003 first reported the problem.
15. Mold was visible in the shower and on the shower curtain in the "workout" area.
16. On June 11, 2001, the Board of Supervisors for El Dorado County found that "the basement space is inadequate for the District Attorney's staff . . . including space needs and inability to fully comply with the requirements of the ADA."
17. DA Investigators are housed in a separate building, 525 Main Street, creating workplace inefficiencies.

Findings/Recommendations

1F. Finding: The District Attorney and staff have outgrown their office space.

1R. Recommendation: Relocate the District Attorney and his office staff into one office facility.

2F. Finding: 515 & 525 Main Street are not suitable for any tenancy in their` current condition.

2R. Recommendation: Renovate these buildings if required for future county use.

Commentary:

To our knowledge there is no long range plan to build a new facility that would accommodate the District Attorney and other related offices. The County owns properties that could accommodate such a structure combined with a new, efficient and modern Justice Center for the DA and other related county departments. See Grand Jury Report regarding leased facilities.

A response is required by the Board of Supervisors within sixty (60) days. See Table of Contents, "*Notice to Respondents.*"