

COURT FACILITIES

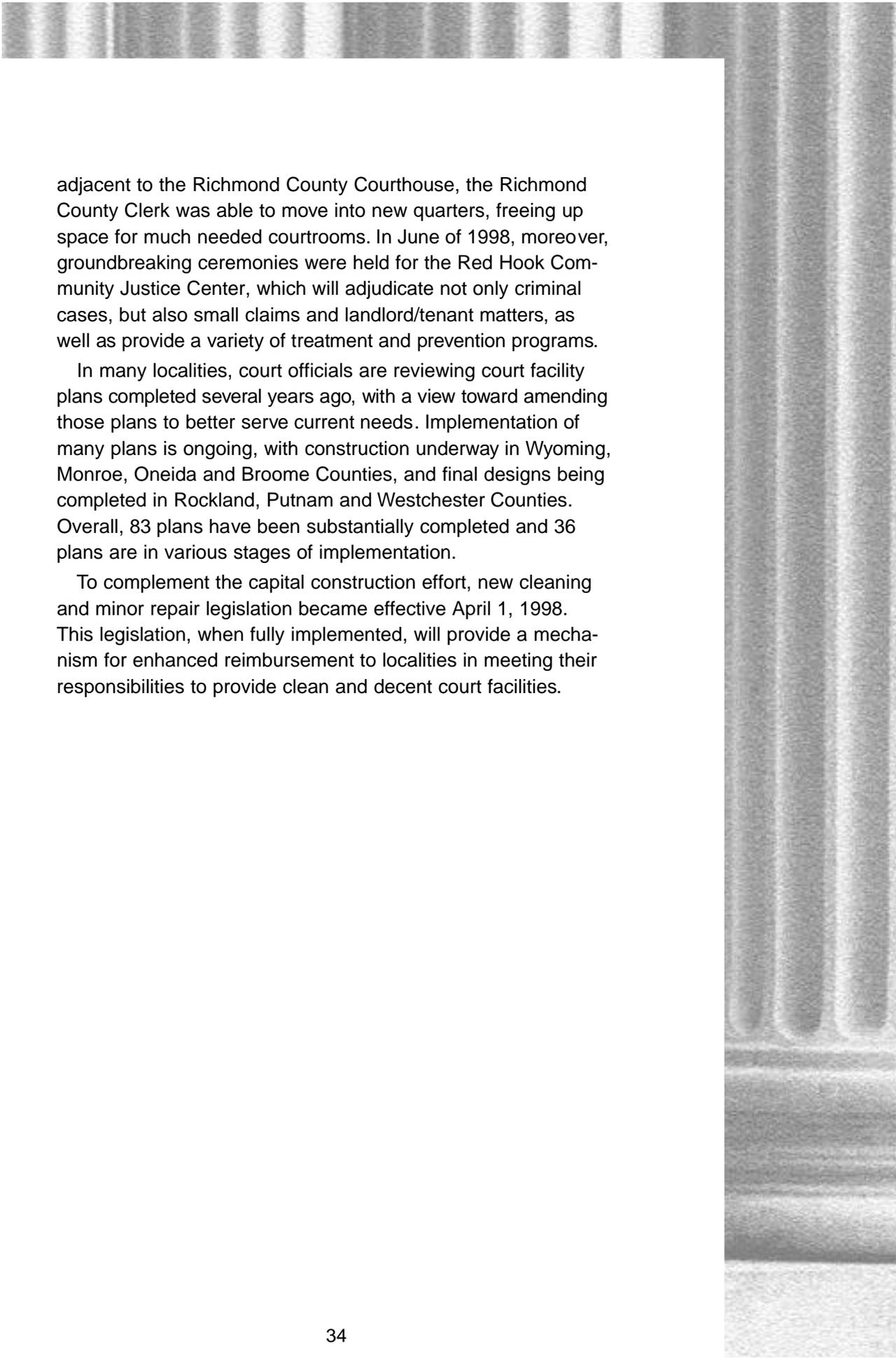
From the largest urban justice complex to the smallest village courthouse, our court facilities both reflect and reinforce public attitudes toward our legal system. The New York State courts are committed to ensuring that every one of its more than 300 courthouses stands as a symbol of the strength and stability of our justice system.

By State statute, the responsibility for providing “suitable and sufficient” court facilities lies with local government. In the past, some localities’ neglect of this duty led to court buildings that were in fact unsuitable and insufficient for the dignified administration of justice. But in the years since the 1987 passage of the Court Facilities Act—which instituted a planning process and economic incentives to spur local attention to this issue—the court system has worked diligently with local officials, and has made much progress in this area.

1998 thus saw the opening of a number of new court facilities upstate: a new City Court in Geneva; a Public Safety Building in New Rochelle that includes a new City Court facility; a new Family Court for Rensselaer County. The second phase of the court facility plan in Dutchess County—the renovation of the County Courthouse—was also completed, complementing the state-of-the-art Family Court that opened there in 1997. A new courthouse in Herkimer County is now substantially complete, as is a major addition in Orange County.

In New York City, there was also continued progress. In the early part of 1998, the new Queens County Civil Courthouse opened in Jamaica. Thanks to newly renovated office space

The New York State courts are on the leading edge in developing attractive, user-friendly courthouse designs. This past March, the American Institute of Architects’ Committee on Architecture for Justice included eight New York State courthouse projects among the 16 buildings spotlighted in an exhibition of model courthouse designs. And more recently, the New York State Association of Architects honored the new Queens Civil Courthouse with an “Excellence in Design” award, bestowed to celebrate achievement in design excellence and to honor those “who work together to create and enhance our built environment.”



adjacent to the Richmond County Courthouse, the Richmond County Clerk was able to move into new quarters, freeing up space for much needed courtrooms. In June of 1998, moreover, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the Red Hook Community Justice Center, which will adjudicate not only criminal cases, but also small claims and landlord/tenant matters, as well as provide a variety of treatment and prevention programs.

In many localities, court officials are reviewing court facility plans completed several years ago, with a view toward amending those plans to better serve current needs. Implementation of many plans is ongoing, with construction underway in Wyoming, Monroe, Oneida and Broome Counties, and final designs being completed in Rockland, Putnam and Westchester Counties. Overall, 83 plans have been substantially completed and 36 plans are in various stages of implementation.

To complement the capital construction effort, new cleaning and minor repair legislation became effective April 1, 1998. This legislation, when fully implemented, will provide a mechanism for enhanced reimbursement to localities in meeting their responsibilities to provide clean and decent court facilities.