

San Luis Municipal Court

Organizational Structure Review

FY 2026-2027

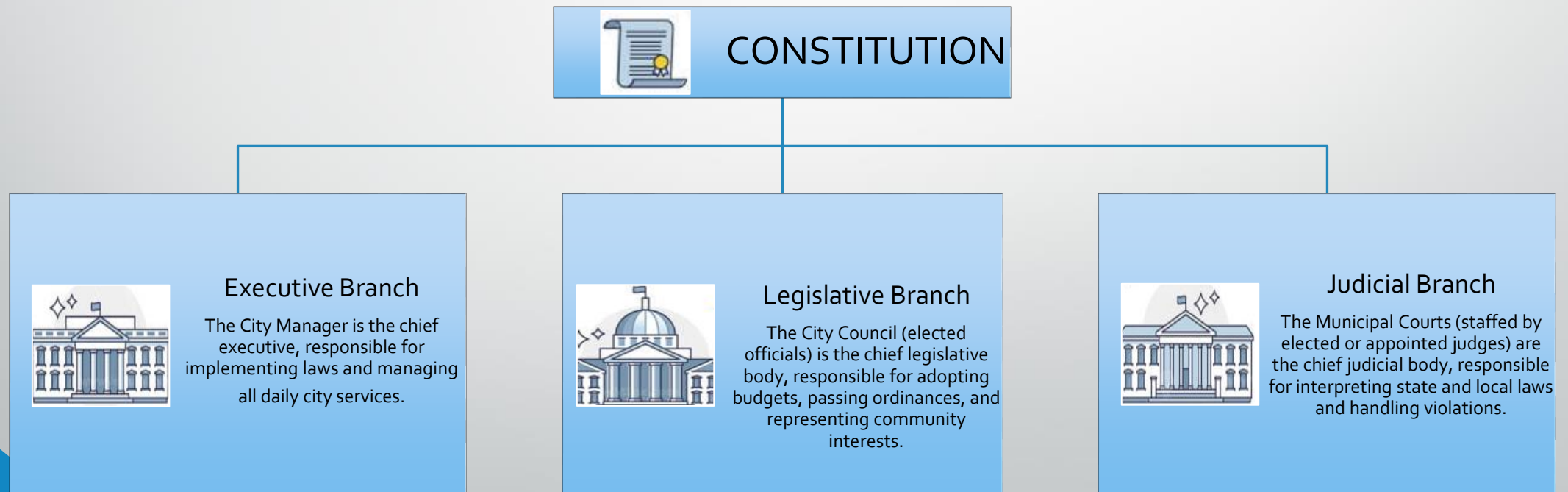


CITY OF
SAN LUIS
ARIZONA



Functions

Municipal courts serve as the judicial branch for local city governance and are integral to the local community, often providing the public's most frequent interaction with the justice system.



Roles and Responsibilities

Municipal Court

- The municipal court must follow city or town expenditure procedures
- Additionally, courts should be mindful if a municipality is experiencing a fiscal deficit or shortfall and work cooperatively with the municipality to achieve a mutually agreeable solution.
- If the court follows the funding authority's policies and is still denied adequate staff or facilities, the court may, through its inherent powers, order the funding authority to provide for adequate staff or facilities. *Reinhold v. Board of Supervisors of Navajo County*

Municipalities

- The budget process must yield funding necessary for the proper operation of the court. The local government must defer to the judge's determination of the financial needs of the court and the advisability of implementing any recommendations, unless the judge's determination is arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable. *Reinhold v. Board of Supervisors of Navajo County*
- In *Maricopa County v. Dann*, the Supreme Court held that courts have a right to necessary personnel to carry out the court's constitutional and statutory duties, and that legislative bodies have the duty of approving personnel requests unless there is a clear showing that the judges acted unreasonably, arbitrarily, or capriciously in making the request.

Position Request

The San Luis Municipal Court is requesting a **new Chief Clerk** position to delegate tasks between Civil and Criminal Departments, enabling specialization and providing targeted training, support, and focus on each department's distinct processing needs.

Civil Department Responsibilities

- **Procedural Adherence:** They rigorously check all incoming documents and pleadings for compliance with established Rules of Civil Procedure and local court procedure.
- **Case Processing:** The clerk receives and enters all Citation data, manages the daily case Queues (dockets), and ensures the flow of cases through the court system.
- **Compliance & Finance:** The clerk is responsible for collecting all court-ordered Fare (fines and fees) and sending essential case dispositions and driver actions (MVD Updates) to the state's Motor Vehicle Division to enforce judicial outcomes.
- **Civil Financial Processing:** includes the assessment and waiver of fines and fees; processing City requisitions, community restitution, completing daily reconciliation, and managing AJACS deposits.

Criminal Department Responsibilities

- **Procedural Adherence:** Strictly follows all Rules of Criminal Procedure and local court procedures.
- **Manages Court Calendar:** Manages scheduling for key events (initial appearance, arraignments, pretrial conference, change of plea, sentencing).
- **Compliance of Court Orders:** Enforces specific judicial requirements (Weapon surrender, self-surrender days at jail, fingerprint compliance, community restitution, referral compliance, payment compliance).
- **Criminal Financial Processing:** processing bonds, TIP payments, and City requisitions; handling the assessment and waiver of fines and fees; processing restitution and community service programs like "Days for Dollars"; and managing enforcement actions such as delinquency notices and Failure to Pay warrants.

Structure Review Request

Recognizing the City's financial constraints, our prioritized strategy is the creation of one additional Chief Court Clerk position. This investment will immediately secure the court's operational integrity and long-term compliance.

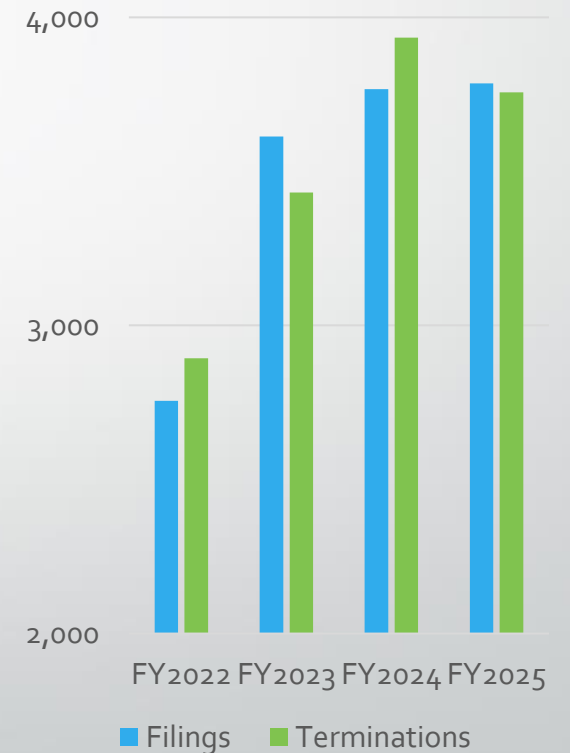
The new Chief Court Clerk will:

- **Mitigate Operations:** This position will immediately alleviate the existing operational burden by allowing supervisors to specialize in either the Criminal or Civil department. This specialization will enhance staff support and supervision, thereby improving daily service delivery.
- **Drive Efficiency:** Enable the strategic distribution of critical workload, allowing current resources to be successfully re-allocated to complex case management, process optimization, and overall efficiency improvements. Crucially, this added capacity will facilitate dedicated efforts to address and resolve the years-worth of outstanding operational backlog.
- **Risk and Error Prevention:** A dedicated Chief Court Clerk will enhance quality control, drastically reducing the potential for critical errors in case management and reporting, thereby safeguarding the City against potential future liabilities.

Justification for New Chief Clerk Position

- Our court staff is currently facing two mounting pressures: a consistent rise in new filings and an ongoing commitment to resolving backlogged cases. This combined volume has resulted in an average annual workload of 6,280 cases, reaching an unsustainable level for our current personnel.
- When compared to other municipal courts in the county, our workload is disproportionately high. We currently process 628 filings per clerk—52.4% higher than the county average of 412. When accounting for the existing backlog, each clerk is managing an average of 1,047 cases. This volume places a significant strain on our operational capacity and long-term sustainability.

<https://www.azcourts.gov/statistics/Interactive-Data-Dashboards/Limited-Jurisdiction-Filings-and-Terminations>

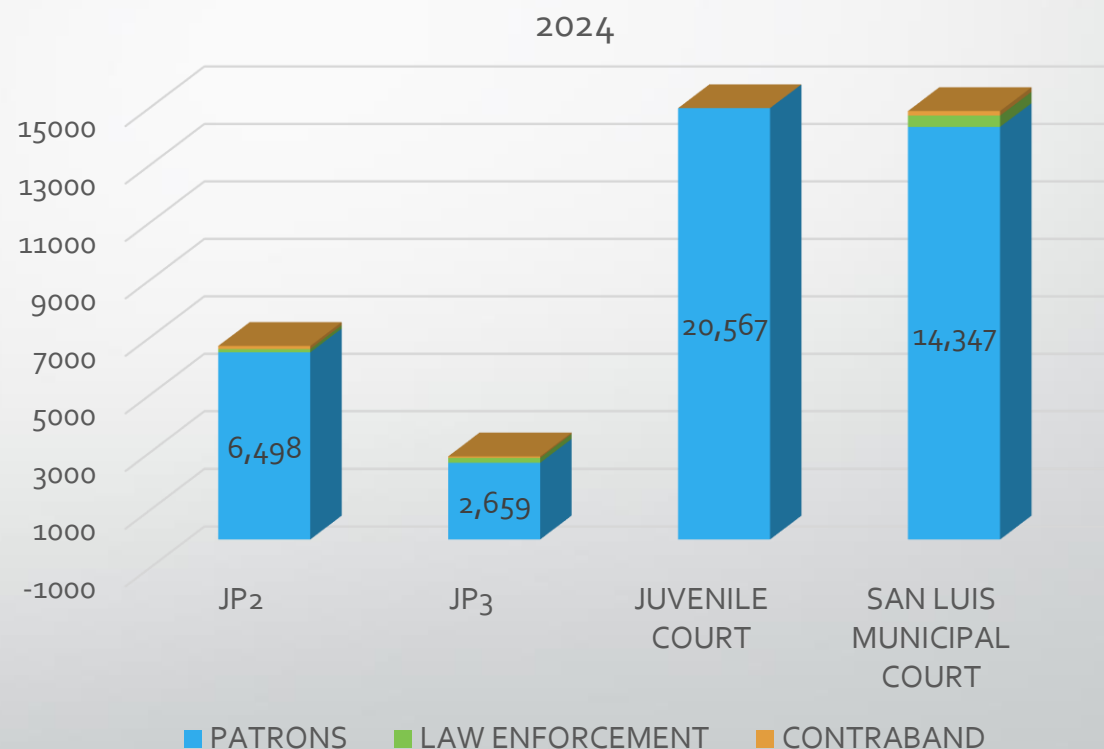


Justification for New Chief Clerk Position Cont.

Among the courts in Yuma County requiring security services, the San Luis Municipal Court exhibits high operational demand ranking:

- **3rd** in the total number of patrons visiting the courthouse.
- **2nd** in the volume of visits by law enforcement officers conducting business
- **2nd** in the amount of illegal contraband detected and seized.

The Yuma Justice Center, housing the Superior Court, JP1, Law Library, JAU, and the Clerk's Office, received the highest ranking.



Justification for New Chief Clerk Position Cont.

The court is burdened with a significant, decades-old backlog of tasks requiring specialized compliance and archival work.

- **Criminal Records Compliance (DPS):** Managing over 8,000 open dispositions—unfinalized charges that must be accurately reported to the DPS system to ensure correct criminal records. This accumulated backlog spans 23 years and is estimated to require approximately 3 to 4 years of dedicated effort to fully resolve.
- **Warrant Review and Validation:** Systematically reviewing 40 years worth of active warrants. This requires cross-referencing old charges against recent legislative updates to ensure they remain criminally valid and determining the unknown number of warrants that lack necessary extradition requisites.
- **Clerical System Reassignments:** The large-scale tasks of re-assigning FARE (collection agency) processing and re-assigning the processing of "ticklers" (reminders/follow-ups) across all clerks.
- **Property and Evidence Archival:** Responding to requests for case status and copies for an unknown number of cases involving the destruction of property or issuance of property release orders. This critical process is complicated because the prosecutor lacks the old case files, forcing reliance entirely on court records.
- **Expungement Program:** The Attorney General's Office is currently filing expungement petitions for defendants across Arizona, with an estimated 900 filings projected for our court. This mandate requires specialized administrative processing to ensure all records are updated according to state law.

Strengthening the Pillars of Public Safety

A unified vision for public safety exists between the Court, the Police Department, and the Prosecutor's Office, ensuring a coordinated approach to justice and community restoration.



SAN LUIS POLICE DEPARTMENT

1030 E. Union Street | P.O. Box 3720
San Luis, Arizona 85349
(928) 341-2420 | Fax (928) 627-5446

www.sanluispolice.org



To: Alejandra Peru, Court Administrator
From: Nigel Reynoso, Chief of Police
Date: December 16, 2025
REF: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COURT SUPERVISOR POSITION

As noted in your email and the information provided, the San Luis Police Department endorses support to seek a Court Supervisor Position.

Our staff values the work and recognizes the commitment and dedication of the San Luis Municipal Court, and understands the need to streamline services and requirements to manage case backlog, requisites, and audit findings, as well as property and evidence support, all of which have a direct impact on the daily operations of the police department.

As the police department continues to grow, the municipal court should also increase its staff, including supervisory positions, to remain effective and manage its span of control.

It is for that reason that I fully support the establishment of a Court Supervisor Position.

Respectfully,


Nigel I. Reynoso, Chief of Police
San Luis Police Department



City of San Luis Prosecutor's Office

PO Box 1629
San Luis, AZ 85349
PH: (928) 341-8598 | Fax: (928) 627-0222

January 12, 2026

To: Alejandra Peru
From: Amanda Mahon Watlington, City Prosecutor 
Date: January 12, 2026
Re: Letter of Support for Court Supervisor position

I am writing to formally express support for the San Luis Municipal Court's request for a Court Supervisor.

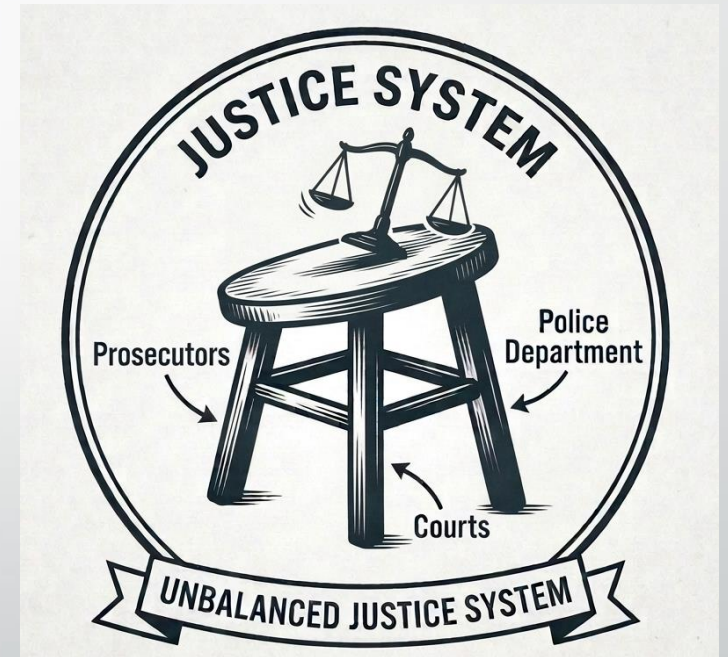
As the City grows and more police officers are added, the number of cases heard by the court increases. Additional cases means additional time in the courtroom for hearings, equating to less time in the office to handle routine case management tasks.

The court has backlogs of what would have been routine case management but has been deferred for decades. Tackling these backlogs while handling the court's increasing caseload would be an overwhelming task. The court also has a high number of walk-ins, which further draws attention away from these backlogs and the day-to-day demands of an increasingly busy court.

Approving the court's request is in the best interest of the City and the broader justice system. I respectfully urge you to give this request full consideration.

Justification for New Chief Clerk Position Cont.

Maintaining a cooperative relationship among the police department, the prosecutor's office, and the court is crucial, as the court serves as the ultimate guarantor of constitutional due process and ensures overall judicial efficiency. When the court experiences an increase in duties without corresponding staffing or resources, its ability to manage its workload and maintain oversight is strained, which directly impacts the integrity and effectiveness of those inter-agency relationships. Therefore, a strong, ethical, and collaborative dynamic among the three entities remains vital for the court to ensure that presented cases are legally sound, that judicial time is used efficiently, and that the institution's public legitimacy as a dispenser of fair justice is reliably maintained.



Chief Court Clerk Reclassification

Due to inconsistent job titles across Arizona municipalities, the Chief Court Clerk position was benchmarked against non-supervisory clerical roles, leading to a significant undervaluation of actual duties.

Compensation Realignment

- **Market Reality:** Average Chief Clerk rate is \$28.15/hr.
- **Current Status:** Our rate of \$21.84/hr trails the market by 28.9%.
- **Initial Request:** Our initial request of \$25.96/hr reflects market mid-point.
- **Proposed Alignment:** \$24.10/hr.

Position Reclassification

- **Judicial Support:** Prepares legal documentation and provides executive-level support to judicial officers.
- **Operational Analysis:** Conducts research and develops recommendations for court programs and projects.
- **Compliance & Oversight:** Serves as the primary enforcer of AOC standards and court orders.
- **Strategic Management:** Reports directly to the Court Administrator; oversees case file integrity and staff workflow.
- **Fiscal Support Specialist:** Responsible for the accuracy of Court accounts payable and municipal fund integrity.

Court Administrator Salary Adjustment

In San Luis, we take great pride in the strength of our three branches of government. Aligning the Court Administrator's compensation with our other city executives simply reflects the vital role this position plays in that balance. It recognizes that managing the Judicial Branch requires the same high-level leadership and independent oversight that our community expects from all its executive leaders.

Compensation Realignment

- **Market Reality:** Average Court Administrator rate is \$39.32/hr.
- **Current Status:** Our rate of \$34.06/hr trails the market by 15.4%.
- **Initial Request:** The \$42.53/hr rate corrects existing salary fluctuations by aligning established City pay scales for equivalent management levels.
- **Proposed Alignment:** \$38.53/hr.

Position Responsibilities

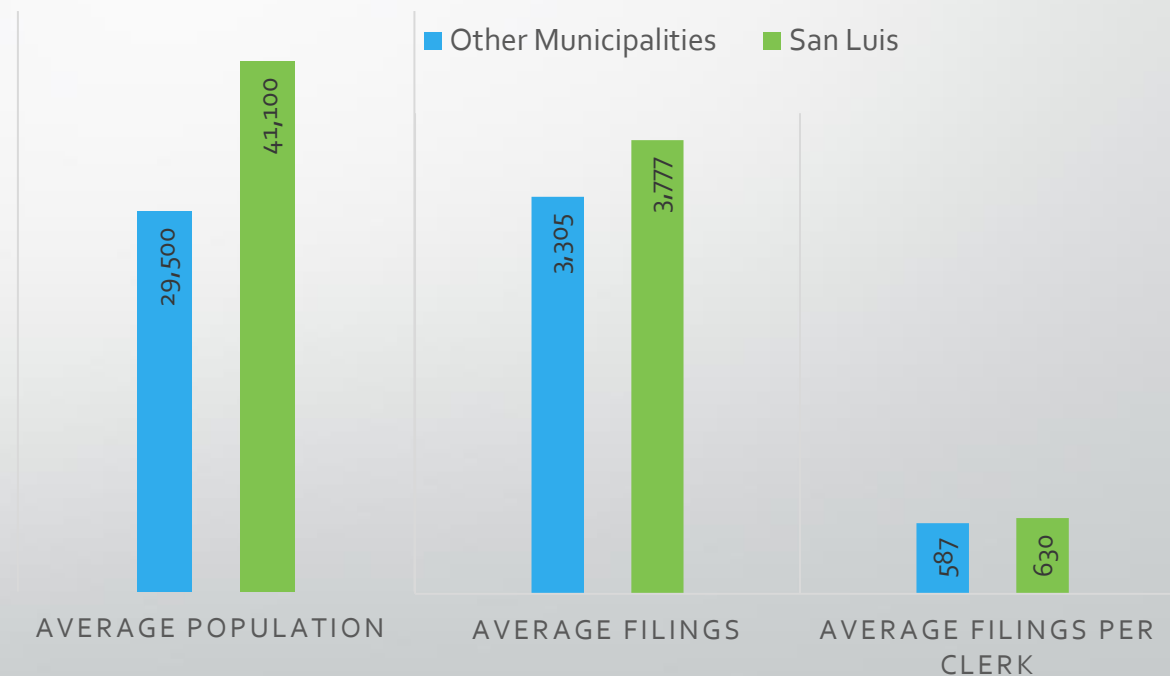
- **System Integrity:** Ensures compliance with local, state, and federal mandates while spearheading all required statutory reporting.
- **Judicial Readiness:** Orchestrates all courtroom functions and case processing to ensure a seamless environment for Judicial Officers.
- **Stakeholder Relations:** Maintains effective, high-level partnerships across the criminal justice system and inter-departmental agencies.
- **Mission-Critical Support:** Manages daily operations and staff development with specialized expertise in court management and legal procedure

Internal Salary Study

An internal salary study was conducted comparing the San Luis Municipal Court to four similar Arizona municipal courts: Kingman, Oro Valley, Tolleson, and Sedona.

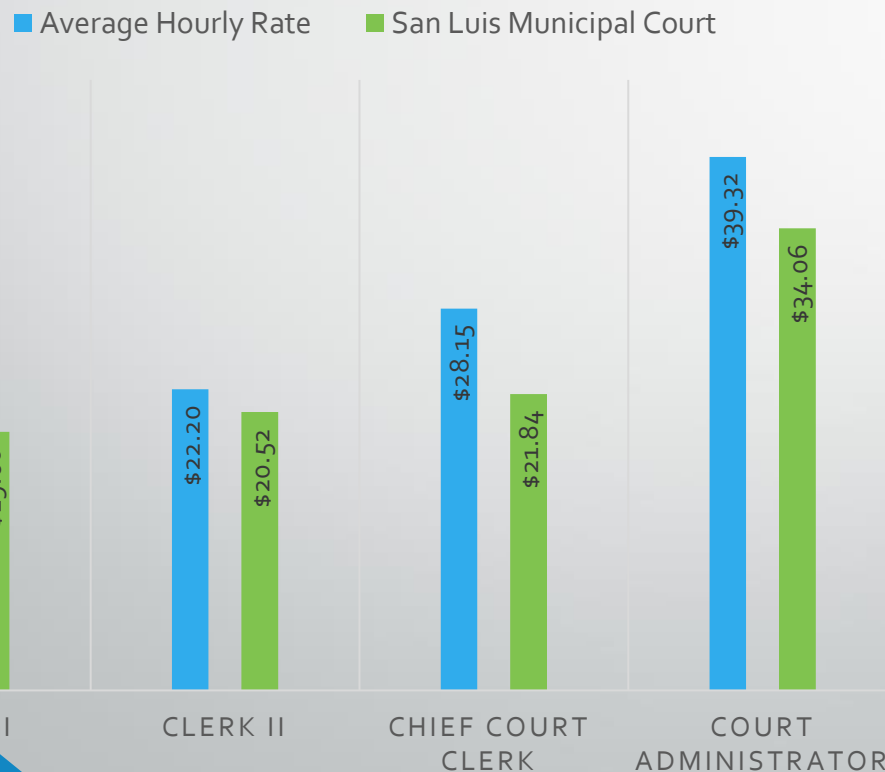
By analyzing two years of filing data, city population, average filings, and average filings per clerk, we established a baseline for comparison.

The study concluded that the San Luis Municipal Court has a higher average across the board when compared to the surveyed municipalities.



Internal Salary Study Cont.

San Luis Municipal Court employees manage a higher average caseload per employee while simultaneously receiving lesser pay compared to our peer courts.

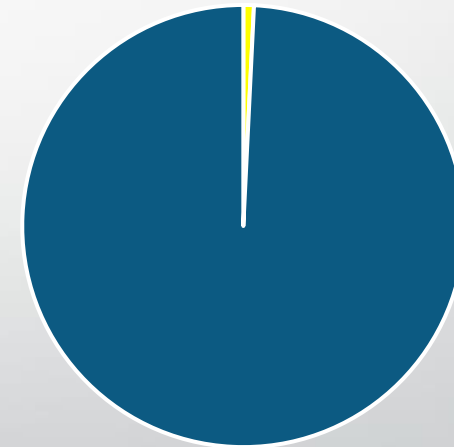


- Chief Court Clerk: A salary disparity of \$6.31, which equates to a 28.89% gap.
- Court Administrator: A salary disparity of \$5.26, which equates to a 15.44% gap.

FY 2025 Budget Overview: City vs. Court Expenditures

- As the chart shows, the Court's portion represents a very small fraction, .77%, of the overall city budget, while the remaining 99.23% covers all other city departments and services.
- Court Operations account for less than 1% of the overall city budget

Budget Allocation



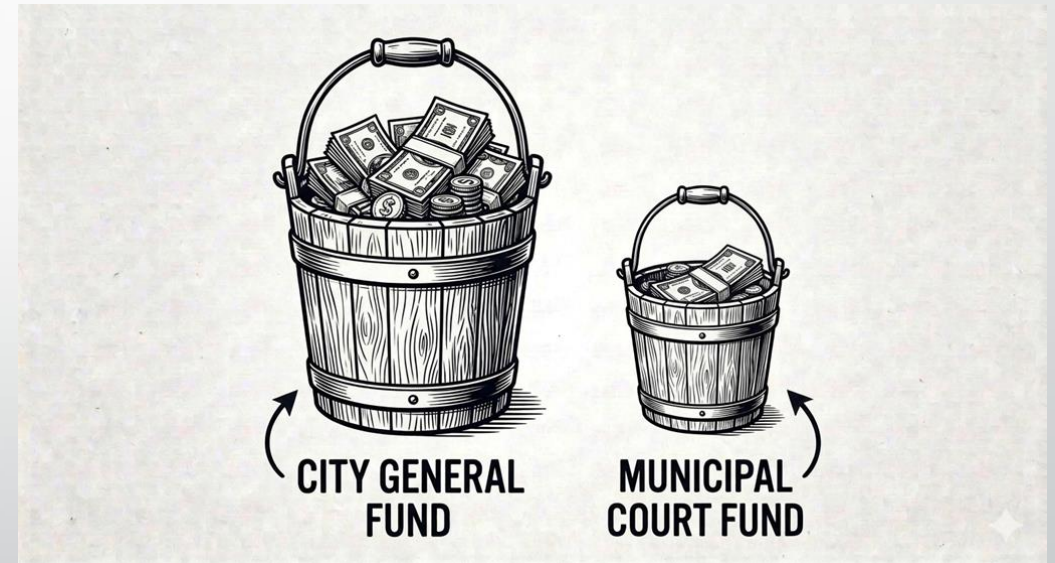
■ Court Expenditures ■ Other City Expenditures

Funding

We propose utilizing the Municipal Court Fund to cover the Chief Court Clerk's position and raise for FY 2026–2027, contingent upon the City incorporating these expenses into the general budget in subsequent budgets.

City Code 2.30.040 Municipal Court fund

- (A) There is hereby established a Municipal Court fund, which shall be used exclusively to recover legitimate court costs and to enhance the technological, operational, security and collections capabilities of the City Municipal Court.
- (B) The Municipal Court fund shall be established as a designated fund account with the City Treasurer. The Municipal Court shall collect designated Municipal Court fees and deposit them in the Municipal Court fund account. The City Treasurer shall invest the monies in the fund in the same manner as other City funds. Interest earned on fund monies shall be deposited in the fund.
- (C) The Municipal Court, with the concurrence of the City Council, shall administer the fund and may make expenditures from the fund for the purpose provided in this section.



Capital Improvement Plan

New Courthouse Design &
Network Circuit Upgrade



CITY OF
SAN LUIS
ARIZONA



Capital Improvement Plan: New Courthouse

Facility Analysis: Costs & Constraints

- **Sunk Costs & Future Liability:**
 - **\$73,902.82** already spent on OSHA-mandated corrections.
 - **\$136,412.43** in additional estimated repairs required for the current site.
- **Irreparable Structural Deficiencies:**
 - **Asbestos Contamination:** Prohibits necessary structural demolition or expansion.
 - **Repurposed Layout:** Current design is fundamentally unfit for modern court operations.
- **Operational Hindrance:** Insufficient space for clerks, jury assembly, and private attorney-client conferences.





Courtroom

Due to physical space constraints, the courtroom often reaches maximum capacity during regular hearings. This limitation hinders the courts attempt to host the required number of jurors during jury trials.



Encapsulation of Asbestos

In coordination with the City Risk Department, the court has retested for asbestos and successfully encapsulated the affected materials. However, an exposure risk remains if the area is subjected to further disturbances.



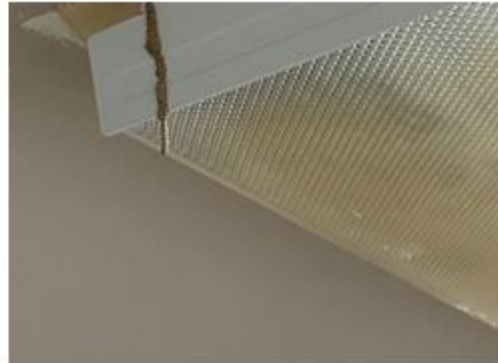
Previous Probation Department

The courthouse's multifaceted layout includes numerous offices, but this configuration limits the building's overall capacity and flexibility for courtroom use.



Ceiling Leaks

Multiple structural leaks in the roof pose a significant risk to the courthouse's technological infrastructure; immediate sealing is required to prevent further damage.



Termites

The unresolved roof leaks have created a persistent moisture problem, leading to termite activity that now requires continuous and costly chemical treatments.



Office

The current office layout, originally designed for individual occupancy, severely restricts our operational capacity. We are now forced to house multiple clerks in spaces intended for a single person, resulting in limited workspace.



Exterior Doors

The exterior doors do not automatically close as they should, resulting in a security risk. This issue persists despite multiple attempts by Facilities to adjust the frames and doors.



Exterior Doors

Exterior door damage creates a security risk and allows cooled air to escape the building, increasing the costs required to keep the facility cool.



Holding Cell

The holding cell is located on the south side of the building; however, there is no sally port. As a result, officers must bring detainees through the secured employee parking lot or the front entrance, creating a significant security risk.



Lobby

The lobby serves as the main connection between the south and north sides of the building, lacking a secured pathway to separate public, detainees, and judicial employees.



Customer Service Windows

The court currently lacks a dedicated ADA-compliant window to properly assist all individuals.



Southside of Building

The building lacks a PA system or any internal communication system between the north and south sides. This creates a significant safety risk during evacuations, specifically because the court does not have a fire suppression system or a fire alarm.

Justice Center

The new courthouse design would serve as the city's justice center, housing the court, the prosecutor's office, and victim advocacy services.

- **ADA Accessibility:** Fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act for public and staff access.
- **Enhanced Security:** Integrated Sally Port and a modern, functional holding cell for secure transport and detainment.
- **Life Safety Systems:** Installation of a comprehensive fire suppression system.
- **Environmental Safety:** Verified Asbestos-Free construction to ensure long-term occupant health and safety.








Vision for San Luis Municipal Court

By investing in the necessary staffing and facility resources today, the City empowers the Court to resolve long-standing backlogs and deliver a system of meaningful accountability that gives back to our community.

BENEFITS OF SPECIALTY COURTS

Specialty courts—Mental Health Court, Drug Court, and Homeless Court—address underlying issues to improve lives and strengthen communities.

 MENTAL HEALTH COURT	 DRUG COURT	 HOMELESS COURT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Improves access to mental health treatment✓ Reduces symptoms and promotes stability✓ Lowers chances of reoffending✓ Reduces jail and prison populations✓ Supports recovery and long-term success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Connects people to addiction treatment✓ Reduces substance use✓ Lowers chances of reoffending✓ Saves money on incarceration and related costs✓ Strengthens families and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Connects people to housing and services✓ Addresses underlying needs like shelters and healthcare✓ Reduces street homelessness✓ Lowers arrests and court costs✓ Promotes stability and self-sufficiency

 **By addressing root causes, specialty courts reduce recidivism, lower costs, and create safer, healthier communities.** 

- **Mandated Excellence:** Hiring essential personnel to meet all constitutional and statutory duties.
- **Community Restitution Program:** Implementing a Community Restitution Program in Lieu of Monetary Obligations as per A.R.S § 13-824 to strengthen local ties.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Executing an IGA with the Adult Probation Department for enhanced supervision.
- **Restorative Justice:** Staffing the court to effectively manage Mental Health, Drug, and Homeless Court referrals.

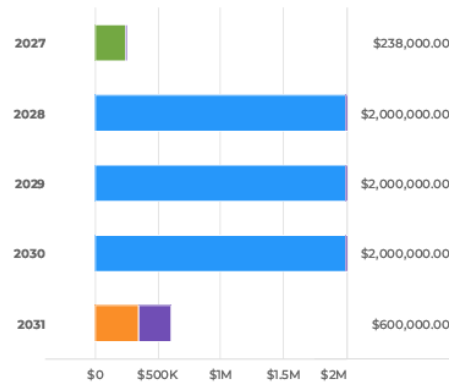
Funding

We propose utilizing the Municipal Court Fund to cover the New Courthouse Design for FY 2026–2027, contingent upon the City incorporating the construction expenses into the general budget in subsequent budgets.

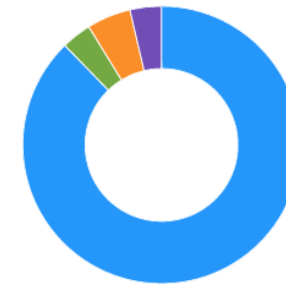
Capital Cost

FY2027 Budget **\$238,000** Total Budget (all years) **\$6.838M** Project Total **\$6.838M**

Capital Cost by Year



Capital Cost for Budgeted Years



- Construction/Maintenance (88%) \$6,000,000
- Design (3%) \$238,000.00
- Furniture and Fixtures (5%) \$350,000.00
- Other (4%) \$250,000.00
- TOTAL \$6,838,000.00**

Capital Cost Breakdown

Capital Cost	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	FY2031	Total
Design	\$238,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$238,000
Construction/Maintenance	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$6,000,000
Furniture and Fixtures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$350,000	\$350,000
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000
Total	\$238,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$600,000	\$6,838,000

Network Circuit Upgrade

Grant Funding & Project Continuity

- **Project:** State Network Circuit Upgrade - Grant Funded.
- **Current Status:** On schedule for June 5th implementation.
- **Request:** Formal approval to carry over remaining grant balances.
- **Rationale:** To preserve the awarded funds beyond the June 30th fiscal year-end, per the 3-year contract allowance.
- **Goal:** Ensure zero loss of state funding regardless of final vendor processing dates.

Questions?

