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## **Arapahoe County Commissioners, District Attorney celebrate grand opening of new office Oct. 22**

*Ceremony marks the next step in an innovative, cost-saving project to address the space needs of the Arapahoe County judicial system.*

CENTENNIAL, CO --- As part of the next step in an innovative \$13.8 million project to address the space needs of the courts, the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners and 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney Carol Chambers celebrated the grand opening of the DA's new office with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday.

Commissioners Susan Beckman, Rod Bockenfeld, Pat Noonan and Frank Weddig, along with District Attorney Carol Chambers, were joined by more than 100 guests to commemorate the opening of the District Attorney's new office at 6450 S. Revere Parkway, Centennial.

"The Arapahoe County Commissioners have done a phenomenal job of providing the District Attorney's Office with an extremely pleasant, functional work space at a very reasonable cost to taxpayers," said Carol Chambers, District Attorney for the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, which includes Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln counties. "We thoroughly enjoyed working with their professional, talented and efficient team. In addition, all of our employees pitched in to help with this project, and are proud of what we have created together."

Thursday's ceremony marks the completion of another phase in a \$13.8 million courts and judicial project that eventually will provide 10 additional courtrooms, one expanded courtroom, a new jury room, and improved court efficiency by consolidating most court functions within the Arapahoe County Justice Center – all without increasing taxes.

"This project is an excellent example of Arapahoe County's ongoing effort to improve efficiencies and reduce the cost of operation in our judicial system," said Commissioner Susan Beckman, who serves as Board Chairman. "Thanks to Carol Chambers and the District Attorney's Office and their willingness to relocate their offices, we were able to free up 40,000 square feet of space for the courts without additional cost to taxpayers."

Arapahoe County, like most counties in Colorado and across the nation, is grappling with a shortage of court and jail space. Since 2005, Arapahoe County has been working to determine how best to meet the space needs of the courts and jails, and to accommodate an additional four new judges.

In 2005, the Board of County Commissioners appointed the Judicial Facilities Review Committee – a 30-member group, which included professionals knowledgeable in court and detention operations, as well as mayors, city council members, legal and law enforcement officials.

The Committee spent two years researching the short and long-term needs for both the courts and jails and wrapped up its work in 2007. The Committee presented the Commissioners with three proposals, which included establishing a Justice Coordinating Committee, developing short and long-term space solutions to address court and jail needs, and finding creative solutions to manage court cases and the jail population.

At the time, the committee projected that it would cost Arapahoe County more than \$500 million over 20 years to address its court and jail space needs, of which \$193 million was designated for a new judicial center.

Instead of moving forward, Arapahoe County took a step back to determine if there were other ways in which to address the Courts' space needs, and was able to scale down a \$193 million project into \$13.8 million, which included relocating the District Attorney's Office off the Justice Center Campus.

Arapahoe County purchased the 45,000-square-foot, three-story building earlier this year for \$5.2 million and completed \$2.5 million in renovations to serve as the new home for the District Attorney's 200-plus employees.

Last February, Arapahoe County completed the first phase, which added three new courtrooms to the Justice Center for domestic court cases. Construction is currently underway on an expanded courtroom and jury assembly room in the Courthouse. The final phase, which includes the addition of six new courtrooms on the second floor of the Administration II Building on the Justice Center campus, also is underway and is expected to be completed by fall 2010.

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**Photo cutlines:**

<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/District%20Attorney%20Open%20House/>

Arapahoe County Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld, Commissioner and Board Chairman Susan Beckman, 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney Carol Chambers, Commissioner Pat Noonan and Commissioner Frank Weddig celebrate the grand opening of the new 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office in Arapahoe County.