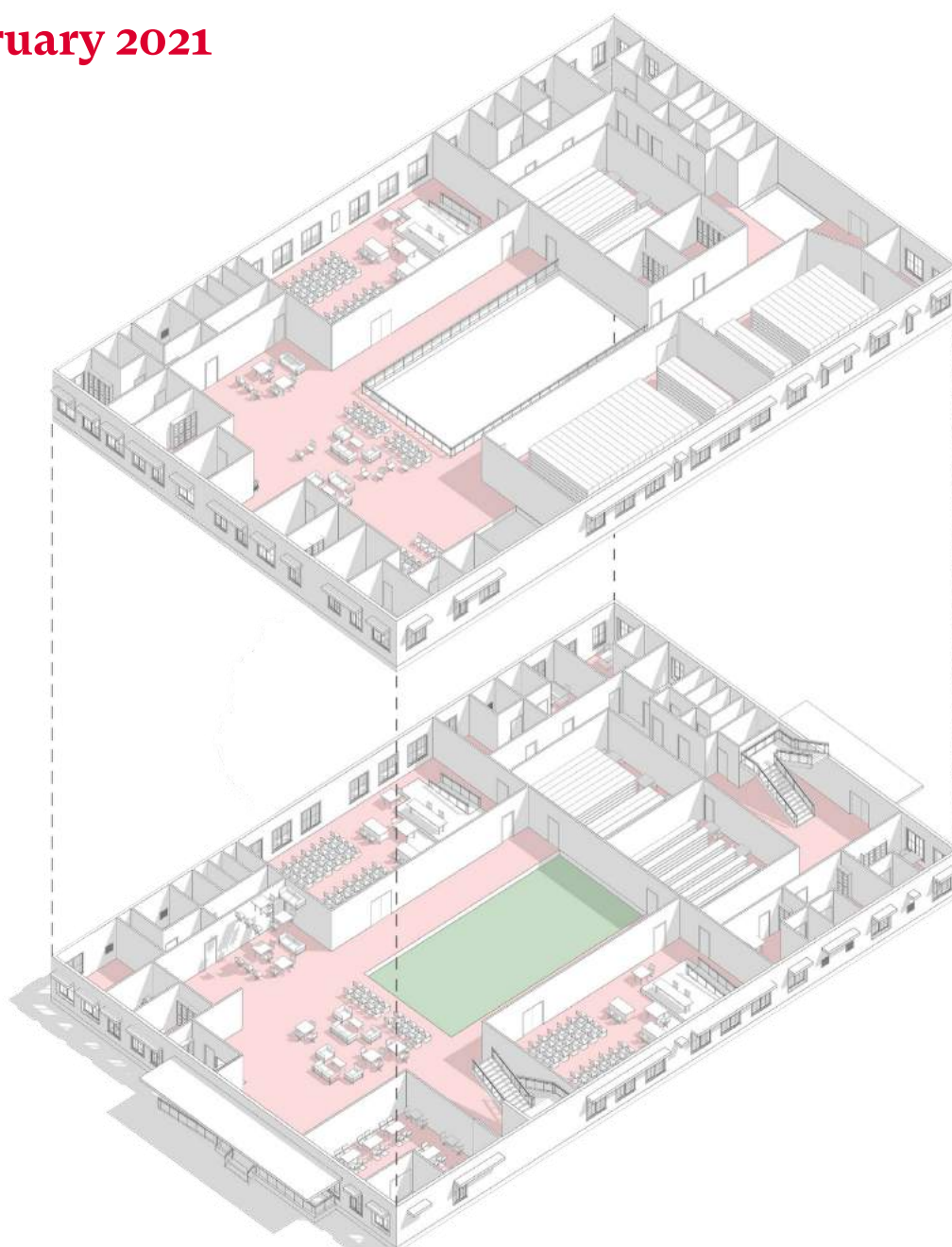


Re-Imagining Consumer Forums

Introducing a Spatial Design Approach to Court Infrastructure

February 2021



**This report is
an independent,
non-commissioned
piece of work by the
Vidhi Centre
for Legal Policy,
an independent
think-tank doing
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Introducing a Spatial Design Approach to Court Infrastructure

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The Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy is an independent think tank doing legal research to make better laws and improve governance for the public good. The JALDI Initiative is a multi-year initiative that aims to advocate for and implement evidence-based reforms to eliminate the existing backlog in courts and ensure that cases are disposed within reasonable timelines. This report is part of JALDI's work under the JALDI Innovation Lab which undertakes multi-disciplinary collaborative projects to translate research into actionable solutions.

Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology is an institute of higher education in Bengaluru that offers inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary education in the fields of art, design, humanities, sciences, media, education, environment, policy, business, and technology.

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The errors, if any, rest with the authors.

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Glossary of Terms

Design Glossary

Anthropometry	Anthropometry refers to the measurement of the size and proportions of the human body.
Axis	An axis establishes a line between a beginning and an end. It allows a visitor to see where her destination is located (whether the filing section or the courtroom itself) and can help her find her way there.
Characteristic Ratio	Ratio is the quantitative comparison of two similar things, while proportion refers to the equality of ratios. A proportioning system is based on a characteristic ratio, i.e., a permanent quality (e.g., a length, an area) that can be transmitted.
Circadian Rhythms	Circadian rhythms are approximately 24-hour cycles in physiology and behaviour that enable an organism to predict and adapt to periodic changes in its environment. They influence everything from locomotion and sleep/wake cycles to hormonal rhythms, metabolism, and cognitive performance.
Circulation	Circulation is used to mean “movement through a building”. It can be conceptualized as a thread that links together any series of interior or exterior spaces.
Daylighting	Daylighting refers to the science, theory, or method of providing illumination through the use of the light of day i.e. sunlight, skylight (the light from the sky, reflected and diffused by air molecules), or ground light (sunlight or skylight reflected by ground surfaces).
Functional Spaces	Functional spaces include the courtrooms and all rooms that are necessarily occupied for the entire course of a working day.
Guy Ropes	A guy rope is a rope or cable used in a structure having vertical or inclined masts, to absorb the horizontal component of thrust and transfer the force to the ground.
Handrail	A handrail provides a handhold and serves as a support.
Identity	The identity of the consumer forum refers to establishing its presence by its physical appearance alone.
Legibility	Legibility refers to the ease with which users can understand and use a building.
Liminal Spaces	Liminal spaces include all movement passages and temporarily occupied zones.
Movement	‘Movement’ consists of all setbacks, pathways, walkways, corridors, all staircases, ramps, including landings, i.e., spaces which are primarily used for accessing one or more parts of the consumer forum from another part.
Nosing	The nosing is the usually rounded edge of a tread that extends over the riser in a stair.

Glossary of Terms

Passive Cooling Passive cooling relies on non-mechanical, non-electrical means such as natural ventilation, air cooling, and shading to improve indoor thermal comfort.

Pauses Pauses refer to those parts of the consumer forum which are either essential services (such as drinking water or toilets), or intermediate spaces (like the reception lobby).

Proportion Proportion creates a sense of identity by inducing order and harmony among the elements in a visual construction. Proportioning systems rely on a characteristic ratio, which establishes a consistent set of visual relationships between the parts of a building, as well as between the parts and the whole.

Rhythm Rhythm is a design tool which follows the system of repeating certain elements within a structure to establish a certain sense of comfort and familiarity such as doors, windows, furniture, etc.

Riser A riser is the vertical face of a step in a stair.

Scale Scale is a primary tool of physical design which establishes identity, legibility and security. It uses the principles of proportion to determine height and size of rooms, doors and windows which affects humans psychologically, influencing their perception of the space in which they find themselves.

Spatial Design Spatial design refers to the relationships between various functions of the consumer forum and how they may be arranged with respect to one another to ensure optimal movement and interaction of people

Spatial Roles Spatial roles refer to the roles that users of a space may play, depending on their relationships with one another. The 'confronting' (e.g. in a court room), 'collaborating' (e.g. staff in a record room), or 'observing' (e.g. waiting consumers) roles may be seen in a consumer forum. The arrangement of users within the space must necessarily reflect their spatial roles.

Tactile Flooring Tactile flooring is used to provide a change of surface for persons with vision impairments or situational disabilities, in order to guide them to facilities and also to alert them to hazards. It is designed to have a distinctive surface pattern of "strips" and "truncated domes" or "cones" which are easily detectable underfoot.

Tread A tread is the horizontal upper surface of a step in a stair, on which the foot is placed.

Visual Axis A visual axis is established when a user stands within a building and refers to any of the infinite number of lines between the user and all that is visible to her.

Legal Glossary

Causelist Causelist refers to a list of cases to be heard by a court on a particular day.

Circuit Bench Circuit Bench is a temporary bench that may be set up in areas that are far off from the permanent bench or which may not have enough number of cases to justify the setting up of a permanent bench.

Glossary of Terms

Copying Section	Copying section is where the parties may obtain certified copies of legal documents such as orders, judgements, etc.
Dispatch Section	Dispatch section is in charge of sending out all official communication from the court complex including notices, summons, correspondence to other courts, etc.
District Commission	District Commission refers to the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission established by the State Government in each district of the State.
E-Filing Kiosk	E-filing kiosk is a platform that enables filing of a case online.
Filing Section	Filing section is a counter within every court complex for receiving complaints, appeals, revisions, etc. This section may also maintain institution registers for issue or dispatch of notices in some courts.
Information Kiosk	Information kiosk is a stand-alone counter where litigants can obtain information related to various court processes, fee details, layout of the court, consumer rights, etc.
Mediation	Mediation refers to the procedure in which dispute resolution is undertaken through discussion between the parties with the assistance of a trained impartial third person(s) acting as mediator(s).
Member	Members are judicial or non-judicial(technical) persons appointed to adjudicate cases in any Tribunal. In a consumer forum, a member includes the President and all other members of the National, State or District Commission.
National Commission	National Commission refers to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission which functions out of the National Capital Region.
Pending Section	Pending section is used to store the files for ongoing cases. The court complex may have a combined pending section for multiple courtrooms or individual pending sections for each courtroom.
President	President refers to the head of a Tribunal and in this context the President of the consumer forum.
Record Room	Record room is used to store the files for decided cases.
Registrar	Registrar is the head of the ministerial establishment of a court who exercises such powers and functions which are conferred upon her by the Chief Justice of the Court or the President of the Tribunal.
Sheristedar	Sheristedar is an administrative officer of the court who undertakes the function of receiving and checking out court pleas. She also acts as the officer responsible for the case files' movement in and out of the court on a daily basis. This post may be named differently in other States. For example, Sheristedars are referred to as Ahlmads in Delhi.
State Commission	State Commission refers to a State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. The Commission generally functions out of the State capital.
Stenographer	Stenographer is an officer of the court who records the court proceedings.

Role of Court Infrastructure in the Justice System

A person's first impression of the court signifies the legitimacy of rules that it represents.¹ For centuries, there were no custom-built courthouses and multiple courts were functioning out of the same room. It was not until the latter part of the 20th century that civil servants began to draw on their collective experience of court processes to form a universal template.² This led to the evolution of court designs as a response to the gradual empowerment of judicial function and reflected the legislative will of each period.³ Now with the evolution of court architecture, it has been identified that due process of law is closely linked to location and design of courts.⁴ There are two aspects to court designs and legal functioning: first, the aesthetic design in terms of iconography to courts and second, the manner in which that identity is construed in the physical design of the space.

The spatial segmentation, segregated circulation⁵ and obscurity of processes may make court complexes illegible to the occasional user.⁶ Litigants, who are typically outsiders to the legal community, feel inhibited and marginalized. An assessment of a law should account for its lived experience by people. The physical site provides the context in which dispute resolution takes place, and strongly influences the perception of the law,

and in turn, its objective and implementation. The space should communicate ideas of fairness and justice while balancing the differential power relations and the needs of the court system.

Lack of public discourse and reforms

Discussions of justice systems focus predominantly on the legal framework, the cases handled by courts and the judgments delivered. The use of the court's physical space where legal and judicial functions play out has not been given the priority it deserves.⁷ However, the time is ripe to rethink this priority and give court infrastructure its due attention. It is important to acknowledge that different actors enter, engage and experience a system in very different ways, and the organization of the physical space plays an important role in mediating these relations.⁸ For instance, an overpowering structure plays the role of a dominant figure and indirectly dictates power hierarchies.⁹ This can be seen in traditional courtroom designs through segregation of spaces, height of the bench and location of parties. Therefore, one of the primary reasons for the need to prioritise reforms in court infrastructure is to revisit the hierarchical relations between different actors such as judges, advocates, litigants, court staff, etc. This

¹ Linda Mulcahy, "Architects of Justice: The Politics of Courtroom Design" [2007] *Social and Legal Studies* 383.

² *ibid.*

³ Rahela Khorakiwala, "Judicial Iconography and Access to Justice in the Bombay High Court" [2017] *South Asia Chronicle* 351.

⁴ Norman W. Spaulding "The Enclosure of Justice: Courthouse Architecture, Due Process, and the dead metaphor of Trial" [2012] *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 24(1) 311; Patricia Branco, "Courthouses as Spaces of Recognition, Functionality and Access to Law and Justice: A Portuguese Reflection" [2016] *Vol 6 Socio Legal Studies* 426.

⁵ Francis D K Ching, "Architecture: Form, Space, & Order" [2015] 2nd Edition, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 240.

⁶ Mulcahy (n 1).

⁷ Keith Bybee, "Judging in Place: Architecture, Design, and the Operation of Courts" [2012] *Vol 37 Law and Social Inquiry* 1014.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ (n 1).

exercise is essential in the light of the recent paradigm shift in the way justice system is perceived; justice is seen as a service to be imparted to anyone who seeks it and in consonance with this perception, the physical space needs to be far more inviting than it currently is.

Secondly, the adjudication process is also embedded within elaborate administrative and bureaucratic functions, and the spatial design should account for the needs of efficient functioning of these processes. The infrastructure and design should address the operational needs to enable a smooth functioning system. Physical conditions of buildings, internal organisation of rooms and furniture layouts are key factors that can increase the efficiency in administrative processes which support judicial function.¹⁰ This leaves an impression about the court's functionality on the observers such as litigants, advocates and the general public.

Lastly, taking into consideration the likely effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, adjudication in India is going to have a hybrid model of functioning - both virtual and physical courts co-existing. All courts should be prepared to make this shift by adapting the right infrastructure, digital hardware and necessary software.

Through our previous work,¹¹ we have brought considerable public attention to the issue of poor judicial infrastructure by qualitatively assessing 665 district courts. Based on several criteria identified by a Supreme Court Committee,¹² a survey was conducted, and the results revealed some appalling statistics regarding lack of navigation tools, unhygienic washroom conditions, absence of barrier-free

access for persons with disabilities and poor security facilities for courtrooms. From its findings and overall ranking, Delhi, Kerala, Meghalaya, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh are among the best-performing states in India. States with the poorest overall judicial infrastructure are Bihar, Manipur, Nagaland, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

Our key takeaways from the previous study propelled us to think about possible solutions to address these issues. A domain as vast as court infrastructure requires in-depth and multidimensional research. Further, change cannot happen across all kinds of courts at once. With these parameters in mind, a pragmatic approach is to focus on special courts. While special legislation envisages courts as litigant-friendly spaces, this needs articulation in the architectural design and layout of courts. Novel thinking about courts must start small and this report is a 'proof of concept', for the need for specialisation in court infrastructure.

In this context, a court that warrants a conscious shift of imagination was chosen for this report - **consumer forums**. These forums have a unique attribute having been established with the prime objective of encouraging litigants to directly represent their cases to receive timely and cost-effective justice. Therefore, these courts should be forthcoming, not just in the judicial process but also in its physical space, to be accommodating and accessible for laypersons who do not have any knowledge of court procedures. These unique features of the consumer forum and their growing importance led us to choose them. This report is a first of its kind attempt at reimagining court infrastructure to cater to the objectives of the legislations providing for their establishment.

¹⁰ Peter Robson, Patricia Branco & Johnny Rodger, "The Architecture of Courts in in Portugal and Scotland. Research Handbook on Law and Courts" [2019] Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

¹¹ Diksha Sanyal, Sumathi Chandrasekharan & Reshma Sekhar, "Building Better Courts: Surveying the infrastructure of India's District Courts" [2019] <<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/building-better-courts-surveying-the-infrastructure-of-indias-district-courts/>> accessed 18 July 2020; Chitrakshi Jain, Shreya Tripathy & Tarika Jain, "Budgeting Better for Courts- An evaluation of the Rs 7460 crores released under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Judicial Infrastructure" [2019] <<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/building-better-courts-surveying-the-infrastructure-of-indias-district-courts/>> accessed 18 July 2020.

¹² Report of the Sub-Committee of NCMS Committee, "Court Development Planning System (Infrastructure & Budgeting)" [2012] <<https://main.sci.gov.in/pdf/NCMS/Case%20Management%20System.pdf>> accessed 15 July 2020.

Objective of the Report

This report examines the link between consumer forum infrastructure through the lens of the objectives of consumer protection legislations in India. In imagining this, we analyse who the users of these courts are, what spaces they occupy and what are the functions and requirements of such spaces. Drawing from this, we aim to evolve a comprehensive framework that guides the design and structural requirements of a consumer forum.

Our observations from the field study at Karnataka State Commission corroborates the fact that no definitive thought has gone into identifying or constructing buildings designated to function as consumer forums. This report identifies the specific shortcomings in infrastructure for the pilot study.

Through the course of this report, the following

questions on judicial infrastructure, specific to consumer forums have been explored:

1. What should the design framework for a consumer forum look like?
2. How can the objectives behind the consumer protection legislations be reflected in the architecture of the buildings where such forums are housed?
3. What should be the non-negotiable aspects of a consumer forum that should necessarily feature in the design framework?
4. What are the design principles that are to be borne in mind while designing a consumer forum?
5. How can consumer forum infrastructure provide for technology integration into judicial and administrative processes?

Scope: The primary objective of this report aims to inform the stakeholders that specific thinking on court design and architecture is important and that it plays a critical role in making courts function more efficiently. This is illustrated through the designs which re-imagine spaces in consumer forums. Though the site visits have been limited to consumer forums based out of Karnataka, care has been taken to ensure that the designs are modelled after the objectives of the Act, allowing consumer forums anywhere to adapt them (please refer to the section on **Limitations** for

details). This report focuses extensively on spatial design of consumer forums. While we have touched upon layout, information architecture and inclusive design principles, the latter two have not been dealt in detail as they are beyond the scope of this report.

The designs have been developed to serve as a framework only, to brief a reader about the infrastructural considerations that are necessary to make consumer forums better designed, inclusive and efficient public spaces. These designs are flexible and adaptable

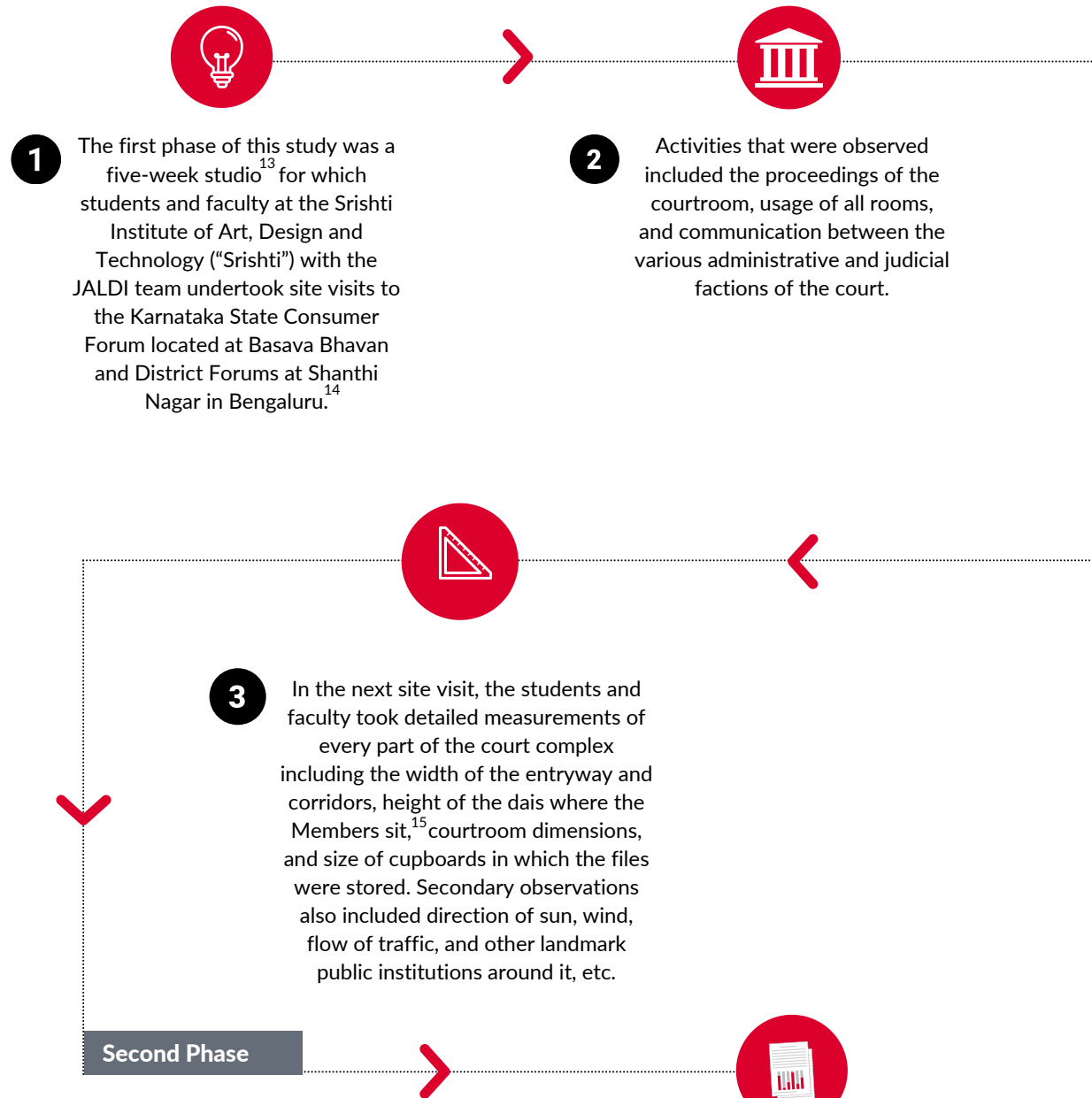
concepts built based on design principles. It is important to note that while the primary objective of the report has been focused on consumer forum design, users and decision makers in charge of civil and criminal courts will find the framework useful as a starting point. This includes portions of the courtroom which are mostly applicable to any court such as sections in charge of filing, copying, dispatch and storage.

The second objective of the report is to visualise the forum designs through the lens of the following users namely, consumers, advocates, judicial and administrative staff,

Members and President. This implies that the designs cater to their needs and functions performed by them individually and collectively in the forum.

The third and the final objective of the report aims to serve as a conversation starter towards thinking about judicial infrastructure as a collaborative exercise between those who use the system and those with the required expertise in design and architecture. This report is intended to be a first in a series which will experiment with collaborations aimed at reimagining court infrastructure.

First Phase



¹³ Studio is a workshop or a unit that is conducted by faculty for students at Srishti.

¹⁴ Two preliminary visits were carried out to observe the court while it is sitting and post court hours. Following these preliminary visits special permission was sought to measure the entire site in order to be able to design a consumer forum.

¹⁵ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Section 2(27).

¹⁶ Deepika Kinhal & Aditya Ranjan, "Enforcing Caveat Venditor" [2020] <<https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/enforcing-caveat-venditor/>> accessed 03 November 2020.

Consumer Forums and Infrastructure

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, envisaged the setting up of a National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission ("National Commission"), State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission ("State Commission") and District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission ("District Commission") for 'timely' and 'effective' settlement of consumer disputes. The legislative intent indicates a prominent role for consumers to enable them to protect their interests.¹⁷ Even though the 1986 Act has now been replaced with an updated legislation in 2019, the objectives of both the legislations, for the purpose of this report, have remained the same.

A. Public Discourse on Consumer Court Infrastructure

The issues with respect to consumer forum infrastructure are three-pronged: one, lack of funds, two, lack of space and three, delay in allocation of land.

1. Lack of Funds & Infrastructure

In the past, legal dignitaries in the judiciary and government have stressed on the importance of court infrastructure.¹⁸ In 2012, a survey report by CUTS International¹⁹ threw light on the need for extra attention to the infrastructure to ensure efficient, fair and inexpensive functioning of consumer forums. The report highlighted that due to the changing economic scenario there has been a rise in the number of complaints

warranting this extra attention. On being asked specifically regarding the condition of infrastructure of consumer forums in 2013, the Minister for Consumer Affairs stated that the Central Government has been providing financial assistance to the States and Union Territories for this purpose.²⁰

However, the infrastructure of the consumer fora has been a subject of litigation. In *Dr. J. J. Merchant v. Shrinath Chaturvedi*,²¹ the Supreme Court was approached by the aggrieved parties alleging inordinate delay in their case due to the lack of infrastructure in consumer forums and vacancies in the post of the President and members. The Apex Court directed the government to take immediate measures for rectifying pendency and achieving the objectives of the Act. It further directed the National Commission to exercise administrative control over State and District fora and to address the issues of infrastructure.

2. Lack of Space

In the case of *State of U.P. v. All U.P. Consumer Protection Bar Association*,²² the Supreme Court appointed a three-member committee headed by Justice Pasayat to examine deficiencies in functioning of consumer forums, including infrastructure. While examining the findings of the report, the Court observed:

¹⁷ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 No. 35 of 2019.

¹⁸ Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has stated that adequate infrastructure is a prerequisite for access to justice and that development of it must be undertaken through centrally sponsored schemes. IANS, 'Ravi Shankar Prasad Backs All India Exam to Recruit Judges for Subordinate Courts' (News 18, 18 July 2019) <<https://www.news18.com/news/india/ravi-shankar-prasad-backs-all-india-exam-to-recruit-judges-for-subordinate-courts-2235581.html>> accessed 15 July 2020.

¹⁹ State of the Indian Consumer, CUTS International Jaipur, 2012, <https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/Report_State_of_the_Indian_Consumer-2012.pdf> accessed on 5 October, 2020.

²⁰ P. P. Chaudhary, Minister of State for Law & Justice and Corporate Affairs, Starred question 386, Improving Judicial Infrastructure for Quick Disposal of Cases, Rajya Sabha (07 April, 2017) <https://rsdebate.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/619891/2/PQ_228_11032013_U1425_p111_p113.pdf> accessed on 13 July 2020.

²¹ *Dr. J. J. Merchant v. Shrinath Chaturvedi* [2002] SCC 635.

²² *State of U.P. v. All U.P. Consumer Protection Bar Association* [2018] SCC OnLine SC 570.

"The Committee, during its visits to states, has found that there are no proper court-rooms with lights and fans, chairs and tables..... The Record-Rooms are, also, either too small and have no almirah, shelves or compactors to keep the files. The files are kept in open and get misplaced or eaten by termites"

In a subsequent order, the Apex Court issued a new set of directions, amongst which it expressed concern on the lack of storage space. It observed that the existing storage was unable to accommodate the rising number of cases coming to consumer forums which led to files lying around in corridors. To this effect, the court ordered creation of additional storage space to organise and avoid losing files.²³ Lack of space, however, has continued to be a primary hindrance for consumer forums, so much so that in some instances, increased case pendency can be directly attributed to lack of physical space for multiple benches to operate.²⁴

A PIL filed in Bombay High Court in 2012 noted the difficulties faced due to insufficient space and stressed upon the need to give importance to litigants in court designs.²⁵ Another PIL filed at the *Bombay High Court in Mumbai Grahak Panchayat and Anr. v. State of Maharashtra*²⁶ concerned itself with the deteriorating infrastructure conditions in State and District Consumer Fora.²⁷ The court noted that the

the Government cannot argue lack of financial and administrative capacity for not fulfilling its constitutional obligations. It thus immediately directed the state to provide land and all necessary infrastructure for efficient functioning of courts and tribunals.

3. Delay in Allocation of Land

In 2014, a Parliamentary Standing Committee Report stated that State Governments have the responsibility of identifying and providing suitable land for construction of the court buildings.²⁸ However, the Supreme Court has noted that the State Governments had not provided land or were slow in the allocation process which caused undue delay in building consumer forums.²⁹ The 2014 Report further recommends vertical construction for efficient utilisation of small spaces of land.³⁰

B. Consumer Forums in Bengaluru & Infrastructure

The Karnataka State Commission³¹ operates from Basava Bhavan in Bengaluru – consisting of a 3-member Principal Bench with the responsibility of hearing complaints of pecuniary limit of upto Rs. 10 crores³² and appeals from 31 District Consumer Redressal Forums.³³ It has close to 8000 pending cases and receives about 3274 fresh filings per year.³⁴ To be able to dispose more cases, the President set up an additional bench in the same court complex. In all, the court complex houses 3 courthalls,

²³ ibid Order dated 18.05.2018.

²⁴ Registrar of Karnataka State Commission said "It is very difficult to function in such a small space. There are 8,408 cases pending before the state commission and there is just one principal bench to hear them. The commission can dispose of only about 200 cases a month. Umesh Yadav, 'Karnataka's state consumer forums cry for infrastructure' (Economic Times, 6 June 2017) <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/miscellaneous/karnatakas-state-consumer-courts-cry-for-infrastructure/articleshow/59013738.cms?from=mdr>> accessed on 03 August 2020.

²⁵ Ahmad M. Abdi v. The State of Maharashtra and Others [2012] PIL No 57 at Bombay High Court.

²⁶ Mumbai Grahak Panchayat v. State of Maharashtra [2017] SCC OnLine Bom 726.

²⁷ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Section 2(15); Section 28(1).

²⁸ Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, 67th Report, Infrastructure Development and Strengthening of Subordinate Judiciary (Parliament of India Rajya Sabha, 06 February 2014 <http://164.100.47.5/committee_web/ReportFile/18/18/67_2016_6_12.pdf> accessed 03 August 2020.

²⁹ State of Uttar Pradesh v. All U.P. Consumer Protection Bar Association [2018] SCC OnLine SC 570.

³⁰ (n 28).

³¹ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Section 2(44); Section 42(2).

³² The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Section 47(1)(a)(i).

³³ Umesh Yadav, 'Karnataka's state consumer forums cry for infrastructure' (Economic Times, 6 June 2017)

<<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/miscellaneous/karnatakas-state-consumer-courts-cry-for-infrastructure/articleshow/59013738.cms?from=mdr>> accessed on 02 August 2020.

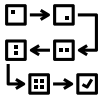
³⁴ Total number of fresh filings before the Karnataka State Consumer Commission for the year 2016- 3678, 2017- 3370, and 2018- 2774; Karnataka State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, 'STATISTICS' (KSCDRC) <<https://kscdrc.kar.nic.in/stat.htm>> accessed on 02 September 2020.

During the field visits, we made several observations on the status of the infrastructure meant to cater to the demands of the personnel as well as the caseload that the State Commission handles daily. These observations are presented below under the following headings:

I. Core Court Infrastructure



- ▶ **Spatial Management:** The existing consumer forum rooms are not of a suitable size for the daily influx of persons and documentation. The courtrooms that can only fit in around 35-40 people at once see a hundred cases a day or more. The court complex also doesn't have designated spaces for mediation.



- ▶ **Organisation of Functions:** There is no coherence in the arrangement of the administrative sections in the order of usage. For example, the courtrooms are on the ground floor whereas the filing section is on the fourth floor. Since the filing section is the first point of contact for the litigant, this creates a lack of clarity in navigation.



- ▶ **Storage:** The pending and record rooms do not have enough storage to accommodate files. The space between two aisles in the rooms is small and congested for the staff.

II. Utilities



- ▶ **Movement:** The path for the movement of the public is very narrow and difficult to navigate, exacerbating the problem of lack of signage for new users unaware of the system that is followed in the court. In addition, irregular placement of furniture and files makes it hard to move through the space.



- ▶ **Signages:** There is no indication at the entrance that the consumer forum is within the building which also houses other Government offices. There is also no help desk, reception, or a map of the building to guide litigants. Additionally, the cause lists were printed in a manner readable only to seasoned users of the court. None of the notices currently being put out are in Braille.



- ▶ **Fire Safety:** There are very few fire-safety measures and not enough space for efficient evacuation measures. There is only one way through which people can enter and exit the premises. There is no fire safety exit plan, emergency exit or provision for fire extinguishers or water sprinklers.



- ▶ **Accessibility:** Public access for people with movement restrictions is limited since there are no ramps to enter the building. The existing lift can provide for only one wheelchair without anyone else inside. The width of corridors to approach the courtrooms is 1.5 m wide (including seating space), with a level difference which does not permit a wheelchair. Floor levels are uneven and elevated in front of the doors and are insufficient for wheelchairs. There are no aids such as audio announcements or accessible washrooms.



- ▶ **Security:** There is no security guard nor any security devices such as metal detectors and/or baggage scans at the entrance of the building.



- ▶ **Parking:** The court complex does not have any 4-wheeler parking provision, it does have 2-wheeler parking spaces, but this restricts the narrow passage for pedestrian movement and the entrance into the court.

³⁵ Refer to **Annexure A** for staff details. Details as on 31.08.2019.



- ▶ **Waiting Area:** There is no waiting area or common area with adequate seating facilities and the central courtyard outside the courtrooms is presumably intended as a waiting area for the public.



- ▶ **Hygiene:** There is no separate accessible toilet for persons with disabilities. They are not well-maintained and therefore not fully functional. There were no dustbins for waste disposal in any of the public areas

III. Miscellaneous



- ▶ **Hierarchy:** The consumer forum is intended to make a deliberate shift away from the hierarchies of traditional court infrastructure. The current amenities and furniture used by people of different positions continue to reinforce the hierarchy of traditional court structures. Another aspect that reinforces the differentiated claims to the spaces is the fact that most of the courtroom space is taken up by the horseshoe table which is typically used by the lawyers and other litigants often use only the single outer row of chairs.



- ▶ **Aesthetics:** One of the primary observations that was made was with respect to the unwelcoming state of the premises. This includes poor lighting, ventilation, and poorly maintained hygiene conditions. Additionally, uneven construction of staircases, lack of planning in terms of materials and interiors do not make the consumer forums conducive to meet its stated objective of being 'consumer-friendly'.

C. Practical Challenges

The following practical challenges emerged from the consultation with our expert panel:³⁶

I. Administrative Challenges



- ▶ In most states, the consumer forums are under the administration and supervision of State Departments that are in-charge of a wider range of responsibilities.³⁷ This leads to consumer forums not receiving adequate importance and recognition.
- ▶ The State consumer forums receive funding from the Central Government through the State administration. Various issues at the administrative level pertaining to coordination, communication, frequent transfer of bureaucrats, forums not submitting Utilization Certificates on time, etc., prevents the Government from managing the funds efficiently.
- ▶ Many of the consumer forums function out of leased or rented buildings. The huge sums of money apportioned towards rent payment prevents utilization of funds for other infrastructural requirements.

II. Infrastructural Challenges



- ▶ Consumer forums are supposed to be open to consumers to file suo moto complaints. However, absence of helpdesks, information centres or relevant bare acts, rules and regulations, often act as a hindrance to this.
- ▶ Most consumer forums have about 60-80 cases listed before them daily. However, they are housed in complexes that do not have sufficient parking facilities to support this footfall.
- ▶ Practitioners also highlighted the absence of basic hygiene facilities such as washrooms, drinking water, etc., for the litigants, advocates as well as judicial and staff members of the consumer forums.

³⁶ Refer to the **Acknowledgements** for details of the panellists.

³⁷ Kerala and West Bengal are the only states to have a separate department for consumer protection. **Annexure B**

Mapping out Consumer Protection Legislations

In this section, we map the relevant provisions of all legislations pertaining to consumer rights to its infrastructural representation to depict a consumer forum framework as provided in the applicable laws and rules. This exercise is aimed at highlighting the fact that the lacuna in infrastructure is not due to shortcomings in the law, but in its implementation.

A. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
	Statement of objects and reasons	For protection of consumers and for timely and effective administration and settlement of consumers disputes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The structure of the Consumer Forum should be such that it does not intimidate the consumers approaching it. 2. The space should be barrier-free, accessible and navigation-friendly, encouraging and welcoming of all aggrieved consumers. 3. It must have signages that help all understand the processes to be followed.
Chapter IV CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION			
S.28	Establishment of District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission	(28) (1) The State Government may establish a District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in each District of the State by notification. The State Government may establish more than one District Commission in a district if necessary. (2) District Commission to consist of one President and at least two members.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land must be provided by the State Government for establishment of District Commissions. In the case of State & National Commission, land must be provided in the State & National capital respectively. 2. Space is to be apportioned within the courtroom for the President and the appropriate members as designated in the legislation. It should be designed to ensure their comfort so that they can undertake their duties to the best of their abilities. 3. Chamber space should be provided for the President and the Members. The chambers should be designed keeping in mind their judicial as well as administrative responsibilities. 4. The chamber of the President may be differently sized to account for the additional responsibilities undertaken by her. 5. The courtrooms as well as the chambers should be appropriately equipped to accommodate Members and President who may be persons with disabilities. 6. To cater to the current and future needs, the courtrooms should be equipped with adequate technology infrastructure for President and members to hold virtual hearings. Care must be taken to ensure assistive technology devices are also provided. 7. In case of the National Commission, the Central Government can also establish Benches. Space should be apportioned for the same accordingly, preferably in/near the respective State Commissions.
S.42	Establishment of State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission	(1) The State Government may establish a State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission by notification which shall ordinarily function at the State capital. (3) (b) The State Commission should have atleast four Members. The number of Members may increase by the notification of the Central Government.	
S.53	Establishment of National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission	(1) The Central Government must establish a National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, to be known as the National Commission. (2) The Commission must be set up at the National Capital Region and it must perform its functions at such other places as may be notified by the Central Government in consultation with the National Commission. The Central Government may also establish regional Benches of the National Commission, at such places, as it deems fit.	
S.54	Composition of National Commission	The National Commission must have- (a) a President; and (b) atleast four Members as may be prescribed.	

A. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
S.33	Officers and other employees of District Commission	33(1) State Government to provide District Commission with required officers and other employees.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The District, State & National Commission must have workspaces for the officers and other employees. 2. The space must be such that it facilitates the employees in undertaking their responsibilities without compromising on comfort. 3. The workspaces should be appropriately equipped to accommodate employees who may be persons with disabilities.
S.46	Officers and employees of State Commission	(1) The State Government must appoint officers and other employees of the Court in accordance with the functions and responsibilities that need to be undertaken by such officers.	
S.57	Other officers and employees of National Commission	(1) The National Government must appoint officers and other employees of the Court in accordance with the functions and responsibilities that need to be undertaken by such officers.	
S.35	Manner in which complaint shall be made	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Complaints can be filed before the District Commission by the consumer and recognised consumer association, in any manner including electronically. (2) Fees for the complaint filed may be paid electronically or otherwise. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There should be an office/section in charge of filing complaints, revisions, appeals, etc., in the consumer forum. 2. E-filing kiosks must be provided in the court complex. The kiosk must be accessible and should have sufficient signages/posters/process maps to help the complainant with the process. 3. Filing counter must have enough systems to help multiple consumers file electronically simultaneously. 4. Information desks at the entrance to guide a consumer regarding the process of filing and payment of fees to reduce dependencies.
S. 36	Proceedings before District Commission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Every proceeding before the District Commission is conducted by the President of that Commission and atleast one Member sitting together. (2) On receipt of a complaint, the District Commission may admit or reject it by order. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courtroom in the District Commission must have space at the Bench for the President and at least one other member. 2. The courtroom must have space for the parties as well as their advocates to present themselves before the Bench during proceedings of the case.
S. 65	Service of notice, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All notices must be served by delivering or transmitting a copy of the notice by registered post, acknowledgment duly addressed to the opposite party against whom the complaint has been made. The notice can also be sent by speed post or through courier services approved by the Commission or by any other mode of transmission, including through electronic means. (2) The notice can be served on an electronic service provider at the address provided by it and for this purpose, the electronic service provider must designate a nodal officer to accept and process such notices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There should be an office/section in charge of serving notices and other necessary correspondence from the court. 2. Appropriate physical and electronic infrastructure such as desktops, laptops, internet connectivity to facilitate serving of notices must be provided. 3. A post-box may be attached within the Court complex.
S. 66	Experts to assist National Commission or State Commission	When the National Commission or the State Commission, is of the opinion that it involves the larger interest of consumers, it may direct any individual or organisation or expert to itself.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate space must be apportioned for an expert within the Courtroom as well as office spaces, if necessary. 2. The space must be such that it facilitates the employees in undertaking their responsibilities in terms of efficiency as well as comfort. 3. The workspaces should be appropriately equipped to accommodate employees who may be persons with disabilities.

A. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
Chapter V MEDIATION			
S. 74	Establishment of consumer mediation cell	(1) The State Government must establish a consumer mediation cell in each of the District Commissions and the State Commissions of that State. (4) Every consumer mediation cell must maintain— (a) a list of empanelled mediators; (b) a list of cases handled by the cell; (c) record of proceedings; and (d) any other information that may be specified by regulations.	1. The District and the State Commissions must be equipped with a Mediation Centre. 2. Office structure and storage space for the mediation cell must be provided. 3. The Mediation cell should be appropriately equipped to accommodate mediators, staff and consumers who may be persons with disabilities.
S.79	Procedure for mediation	(1) The mediation must be held in the consumer mediation cell attached to the District Commission, the State Commission or the National Commission. (3) The mediator must conduct mediation within such time and in such manner as may be specified by regulations.	1. The National, State and District Commissions must be equipped with a Mediation Centre. 2. The mediation room should be constructed to facilitate mediation in an efficient and friendly manner. 3. The mediation centre should make the parties comfortable and should not follow the rigid structure of a Court. 4. The room for mediation should be equipped to be able to carry out the proceedings virtually as well.
B. Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal and other Authorities (Qualifications, Experience and other Conditions of Service of Members) Rules, 2017			
R. 16	Transport allowance	The Chairman, Chairperson, President, Vice-Chairman, Vice-Chairperson, Vice-President, Accountant Member, Administrative Member, Judicial Member, Expert Member, Technical Member, Presiding Officer or Member will be entitled to the facility of staff car for journeys for official and private purposes in accordance with the facilities as are admissible to Group 'A' Officer of the Government of India of a corresponding status as per the provisions of Staff Car Rules.	1. Space must be reserved to provide a parking facility in accordance with the strength of the court. 2. Where the Government is making provisions for providing drivers for the members, seating space must be provided for the drivers within the Court complex. 3. In case of staff or judicial members who may be persons with disabilities, appropriate parking space must be provided which should be accessible to their office space.
C. The Consumer Protection Rules, 1987			
R. 10	Additional powers of the National Commission, State Commissions and District Forum	(2) (a) If the National Commission, the State Commission or the District Forum, has any ground to believe that any book, paper, commodity or document has to be produced before it during a case proceeding, to prevent it from being destroyed, mutilated, altered, falsified or secreted, it may, authorise any officer to exercise the power of entry and search of any premises and seizure of the said articles. (b) The National Commission, the State Commission or the District Forum, may order the retention of such articles or may return it to the party concerned.	1. Space must be apportioned in the Court complex for the storage of seized material that is considered evidence in the National Commission, the State Commission and the District Forum.

C. The Consumer Protection Rules, 1987

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
R. 10B	Number of Members in the National Commission	The National Commission must consist of at least four members and not more than eleven members and at least one of them shall be a woman.	1. The office space provided for the member should be designed keeping in mind the comfort of members of all genders. 2. The washrooms and other utilities in the court complex must also be designed keeping in mind the same. 3. The courtroom must have provision to seat at least 3 Members.
R. 15A	Sitting of the National Commission and signing of orders	(1) Every proceeding of the National Commission must be conducted by the President or the senior-most Member and at least two Members sitting together except when a bench is constituted by the President of the National Commission with one or more Members as he may deem fit.	
R. 14	Procedure to be followed by the National Commission	(1) A complaint filed before the National Commission must be filed before the Commission with the necessary particulars. The complaint may be filed by the Consumer in person, through an agent or through registered post. (1) (A) Every complaint under must be accompanied by the relevant fee as is specified in rule 9A.	1. The Court complex must have a filing section. 2. The filing section must have a front window to receive the complaints being filed. It must also have a back area where such files are stored. 3. The filing section must be equipped to receive and store the fees deposited.
R. 15	Procedure for hearing the appeal	(3) Each memorandum must be accompanied by a crossed demand draft and a certified copy of the order of the State Commission appealed against and such of the documents as may be required to support grounds of objection mentioned in the memorandum. (5) The appellant must submit four copies or such number of copies of the memorandum to the Commission as required.	1. The Court complex must preferably have a bank outpost for the benefit of the complainants. 2. The Court complex must also have a Copying section which may be used by the complainant if necessary.
D. Consumer Protection Regulations, 2005			
R. 3	Arrangements in Consumer Forum	(1) A Consumer Forum must have arrangements distinct from a regular Court. (2) In the hall in which the Consumer Forum has to hear the parties, the dais must be no more than 30 c.m. in height than the place earmarked for the parties to occupy. (3) At the dais of the hall, the President and the members of the Consumer Forum must have the same type of chairs at the same level and these chairs need not have high backs	1. The Courtroom must have provision to seat at least three Members. 2. The word "arrangement" seems to be a broader category encompassing design, infrastructure and amenities. 3. The height of the Members' dais cannot be more than 30cm from the table at which the parties are seated. 4. The chairs of all the Members seated in one courtroom must be the same and shouldn't indicate any hierarchy. 5. The courtrooms as well as the chambers should be appropriately equipped to accommodate Members and President who may be persons with disabilities.
R. 5	Hearing Hours	The normal working hours of the Consumer Forum for hearing matters shall be from 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. on all working days of the Central Government in the case of the National Commission and on all working days of the State Government in the case of the State Commission and the District Forum.	1. The working hours of the Court should be kept in mind while designing the structure in terms of lighting, ventilation, etc. 2. The Court complex must also be designed keeping in mind the climate and topographic conditions of the part of the country in which it is located.

D. Consumer Protection Regulations, 2005

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
R. 6	Cause List	(1) The cause list of the Consumer forum for the following entire week must be made ready before the close of the working hours of the preceding week and displayed on the notice board. The cause list in respect of a Consumer Forum having a website shall also be hosted on the website.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A notice board must be put up in the Consumer Forum in a prominent place. 2. Sitting area must be provided near the notice board. 3. The causelist must also be put up on the website and the Consumer Forum should be equipped with a "Control Room" to handle such activities. The website for the Forum should be compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. 4. This room should have computer facilities, internet connection and all such technological infrastructure as may be necessary. 5. Causelists in the court complex should be at a height accessible for wheelchair users, available in Braille and accompanied by audio announcements.
R. 7	Institution of complaints, appeals and revision	(1) Three sets of a complaint must be filed before a District Forum or State Commission and four sets must be filed before the National Commission. Additional sets may be filed as required depending upon the number of opposite parties or respondents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The filing section must be equipped with appropriate storage.
R. 9.	Scrutiny of complaint, appeal, petition and revision petition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Every complaint, appeal, or revision petition shall after it is filed be numbered by the Registrar. (2) If there is any defect in the filing of the complaint, appeal or revision petition, the particulars of such defects shall be recorded and the party or his agents shall be informed of the defects asking them for removing the defects within 15 days. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Court complex must have provision for a Registrar's Room 2. There must be adequate storage in the room for complaints coming in. 3. The files must be segregated in accordance with the stage to facilitate easier access. 4. Virtual defect detention and scrutiny should be enabled via application or software to implement e-filing entirely.
R. 19	Return on institution and disposal of cases	(1) A Consumer Forum is expected to dispose of at least 75 to 100 matters every month.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Court complex must have a Pending Section. Space must be apportioned within the pending section for the case files as well as the staff members handling the section. 2. The Pending Section must have enough storage space to accommodate additional 75 to 100 case files every month. Storage must be designed such that files are easily accessible and retrievable. 3. Every courtroom inside the complex must have an appropriate pending section. It may have combined sections that must then be segregated to provide appropriate space for every courtroom. 4. The Pending Section should be appropriately equipped with suitable working spaces for employees including those who may be persons with disabilities. 5. The Pending Section should have appropriate ventilation and lighting considering the volume of case files stored.
R. 20	Preservation of records	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In the case of complaint, the record containing main files with original order sheet shall be preserved for a period of five years. (2) In the case of records of first appeal and revision petitions, it shall be preserved for three years from the date of disposal of the appeal or revision as the case may be. (3) Immediately after the consumer complaint, first appeal or revision petition, as the case may be, is disposed of, extra sets shall be given to the parties who may use the same for filing of appeal or revision petition and in that case the necessity to summon the record from the forums below can be dispensed with. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Court complex must have a Record Room. Space must be apportioned within the room for the case files as well as the staff members handling the section. 2. The Record Room must have enough space and utilise smart storage facilities to retain the files for at least eight years. 3. The Record Room should be appropriately equipped to accommodate employees who may be persons with disabilities.

D. Consumer Protection Regulations, 2005

Section Nos	Section Title	Section Relevant Details	Infrastructure Equivalent
R. 21	Certified Copy	(1) A copy of the order is to be given to the parties free of cost as required under the Act and the rules made thereunder.	1. The Court complex must have a Copying Section. 2. The Copying Section must be equipped with the necessary printers and photocopy machines. 3. The Copying section must have a front window to receive the documents. 4. The Copying section must be equipped to receive and store the fees deposit.
R. 26	Miscellaneous	(2) Every State Commission and every District Forum shall take steps for its computerisation and networking. (3) The Consumer Forum shall give proper respect and courtesy to the parties who appear in person and shall provide separate accommodation in the Hall for the convenience of the parties. (6) The cases filed by or against the senior citizens, physically challenged, widows and persons suffering from serious ailments shall be listed and disposed of on a priority basis.	1. The State and District Commissions must incorporate technological infrastructure to facilitate the smooth functioning of their various functions. Assistive technology devices must also be provided for persons with disabilities. 2. The regulations state that the Consumer Forum must be designed keeping in mind the parties. Enough space must be provided within the Courtroom for the parties. It can also be deduced from here that there must be an adequate waiting area outside the Courtrooms for the parties to wait their turn. 3. Adequate infrastructure in terms of seating arrangements and accessibility for senior citizens, persons suffering from serious ailments or with disabilities.

The Consumer Protection Regulations, 2005 is the only authoritative legislation that gives standards for infrastructure and design of consumer forums.

Methodology for Designs

This chapter outlines the process that was followed to arrive at the designs and space requirements. The design process responds to the requirements of navigation and needs of the different actors within the consumer forum complex. The spatial requirements were arrived at on the basis of the principle of **Anthropometry**.³⁸ This is critical to the idea of comfort for consumers, particularly with respect to a consumer forum that envisages a litigant-friendly atmosphere.

Anthropometric proportioning methods use functional ratios and are predicated on the theory that forms and spaces in architecture are either containers or extensions of the human body and should therefore be determined by its dimensions.

The dimensions and proportions of the human body affect the proportion of things humans handle, the height and distance of objects within reach of a human arm, and the dimensions of furniture used for sitting, working, and eating. They also affect the way humans perceive a space by the virtue of depth perception of the eye, and therefore the volumes that may be perceived as claustrophobic, intimidating or uncomfortable. This report suggests some sizes and volumes for various functions in the consumer forum based on Anthropometry which take the into account and which can be summarised as:³⁹

Type of Space	Dimensions to calculate working spaces
The space between furniture pieces and the distances between furniture and walls including distance required to push a chair back and accommodates a wheelchair user	1. Outstretched arm length ~500 mm 2. Upper leg length ~600 mm 3. Outstretched elbow dimensions ~500 mm
All heights for storage, doors, windows, ceiling-mounted cameras, and TV screens.	1. Raised arm length ~2000 mm
All passage widths within rooms to permit a wheelchair user to pass in the main circulation areas of the room.	1. Width ~900 mm
All passages, ramps, walkways, and staircases in common areas that connect the various functions of the court to allow wheelchairs to pass.	1. At least a minimum Width ~900 mm

³⁸ Ching (n 5) 299.

³⁹ Ching (n 5) 326.

To use Anthropometric dimensions, it is crucial to have the number of persons for whom each room should be designed. For the purposes of this, the number of persons who occupy each room in the current Karnataka State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission was assumed for the redesigned consumer forum as well. For example, if the existing Dispatch Section has three persons, then three persons have been designed for in the redesigned consumer forum. For detailed staffing details please refer to

Annexure A.

It may be noted here that state commissions and district forums in other parts of the country may have a variable number of people per room. The list of detailed room sizes provided below indicates how room size may be varied if more or fewer persons need to be designed for in the given consumer forum.

Area Statement

S. No.	Function	Room Dimensions	Area in sq.m	Additional area to be added	Number of persons in the Karnataka State Commission	Number of persons (for the purpose of this Report)
1.	Court Room	16.8m by 8.6m	144.48	7 sq. m for every additional 8 persons	NA	10 plus 64
2.	President's Chamber	7m by 5m	35	4.25 sq. m per person with table	1	1 + chair
3.	Member's Chamber	4.86m by 5.1m	24.786	4.25 sq. m per person with table	1	1 + chair
4.	Registrar's Office	7m by 5m	35	4.25 sq. m per person with table	3	3
5.	Assistant Registrar's Office	4.5m by 3.1m	13.95	4.25 sq. m per person with table	1	1
6.	Mediation Cell	9.7m by 7.6m	73.72	NA	NA	1, 2, 10, 10
6a	Mediation Cell Storage	2.5m by 4.5m	11.25			
6b	Mediation Room	4.5m by 3m	13.5			

S. No.	Function	Room Dimensions	Area in sq.m	Additional area to be added	Number of persons in the Karnataka State Commission	Number of persons (for the purpose of this Report)
6c	Mediator's Office	2.4m by 2.7m	6.48			
6d	Mediation Cell Waiting	4m by 4.5m	18			
7	Sheristedar's Office	4.5m by 4m	18	4.25 sq. m per person with table	2	2
8	Stenographer's Office	4.5m by 4m	18	4.25 sq. m per person with table	3 per office	3
9	Filing Section	4.35m by 6.5m	28.275	4.25 sq. m per person with table	1	1
10	Waiting Room	8.7m. by 9.2m	80.04	7 sq. m for every additional 8 persons	NA	40
11	Copying Section	3.25m by 2.5m	8.125	4.25 sq. m per person with table	1	1
12	Dispatch Section	4.5m by 4m	18	4.25 sq. m per person with table	3 per office	3
13	Pending Section	9m by 8.1m	72.9	4.25 sq. m per person with table, 4 sq. m per additional six cupboards/840 files	3 per pending section	3
14	Record Room	16.75m by 8.7m	145.725	4.25 sq. m per person with table, 4 sq. m per additional six cupboards/840 files	3 in record room altogether	3
15	Accounts Section	4.5m by 4m	18	4.25 sq. m per person with table	3 per office	3

S. No.	Function	Room Dimensions	Area in sq.m	Additional area to be added	Number of persons in the Karnataka State Commission	Number of persons (for the purpose of this Report)
16	Basement Parking	35m by 40m	1400			
17	Reception	3m by 6m	18			
18	Information Centre	3m by 3.5m	10.5			
19	Bank Branch and ATM	4.5m by 5m	22.5			
20	Library	4m by 4.6m	18.4			
21	Cafeteria	8m by 8m	64			
22	Kitchen	2.9m by 4m	11.6			
23	Computerisation	3m by 5m	15			
24	Monitoring & Statistics	3m by 4.5m	13.5			

Limitations of Methodology

The following information assisted to develop the solutions suggested in the report:

- court functions that were closely observed;
- data on cases listed, projections of case volumes;
- sanctioned and working staff strength;
- average size of case files; and
- storage space for files.

All of these are crucial in identifying space requirements for people, amenities, and storage in the consumer forum. However, a study such as this has not been previously undertaken and this resulted in several unprecedented challenges. In this methodology, we have captured all such limitations and have detailed the proxies relied upon or the compromises that had to be made.

In addition to the above, professionals using the space were consulted to understand their needs.



A. Factors that have been taken into consideration

Data Point/ Court Feature	Limitation/ Caveat
Based primarily on the observations of two sites - the State Commission and District Commission in Bengaluru	As aforementioned, the study was restricted to the sites in Bengaluru and the designers have used this as a baseline. However, to reiterate, it applies to any consumer forum with necessary customisation since it was imagined in the context of the Act, its objectives and functionality of each section required in a consumer forum.
Footfall in Courtroom	We used data on the number of cases heard by the Karnataka State consumer forum between 18th January to 1 February 2020. This indicated that an average of 70-120 cases are listed everyday per bench. Keeping in mind that each case consists of two parties and their two lawyers respectively, we gauged an approximate amount of footfall at the consumer forum every day. Further, this helped us estimate the number of people who would need seating space in the waiting area and in the courtroom. (Annexure A)
Storage Capacity in Record and Pending Rooms	The requirements for storage were arrived at by estimating the volume of files. This was calculated on the basis of the data collected for cases handled by the court at each stage, like filing, disposal and matters listed each day. Storage requirements in the Pending Room have been determined on the basis of data on listing per day. Storage requirements in the Record Room were estimated based on prescribed guidelines on time frame for record maintenance keeping appeals in mind.
Determination of Staff Strength	We examined the spatial requirements of staff members working at the court with a view to help them enhance the operational aspects of their roles. To understand spatial requirements, we gathered data on staff and their respective seating areas during our field visit. This was supplemented with data from the Bagla Committee Report ⁴⁰ to get a baseline requirement of staff strength in a fully functional State consumer forum. Further, we drew up adjacency diagrams based on functional connectivity requirements of staff members and have provided a series of arrangements of their location that can enhance their efficiency.



B. Factors that have not been taken into consideration

Data Point/ Court Feature	Limitation/ Caveat
Material for Construction	The design frameworks that have been recommended do not advise or prescribe the kind of material that must be used. This is because the material to be used for construction of the building as well as for fittings and furniture should be conducive to the climatic conditions, terrain of the place, local materials that are preferred etc. In India, considering the diversity in climatic and socio-economic conditions, it is not advisable to recommend a specific material. In addition, material also speaks to the culture and mood that is attempted to be expressed and hence should be the choice of the people of the area.

⁴⁰ National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, 'Bagla Committee Report' <<http://ncdrc.nic.in/baglacommittee.html>> accessed on 20 July 2020.

Budget and Costs

Data on budget allocated and spending of district and state forums are not publicly available. Furthermore, it was not feasible to obtain information under the RTI Act for every district forum and state commission regarding details about budget and spending. Therefore, these variables have not been factored in while recommending these design frameworks. However, care has been taken to ensure that none of the recommendations go beyond meeting the actual objectives of the Act. This does not however imply that the latest technologies and innovations in designs have not been adhered to.

Ventilation and Air Circulation

Placement of windows, fans and air circulation devices depend on several factors including climate, daylighting, etc. Therefore, such elements have not been considered while designing.

Landscaping

Landscaping has not been incorporated since it involves detailed studies of soil, vegetation, and climatic conditions of sites across the country, which is beyond the scope of this report. The design of landscaping for a consumer forum may thus be undertaken in consultation with a landscape professional.

Signages & Display Boards

Although provided in the designs, the specific dimensions of the signages and display boards have not been provided. This may be determined by taking into consideration disability legislations such as the Rights for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016⁴¹ and the accessibility standards framed under it, by-laws of the area, etc. Ideally, the court should work with an information architect to derive these dimensions.

Operational Maintenance

The report does not make provisions for any operation and maintenance facilities for the consumer forum, since it depends on floor area, staff strength, materials and finishes used, local climatic conditions, the use of specialized mechanical equipment with moving parts, and technological infrastructure, which are very specific to each building and location.

Information Architecture and Technology

This report was completed in collaboration with spatial designers. To the extent of our knowledge, we have tried to incorporate elements of information access and technology required for these functions. These elements have, however, not been comprehensively covered. It is recommended that courts are designed in consultation with information and technology architects to address these aspects.

⁴¹ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Designing a Framework for Consumer Forum

The physical design of the court refers to the design of the shell of the consumer forum building, which influences the experience of being within it. This begins at the entrance and involves the experience of walking into the court while orienting⁴² oneself to the layout of the court. This includes not just the arrangement of the closed rooms and open movement, but also elements such as the height of the ceilings, the colour of the walls and the materials used in construction.

The proposed physical design involves the use of basic spatial principles which signal the **identity** of the consumer forum, establish **legibility** of the consumer forum to visitors and users, and ensure **security** for them all.

We recommend **the following principles for designing the various components of the consumer forum:**

Adaptable: A robust infrastructure should accommodate inevitable change without disrupting court operations. The consumer forum's planning and design must identify future growth and buffer areas for changing needs. This includes weaving technological infrastructure into possible areas of physical infrastructure to make them future-proof.

Aesthetics: The aesthetics should aim to break free from the mainstream iconography of judicial architecture, which

relies on scale⁴³ and colonial design elements such as wood panelling to convey the idea of justice.⁴⁴ Landscaping, outdoor spaces and windows providing natural light create a sense of openness. The consumer forum may use light colours to enable the reflection of natural light, combined with the use of warm accents to ensure alertness. A palette of local materials may provide visual comfort, and the use of human proportions will create comfort within the consumer forum.

For example, local materials in Bengaluru, Karnataka consist of locally available granite or compressed soil blocks for walls, red oxide or terracotta tiles for flooring, madras terraces (roofing with terracotta tiles and lime) or mud roofs with bamboo reinforcement - in addition to locally available wood, bamboo, or steel as structural materials.⁴⁵

Inclusive: Effective and intuitive spatial arrangement accompanied by signage and information systems should be incorporated to make the space be legible to users. The open or semi-open design of some spaces is intended to increase transparency and create a welcoming atmosphere. Above all, it must be designed to be accessible to users of all genders, ages, socio-economic groups and those who may be differently abled.

⁴² William Lidwell, Jill Butler, & Kritina Holden, Universal Principles of Design: a Cross Disciplinary Reference (Rockport 2003) 64-65.

⁴³ Bryan Lawson, "The Language of Space" [2015] Routledge 44-59.

⁴⁴ This is supported in the Draft Consumer Protection (Consumer Commission Procedure) Regulations, 2020, which mentions that the "A Consumer Commission, being not a regular court, shall have the arrangements as to depict it distinct from a court." Regulation 3(1).

⁴⁵ Priya Joseph, "Process, Material and Method in Architecture - Analysis of Vernacular and Current Building Practices" [2017] International Journal on Emerging Technologies 49-53.

Climate-responsive: Strategies such as the use of locally sourced building material and passive thermal design to adjust natural light, warmth, and air should be used to ensure comfort of its users. Daylighting,⁴⁶ natural ventilation, and passive cooling⁴⁷ create environments that not only address functional requirements and save on operation cost, but also have a positive psychological and physiological impact on users.

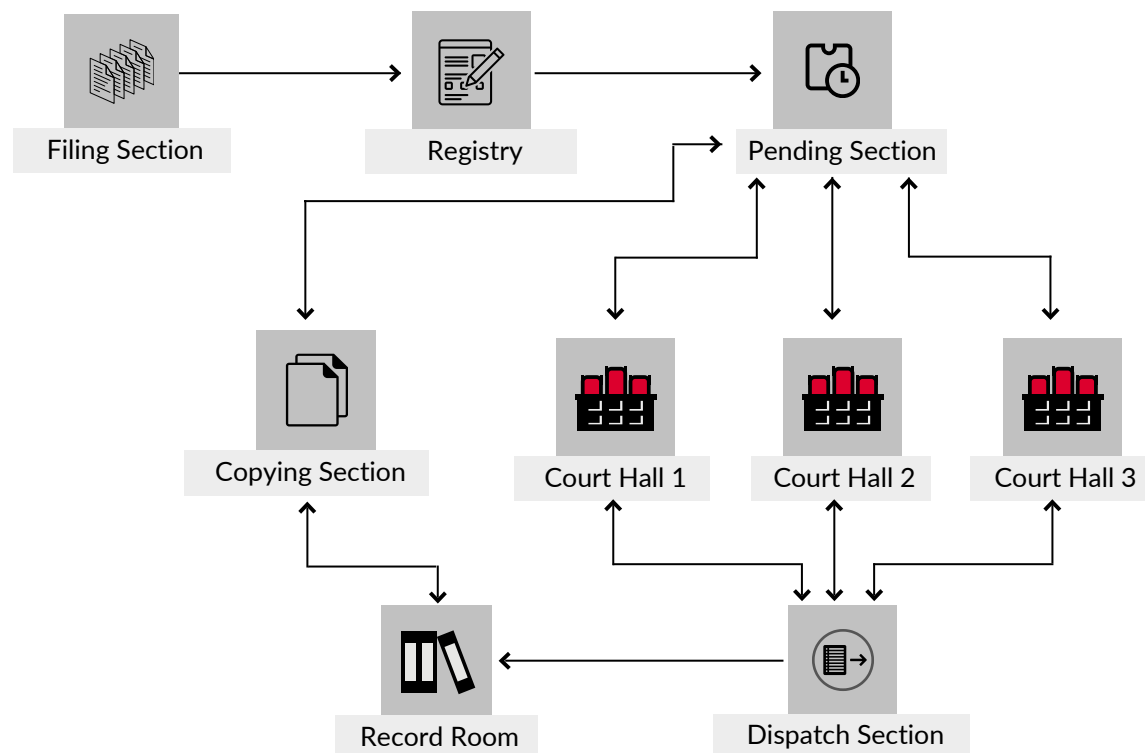
Comfort: An important way of ensuring comfort is to ensure natural lighting and ventilation by providing access to windows, courtyards, or skylights in every room of the

building. The circadian rhythms⁴⁸ of the human body depend on being able to observe the movement of the sun and the passage of the seasons.⁴⁹ Another subtle means of ensuring safety and comfort is via the use of colour, which has a recorded effect on human emotions and the power to influence behaviour.

Efficient: The design should aim for the optimal functioning of its various systems and processes. Arrangements in space⁵⁰ reflect roles and relationships. Circulation within the consumer forum must be simple, clear, precise, and follow the flow of the activities it houses.

Movement of a Consumer through the Forum

We undertook a mapping of the movement of a consumer within the consumer forum- from the point of filing of her case to its disposal. This mapping was essential for a better understanding of the placement of the various sections of the forum vis-a-vis the functions undertaken by them. This also facilitated the placing of these components with the aim of ensuring smooth functioning of the court.



⁴⁶ Ching (n 5) 155.

⁴⁷ National Building Code of India 2016. New Delhi: Bureau of Indian Standards, 2016.

⁴⁸ Angus S. Fisk, Shu K. E. Tam, Laurence A. Brown, Vladyslav V. Vyazovskiy, David M. Bannerman, and Stuart N. Peirson, 'Light and Cognition: Roles for Circadian Rhythms, Sleep, and Arousal' (Frontiers in Neurology 9 2018), 1-18.

⁴⁹ Lawson (n 43) 29.

⁵⁰ Ching (n 5) 240.

Adjacency Diagrams

Through the following illustrations, we try to map out efficient arrangements in terms of relationships between various stakeholders to allow for specific needs and site conditions. These have been made to address the inefficiencies and poor layout design observed in existing consumer forums and to serve as a starting point. They constitute options for functional and efficient arrangements based on consumer movement patterns and interdependent activities in a consumer forum. All possible variations and arrangements of these rooms are too numerous for this report to cover. For these illustrations only one of each room (i.e., courtroom, pending room, record room, etc.) has been illustrated below. The consumer forum may have more than one of such rooms as per their requirements.

Key:

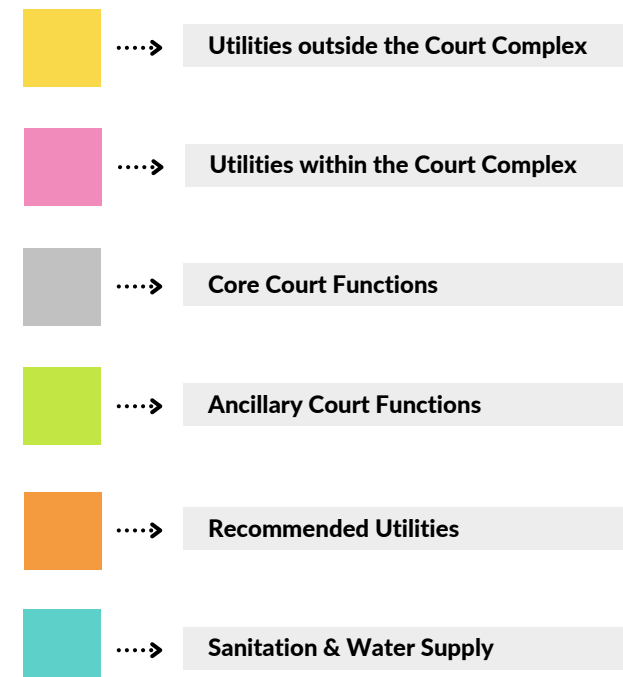


Illustration 1

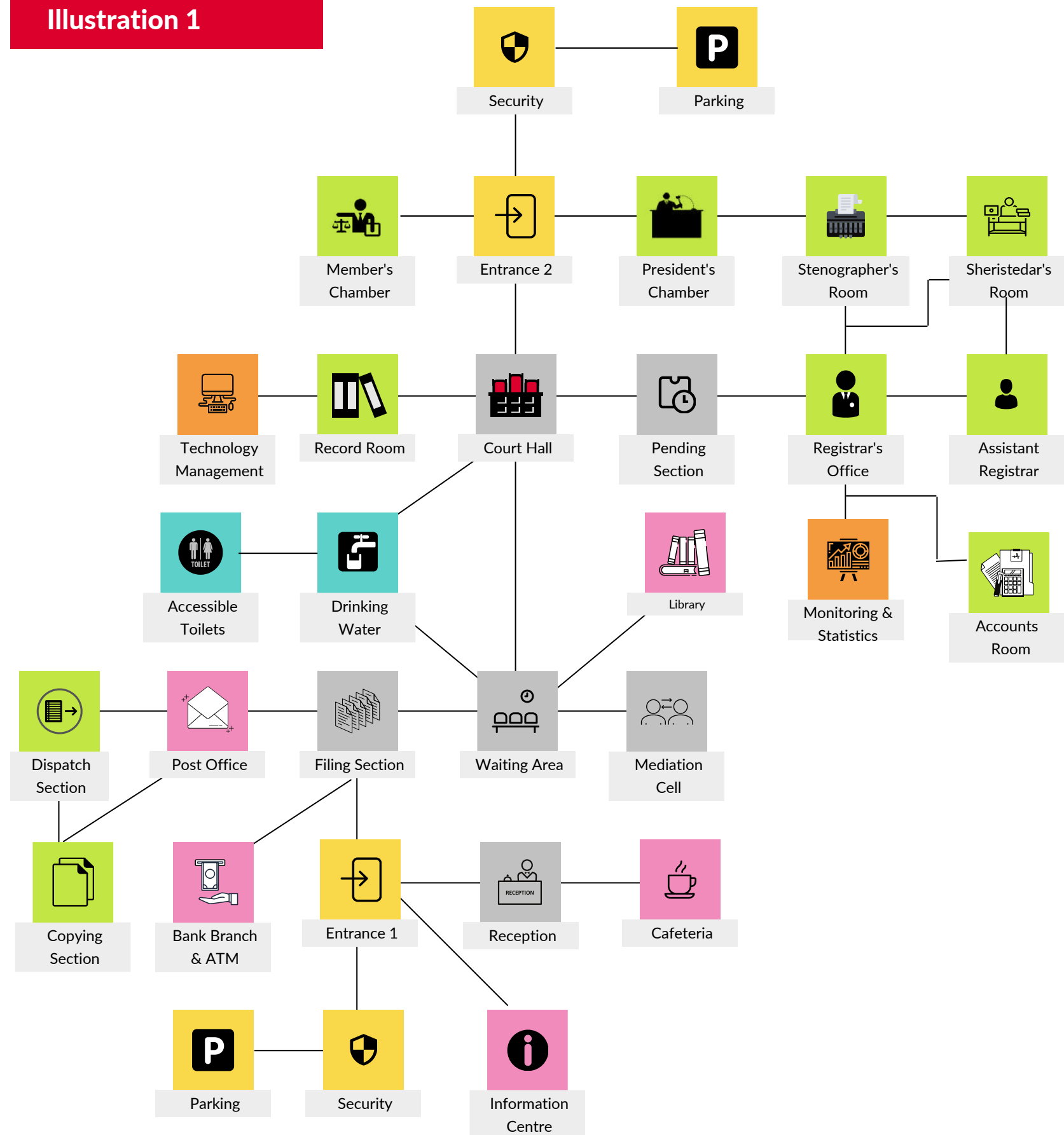


Illustration 2

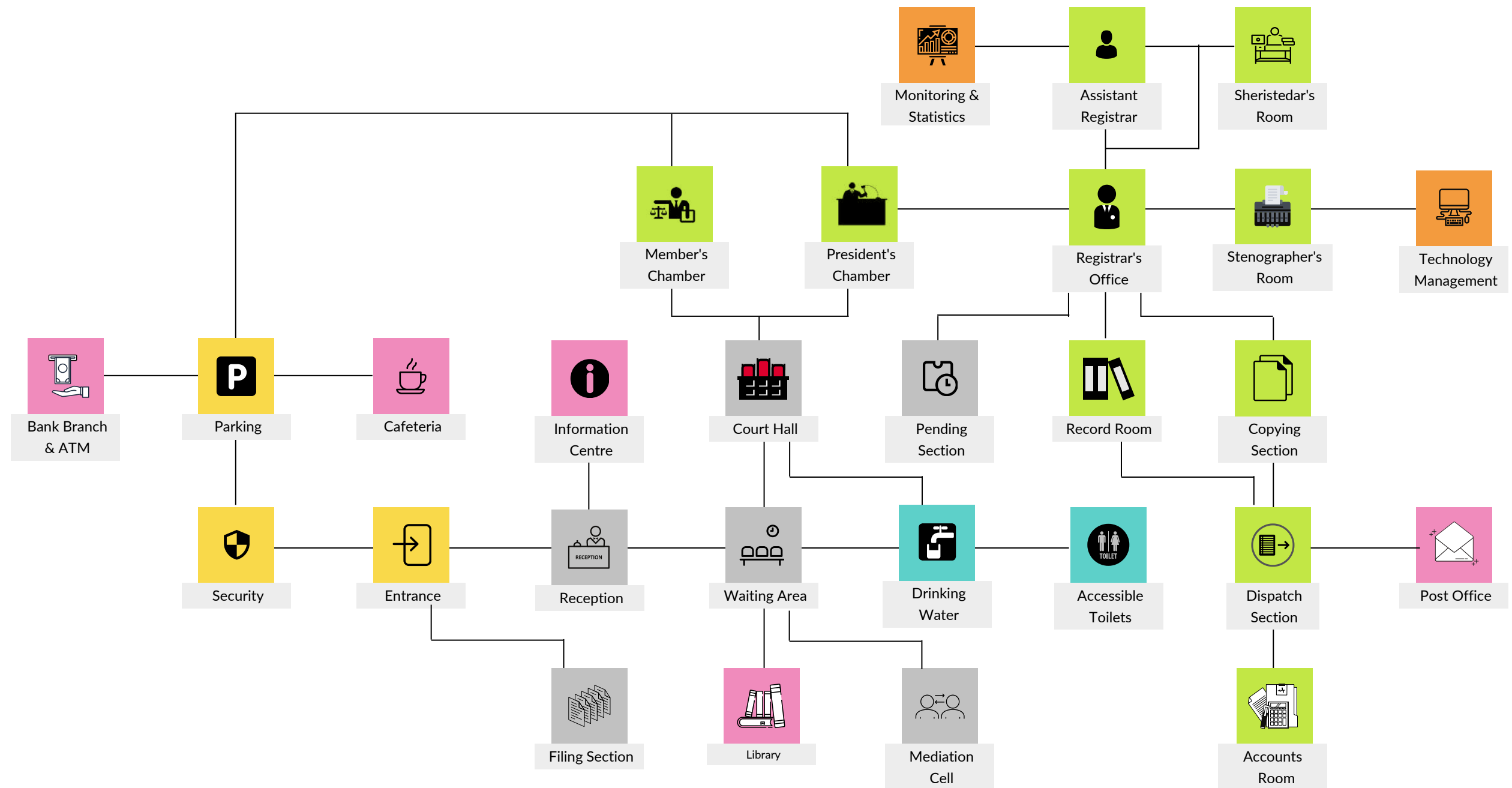


Illustration 3

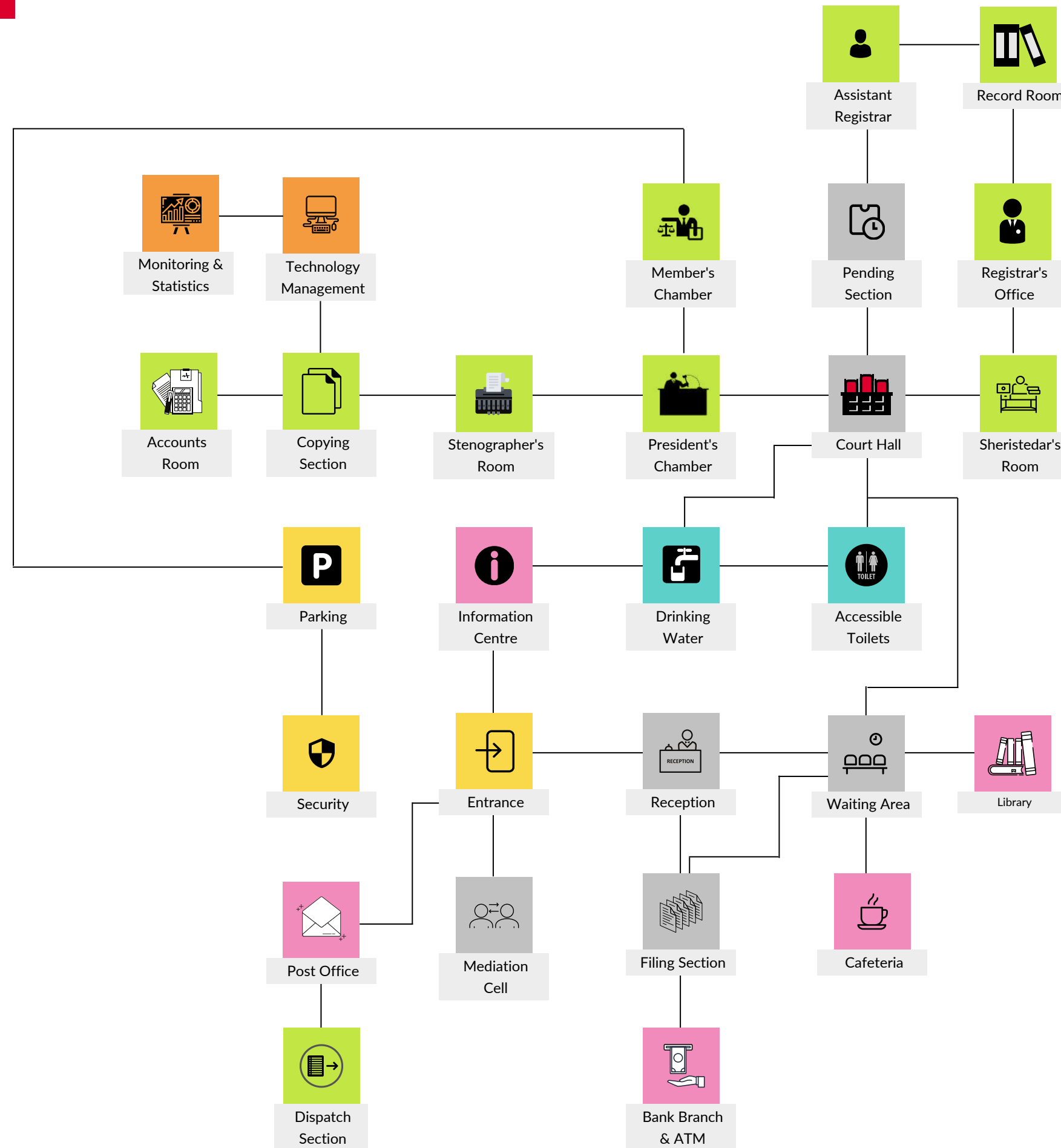
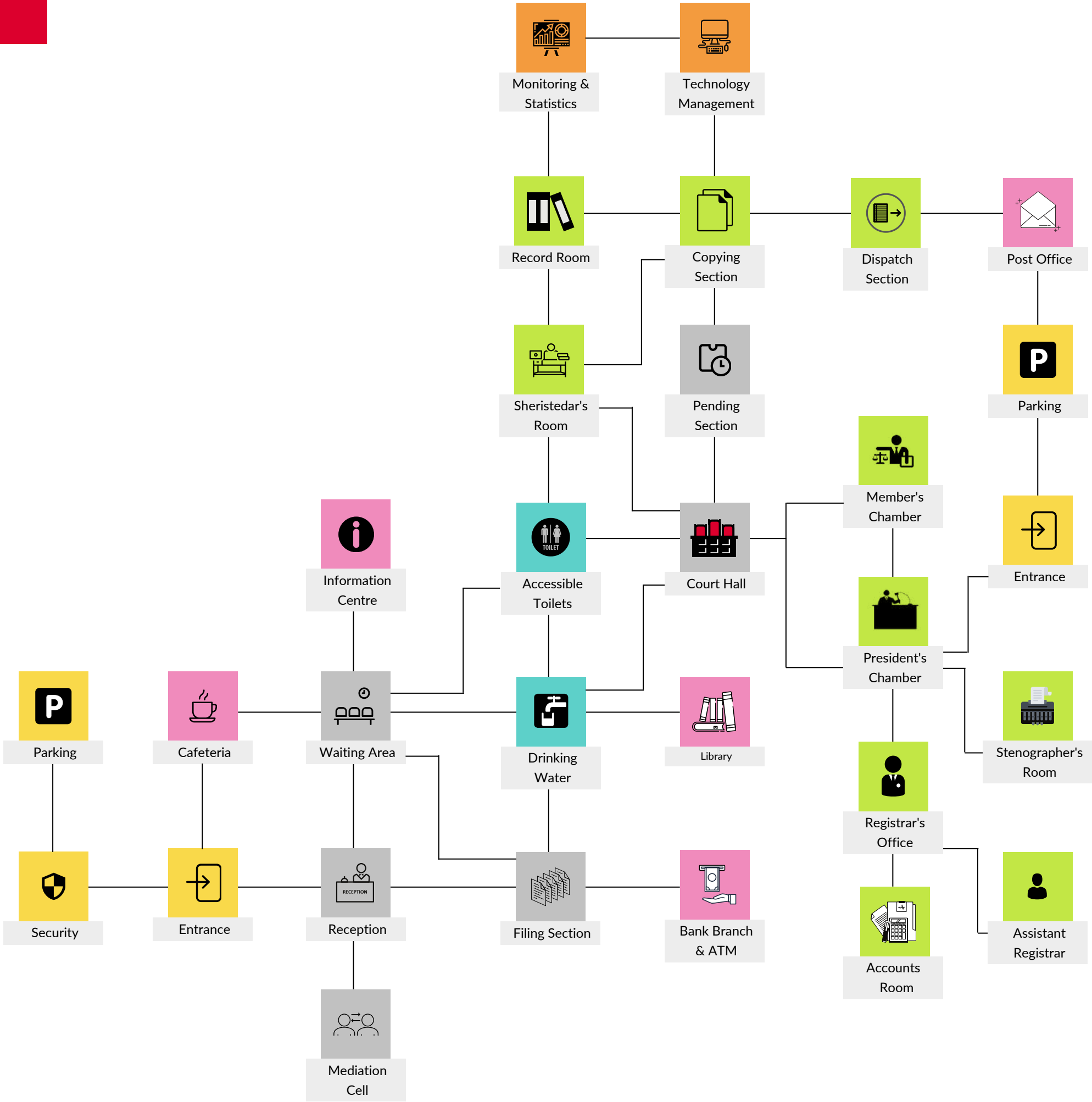


Illustration 4



Spaces in Consumer Forum

The spatial zones and activities in a court may be broadly divided into **functional spaces** which include the court and all functions occupied for the entire course of a working day, and **liminal spaces** which include all movement passages and temporarily occupied zones. Together, they support one another to constitute and contain the entirety of the consumer forum's activities. Wherever possible, specific guidelines for accessibility⁵¹ for persons with disabilities and for fire safety have been described for each space, and function listed below.

A. Design of functional spaces

General Instructions



- **Tables:** All worktables and meeting tables must be at a height of not more than **1200 mm**, with a space about **700mm high and 350mm deep under the table** for wheelchair access.



- **Seating:** Seating for persons with disabilities must be provided at a **height of not more than 450 mm**.



- **Signage:** Signages must be readable at an **eye height of 1.2 m**, in **contrasting colours** and preferably be embossed in distinct relief to allow persons with visual impairment to read the information they contain by touching them. Audible announcements are desirable.



- **Entrance Door:** The **width of an entrance door must be 900 mm**, with **double-swing double-shutter doors** to permit wheelchair access, and the floor of the court room must necessarily be at the same floor level as that of the space from which users enter. If a level difference is unavoidable, it must **not be more than 12 mm**. The approach must have **tactile flooring**.⁵²



- **Other Doors and Windows:** Windows and doors as well as the accompanying curtains/shades can accordingly be of the **same scale as those in the rest of the building** and be designed to have **handles/controls at no higher than 1200 mm**, which permits use by wheelchair users.



- **Lighting & Ventilation:** It is desirable for all offices to have **access to a window/skylight/courtyard**.



- **Ramp:** All entrance landings should have a ramp with **minimum dimension of 1800 x 2000 mm**.



- **Tactile Flooring:** All corridors and lobbies should be **lined with tactile flooring** in order to be accessible to visually impaired users who rely on a cane.



- **Cupboard Storage:** All cupboards must have a **clear floor space at least 750 mm x 1200 mm** that allows either a forward or parallel approach by a person using a wheelchair.



- **Website Accessibility:** All websites and services made available online by the forum must **adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and 2.1**.⁵³

⁵¹ The Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier Free Built Environment for Persons With Disabilities and Elderly Persons as issued by the Government of India, Ministry of Urban Development in March, 2016 and the Fire Safety Guidelines laid down in Volume 1 of the National Building Code of India 2016 must be read in conjunction with this document while designing and building consumer forums.

⁵² Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India (Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier-Free Built Environment for persons with Disability and Elderly Persons 2018) p. cxix.

⁵³ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and 2.1 (WCAG 2.0, 11 December 2008 WCAG 2.1, 5 June 2018.) <<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>> accessed on 1st August 2020.

Non Negotiables

Recognising that consumer forums across will be facing several challenges (refer **Chapter III**), this report also provides a list of non-negotiables as a minimum mandate for making these spaces accessible for consumers.



- ▶ **Hygiene:** Basic hygiene facilities including **well-maintained and regularly cleaned washrooms for all genders**.



- ▶ **Accessibility:** All areas of the forum should be **accessible for persons with disabilities**.



- ▶ **Utilities:** **Drinking water provision** and continuous supply of running water to washrooms, provision for **parking, photocopiers, ATM machines** for all stakeholders.



- ▶ **Information Access:** **Information or help desk or guide maps** (both in English and regional language).



- ▶ **Lighting and ventilation:** All rooms to be sufficiently **well lit and ventilated naturally or artificially**.



- ▶ **Location of Rooms:** Filing section and courtrooms to be **conspicuously placed** for the consumer to identify.



- ▶ **Seating:** **Adequate seating facilities** with comfortable furniture for the staff in all rooms such as filing section, pending section, record room, etc.

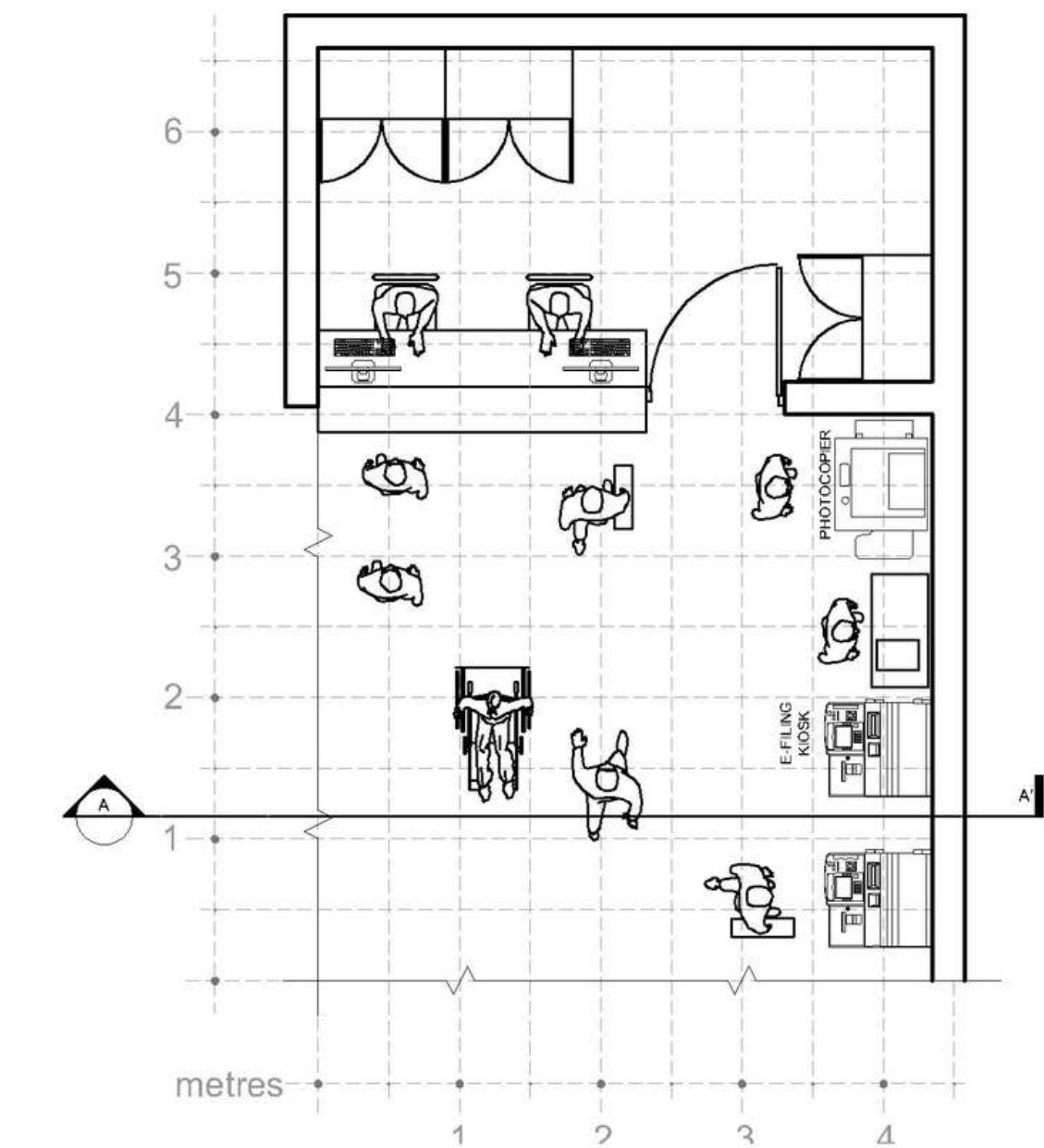


- ▶ **Acoustics:** The courtroom must be designed to have **optimal acoustical qualities** such that the proceedings are audible to the consumers as well as courtroom staff.

Consumer Forum: Room Designs

The rooms may be navigated in the order of movement a consumer is likely to take through the Forum:


1. Filing Section (including e-filing kiosk)





Room Size
4.35 m x 6.5 m

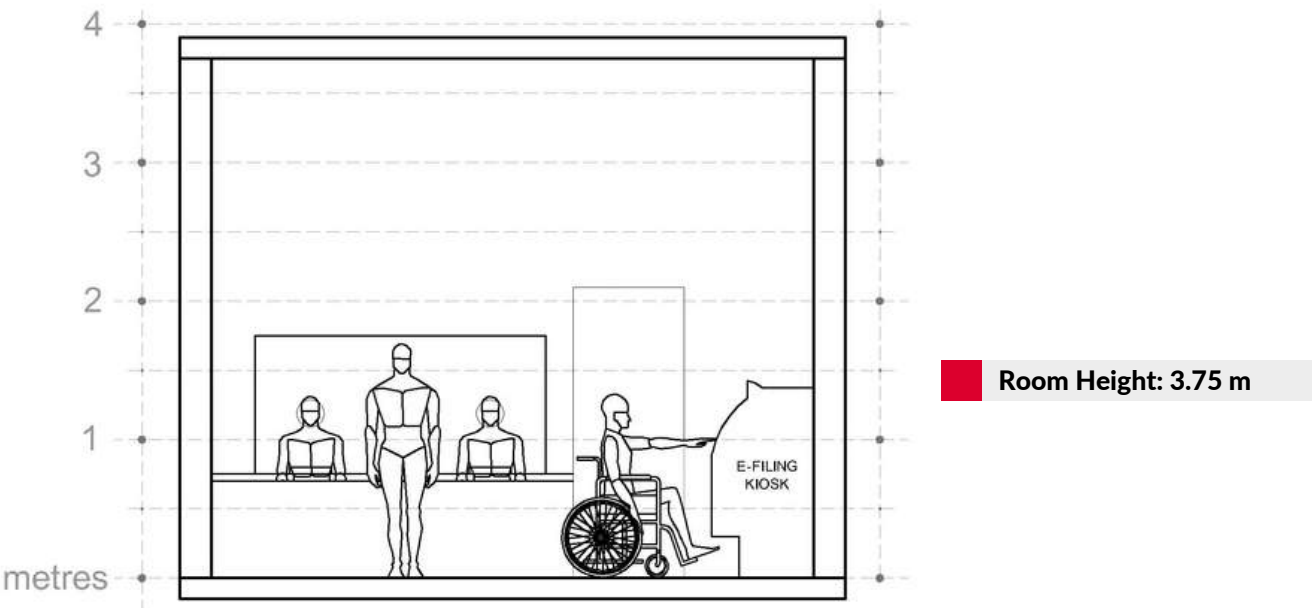
No of persons:
2 personnel +8 consumers

Users of the Space:


Advocates


Consumers


Filing Staff



Location: The Filing Section⁵⁴ must be placed such that it is on the axis of the entrance to the consumer forum. It should be facing the direction of movement of litigants into the forum and must be at the same floor level as that of the litigants.

Layout: The Filing Section must be designed to have a 'front of house' and 'back of house' counter. The 'back of house' portion must consist of tables with computers, storage, seating and leisure space for staff, while the 'front of house' can have queueing area, e-filing kiosks (placed such that staff can assist the users in case of difficulty using the kiosks), and a table for consumers to use to make necessary corrections/additions to their files. Appropriate provisions should be made in accordance with disability guidelines for persons with disabilities (refer to **General Instructions**).

The filing counter must be at a height of not more than 850 mm, with a space 700mm high and 350mm deep under the counter for wheelchair access

The entire space must be designed to be at human scale. It should be compact and welcoming, allowing for clear lines of sight, and accompanied by infographics simply designed but readable, in all local languages. Storage in the Filing Section should be determined by the average number of cases filed each day, multiplied by an average file size.

The public photocopier must be placed adjacent

to the 'front of house' part of the filing section, so that it is accessible to the public. It may be provided with two photocopying machines and a stationery counter, so that consumers can copy their petition at a nominal fee and buy other supplies they may need.

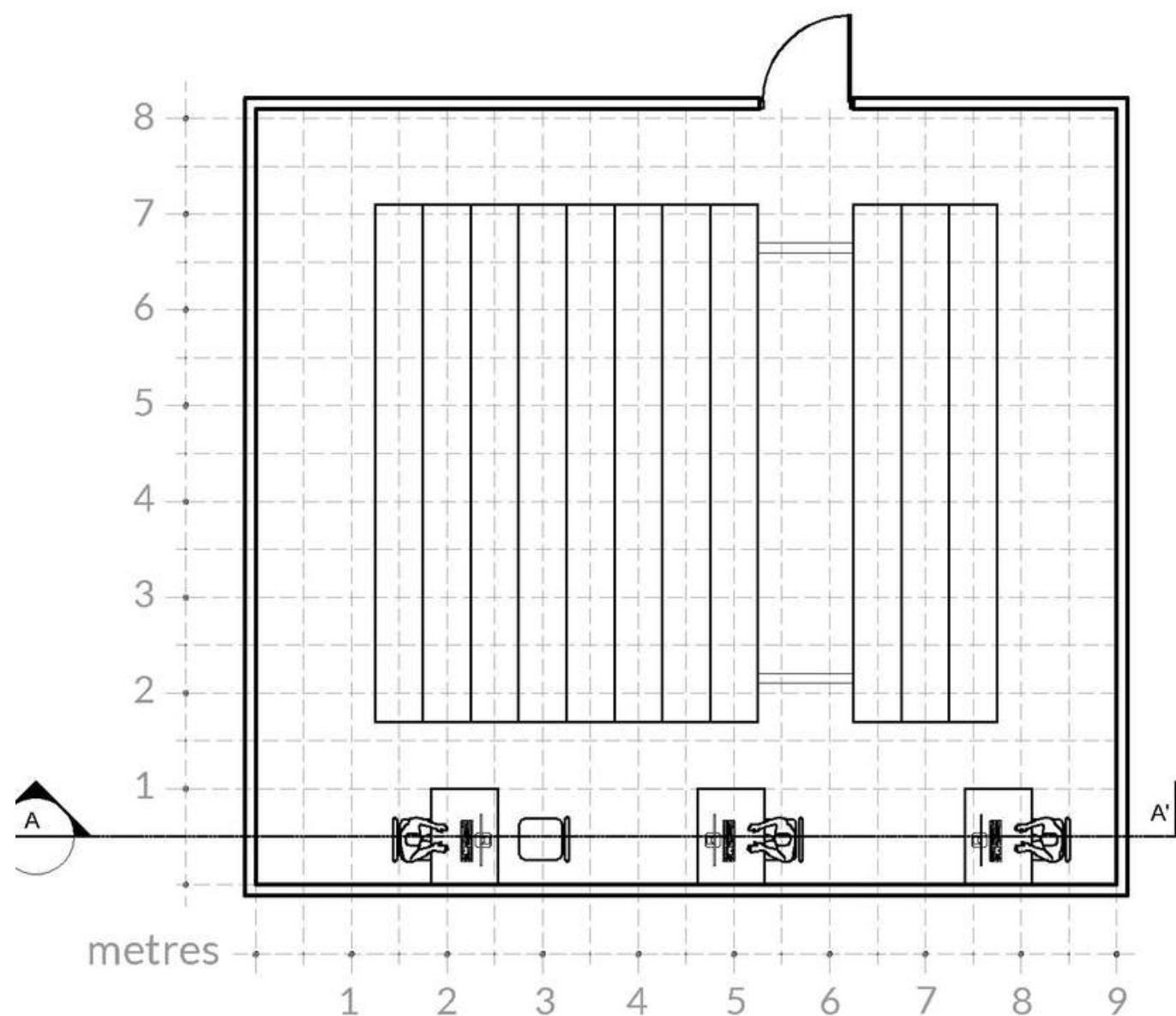
Information Architecture: The Filing Section must have information regarding the process of filing, details of fees, payment processes, etc., displayed in a publicly visible manner. Additional information regarding the rights of consumers, including their right to represent themselves, legal aid, availability of mediation processes, etc., must also be displayed clearly. The display boards should adhere to the accessibility rules mentioned in the **General Instructions**. If the forum is making e-filing available through their website or any other platform, it should be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and 2.1⁵⁵

The keypad of the e-filing kiosk and photocopying machine must be located at a height of 1200 mm or less.

Technology: Presently, there is a conscious move to replace physical filing of cases to electronic filing. A consumer forum should encompass this shift in filing practice. E-filing kiosks may be placed in the publicly accessible area of the Filing Section. To encourage consumers and advocates to file using the e-filing system, it is advisable to have more kiosks displayed at a conspicuous portion of the Filing Section.

⁵⁴ (n 40).
⁵⁵ (n 53).

2. Pending Section



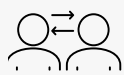
Room Size:
9.0 m x 8.1 m

No of persons: 3
No of files: 9240

Users of the Space:



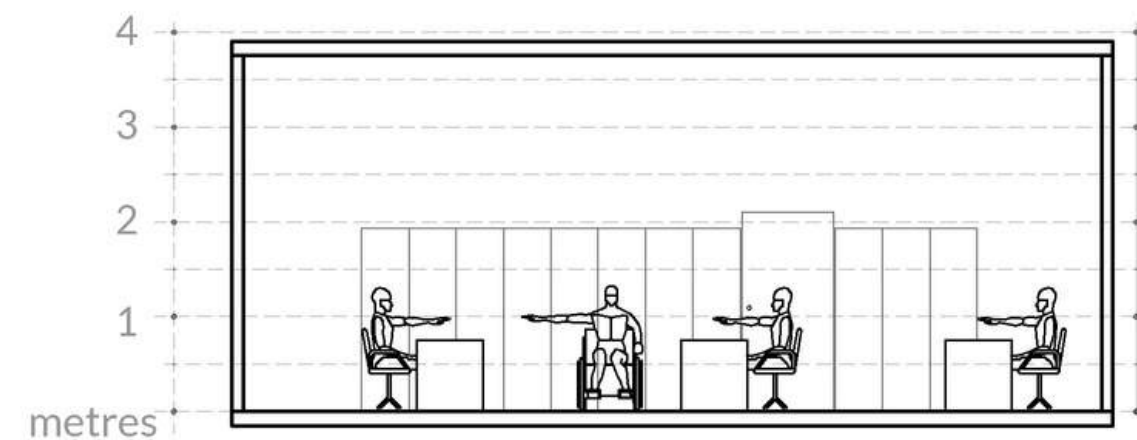
Advocates



Pending Room Staff



Sheristedar



Room Height: 3.75 m

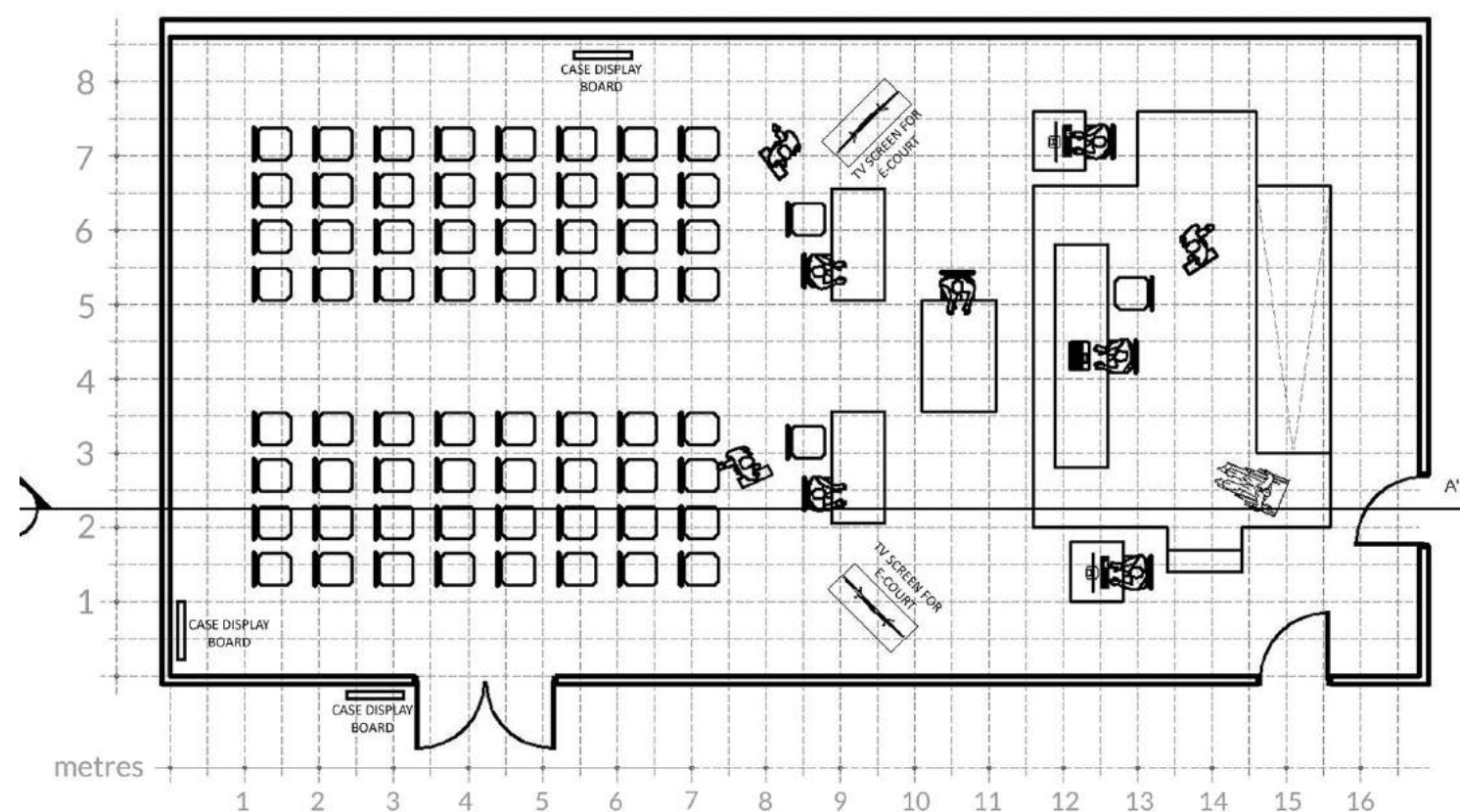
Location: Each court room must ideally have its own Pending Section, with limited access to the public but directly accessible to the courtroom. The floor of the Pending Section must not be raised and must be placed at the same floor level as the rest of the public spaces in the consumer forum, to permit easy entry of wheelchairs and trolleys to carry files.

Layout: The Pending Section is to be designed to be at human scale for the personnel there, with adequate circulation space between storage cabinets for wheelchairs and trolleys, worktables with computers, seating and leisure space for at least three personnel. Floors, seating and tables should be in accordance with accessibility guidelines for personnel with disabilities. Please refer to **General Instruction** for necessary dimensions.

Storage in any one of the Pending Sections may be determined by the average number of pending cases per courtroom in the consumer forum at any given time, multiplied by an average file size. Smart storage equipment may be utilised to be compact and to occupy less physical space in comparison to the current open/closed cupboard system that is followed in most courts.

Technology: The Pending Section may house data entry operators for dedicated digitisation of case files. This system, however, must be connected to complete online record-keeping infrastructure maintained by the consumer forum for case files, records or orders and judgements, and other ancillary data. If it is a State Commission, the consumer forum may itself house a dedicated "Control Room"/server room for such infrastructure.

3. Courtrooms



Room Size:
16.8 m x 8.6 m

No of persons:
10 + 64

Users of the Space:



Advocates



President &
Members



Court Room Staff



Consumers



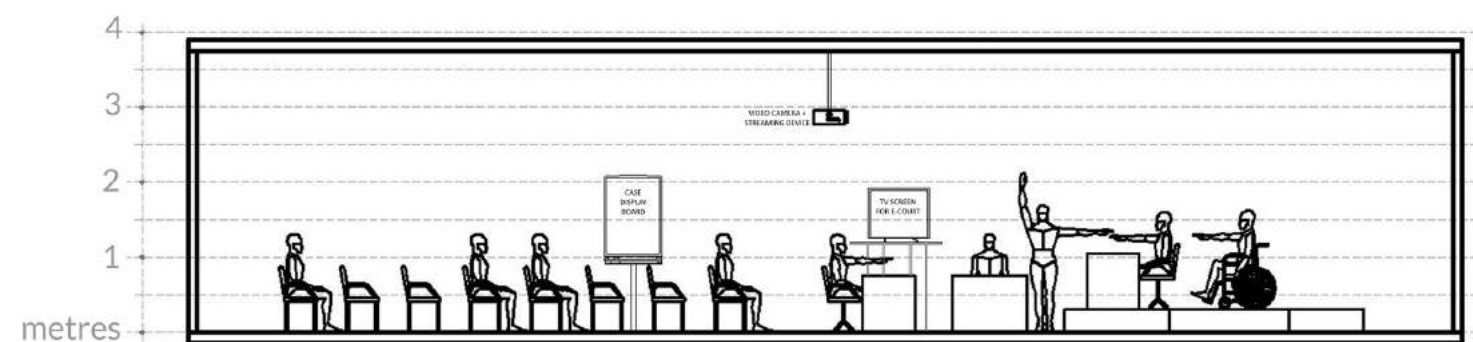
General Public

Location: All courtrooms in a consumer forum must indicate their function by being visible from and located in (or directly accessible from) the main corridor axis of the building. Each of the courtrooms must also be located within proximity to a staircase, lift and ramp, Members' chambers and a public waiting area.

Layout: The courtrooms may distinguish themselves from other rooms by having entrance doors (refer to **General Instructions**) at a slightly larger than human scale. This is not to sidestep either intimacy or cause intimidation but to provide for spaciousness. Additional ornamentation in the form of marble cladding, friezes with scrolls/ meanders may be avoided in the courtroom. Windows and doors (other than the entrance to the courtroom) can accordingly be of the same scale as those in the rest

of the building.

In a courtroom, the primary function is the hearing of cases, and all related roles (the Members, consumers, advocates, bench clerks and stenographers) are placed at one end of the courtroom. Those functions which are secondary (staff moving files in and out, and other consumers awaiting their turn) are placed on the other end. A strong axis exists between the primary and secondary functions, in that the secondary functions exist to serve the primary function, and directly face the primary function. Courtrooms themselves have an inherent axis between the judge and the litigants. The space designer's handling of the courtroom axis within the consumer forum can make this axis feel less unequal in nature.



Room Height: 3.75 m

Spaces within the courtroom can be designed so as to take into account personal distances, speaking distances, and larger distances to those of higher rank.

The Members can be thus located within the courtroom on a semi-fixed dais of height no more than 30 cm above other users.⁵⁶ The Members may be separated by a minimum of 60 cm from the nearest users of the court (the bench clerk and stenographer), a distance which permits communication.

The courtroom may be provided with semi-fixed and freely movable furniture (refer to **General Instructions** for details). A minimum of 2 wheelchair spaces in the courtroom must be provided for a seating capacity of up to 100 seats. This report has consciously done away with the distinct seating arrangements for lawyers and consumers; in sync with the core principle that it should be a consumer-friendly space and to encourage self-representation from consumers. All parts of the courtroom must be accessible for all (refer **General Instructions**).

For optimal acoustics in a courtroom, intelligibility of speech is critical. It can be achieved by making sure that background noise levels are low by limiting echoes, lowering reverberation times, and designing the courtroom to function well acoustically both with and without sound-enhancing audio equipment. For instance, in a rectangular courtroom the front walls (surrounding the bench) should be balanced with sound reflecting and absorbing surfaces such that sound from the bench is reflected towards the bench clerk and the litigants. The ceilings and floor, as well as rear walls (in the public seating area) should be finished with a sound-absorbent material.

This however does not necessarily go hand in

hand with requirements for virtual courts. For example, wood panelling is used in courtrooms because it meets the acoustical requirements of a non-virtual courtroom, but the acoustic performance of wood changes when used in conjunction with sound-enhancing equipment such as microphones and speakers. Testing and adjusting acoustics in a courtroom both with and without sound-enhancing audio systems in consultation with an acoustical expert is critical.

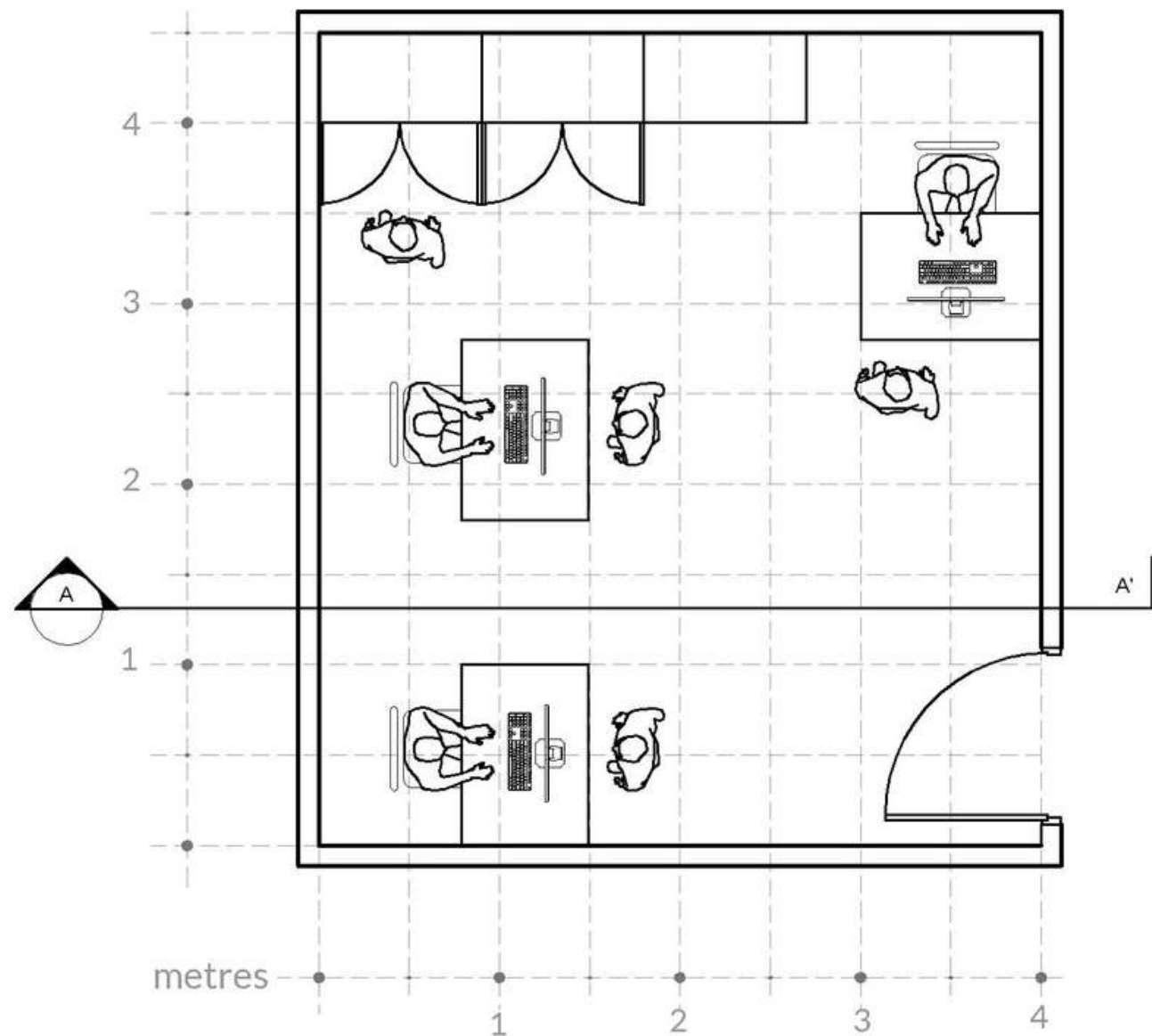
Information Architecture: Information just outside and within the courtroom must be provided with well-lit signages that follow the rules of accessibility as mentioned in the **General Instructions**. In addition, electronic case display boards should be placed inside the courtroom and cauelists must be placed outside each courtroom. Audible announcements are desirable within the courtroom.

Technology: With the advent of virtual courts, the courtroom should be provided with audio-visual equipment such as screens and cameras for video conferencing, and microphones for the Members. These may consist of two-way interactive televisions (IATV), a combo VCR/CD/DVD Player, fixed microphones for the Members, movable microphones for lawyers and consumers, and speakers placed such that proceedings may be audible to the IATVs. The bench clerk and stenographer must also be provided with computers. The Members should each be provided with a computer, a laptop or a screen inset into their desk

In State Commissions and District Commissions, one of these courtrooms may be (or an additional courtroom) designated as a regional bench of the National Commission and State Commission, respectively. The design of such a regional bench will remain the same as described above, with the addition of a seat on the dais for an expert.

⁵⁶ Consumer Protection (Consumer Commission Procedure) Regulations 2020, Regulation 3(2).

4. Dispatch/Process section



Room Size:
4.0 m x 4.5 m

No of persons: 3

Users of the Space:



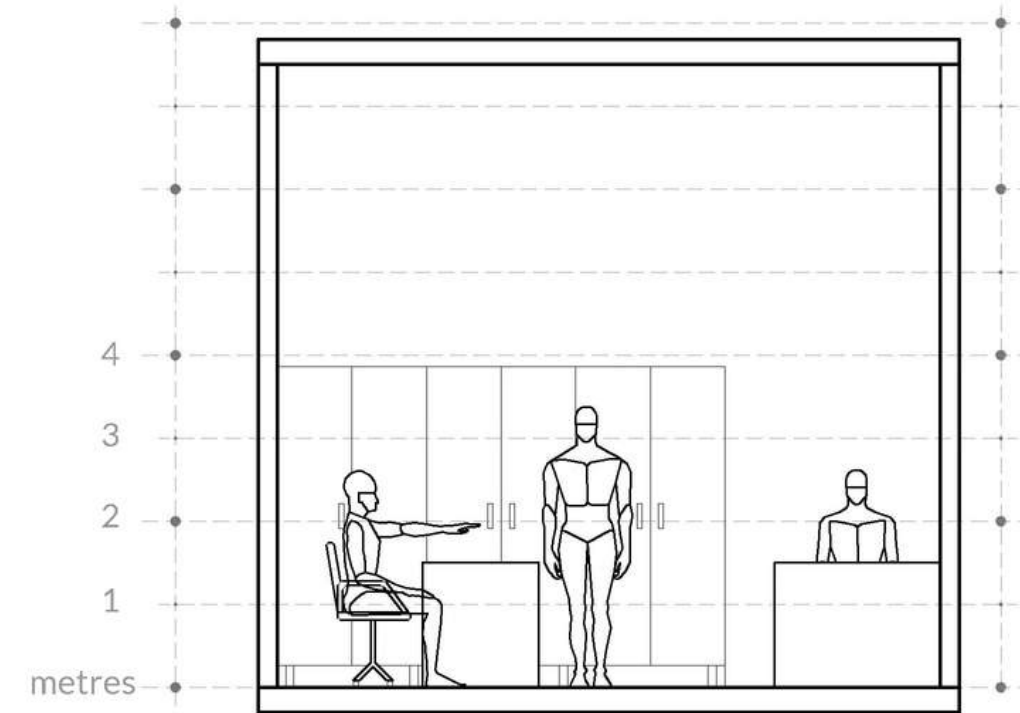
Advocates



Consumers



Dispatch Section
Staff



Room Height: 3.75 m

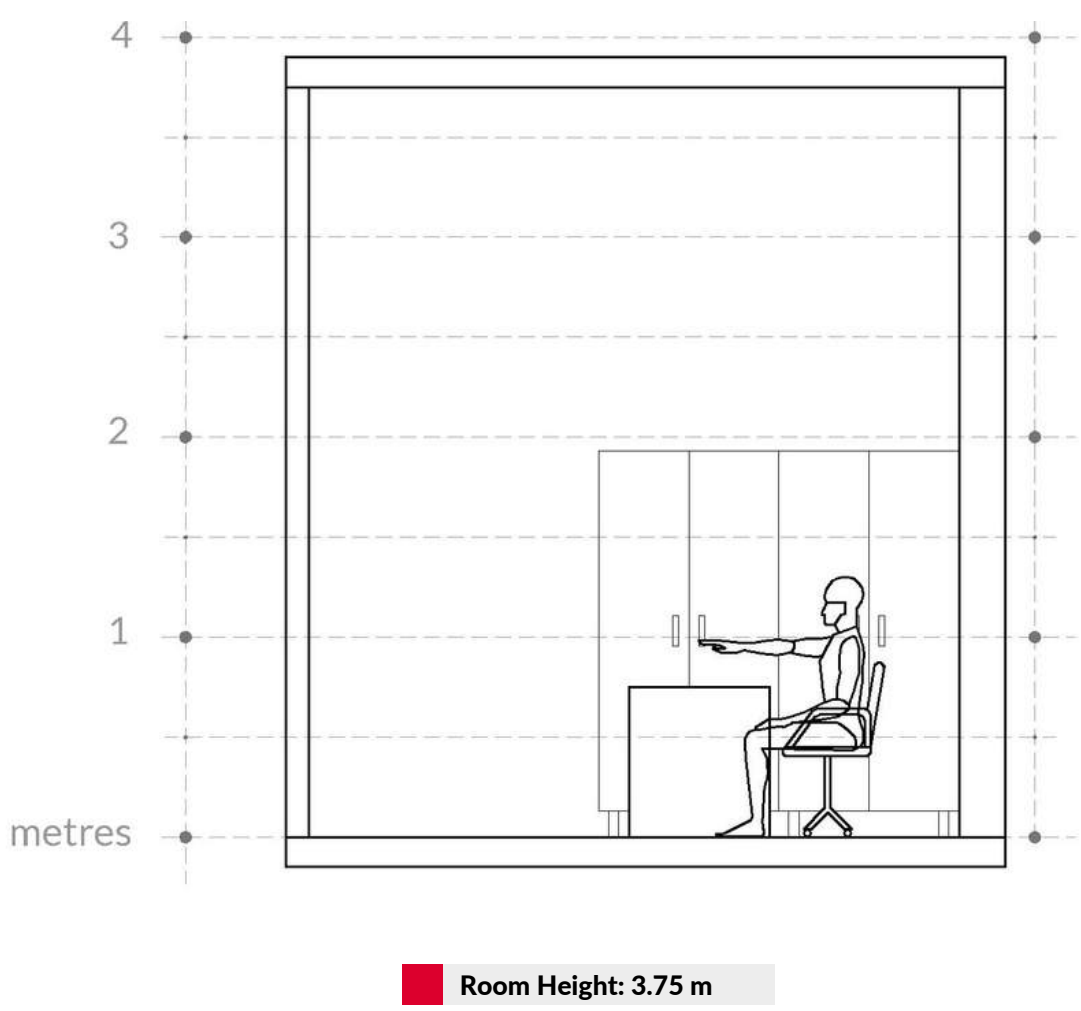
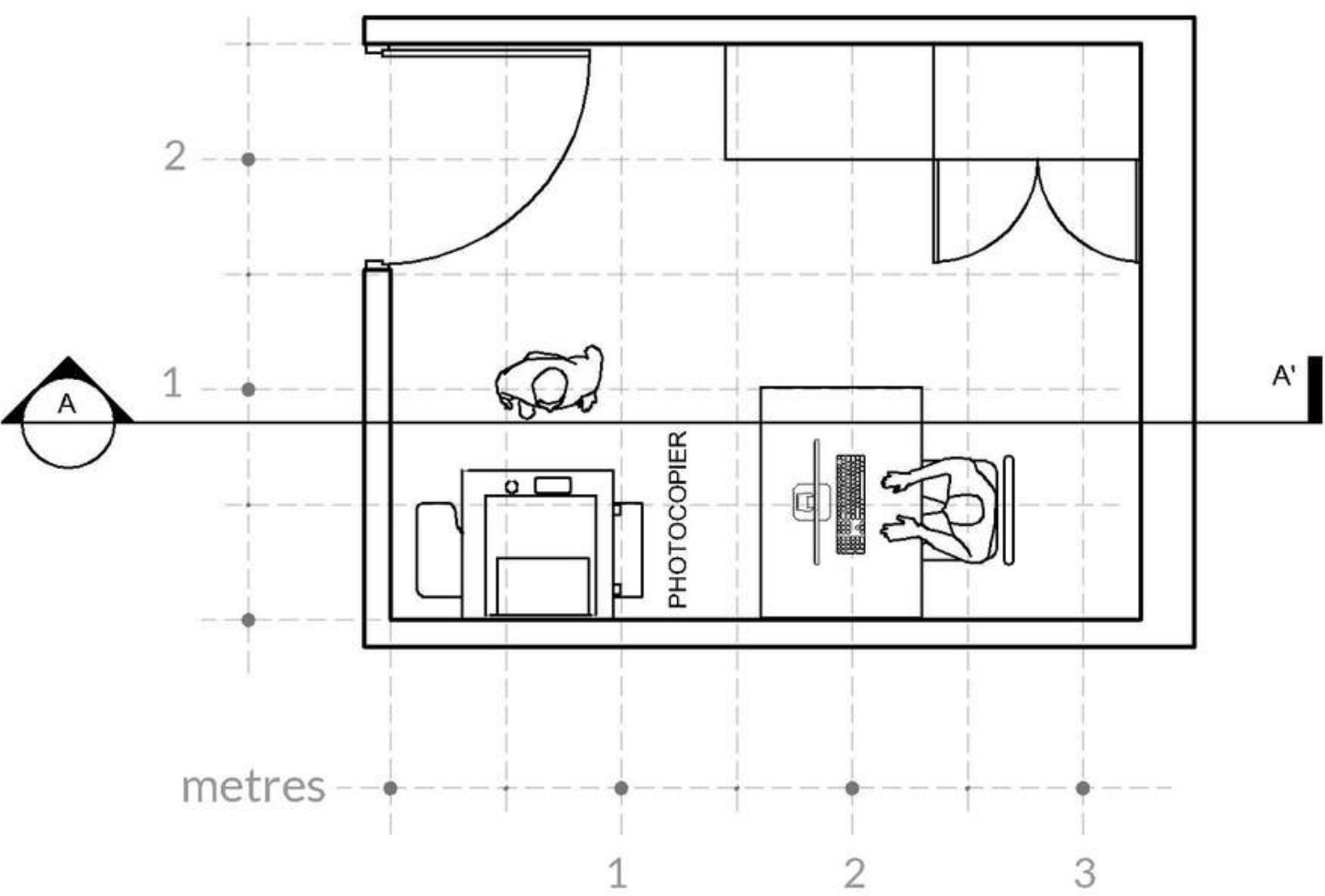
Location: The Dispatch Section should be placed together with the Filing Section and Registrar's office to dispatch notices as required.

Layout: The Dispatch Section must have enough space for two worktables with computers, adequate circulation and leisure space for the staff. Storage in the Dispatch Section may be determined based on the requirements of the court. The Dispatch Section floors, counter and tables as well as seating must be accessible to staff with disabilities. The entire space may be designed to be at human scale: compact and welcoming, allowing for clear lines of sight.

Information Architecture: The space should be accompanied by explanatory infographics, simply designed but readable, in all local languages with appropriate signage.

Technology: The Dispatch Section may house a nodal officer for dedicated acceptance and processing of electronic notices. This system, however, must be connected to complete online record-keeping infrastructure maintained for case files and other necessary data for the consumer forum at the district and state level.

5. Copying Section



Room Size:
3.25 m x 2.5 m

No of persons: 1

Users of the Space:


Advocates


Consumers


Court Room Staff


Copying Section Staff

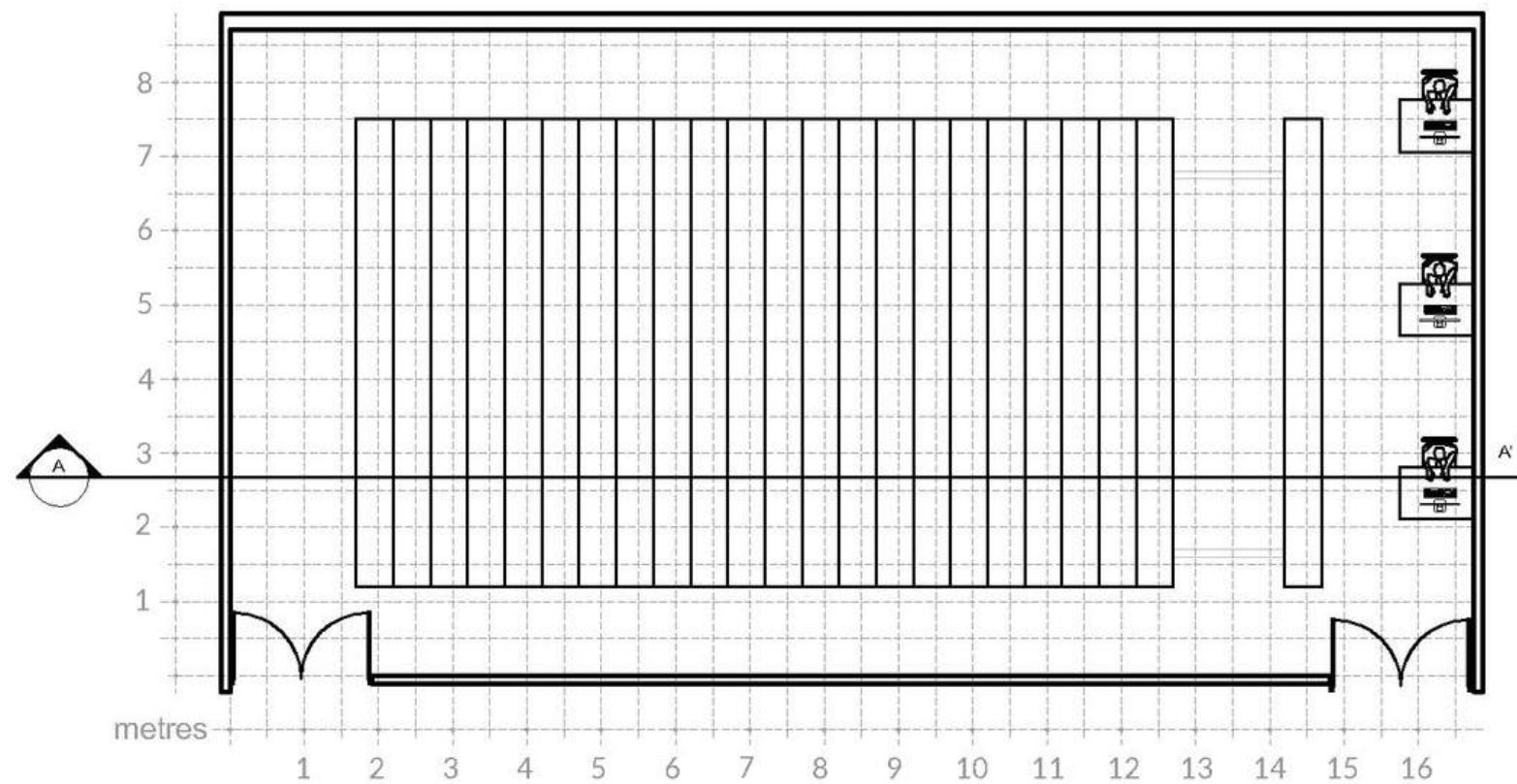
Location: The Copying Section⁵⁷ may be placed such that it is as close to the Registrar's Office and other administrative sections, but with a minimum interface with public common areas.

Layout: The Copying Section may be designed to have worktables with computers, storage, a

photocopying machine, and leisure space for staff members. Appropriate provisions for personnel with disabilities must be provided. Storage volume to be provided in the Copy Section may be determined by the requirements of the court.

⁵⁷ Supreme Court of India, 'Handbook on Practice and Procedure and Office Procedure' (Supreme Court of India, 2017) <<https://main.sci.gov.in/pdf/LU/ppop2017.pdf>> accessed on 22 July 2020.

6. Record Room



Room Size:
16.75 x 8.7 m

No of persons: 3
No of files: 22540

Users of the Space:



Sheristedar



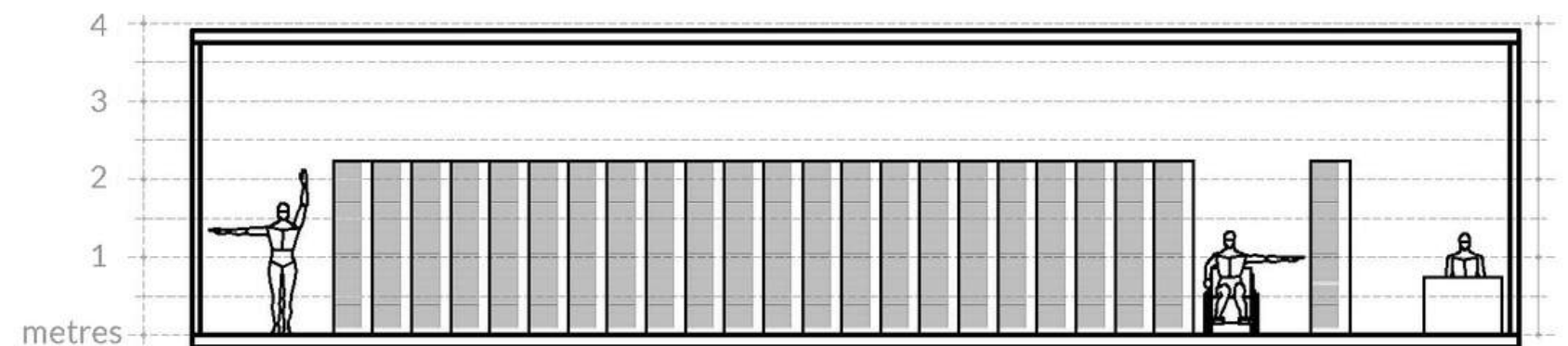
Record Room
Staff

Location: The Record Room⁵⁸ may be placed such that it is within proximity of the copying section and evidence storage. The floor of the Record Room must not be raised but placed at the same floor level as the rest of the public spaces in the consumer forum, to permit easy entry of wheelchairs and trolleys to carry files.

Layout: The Record Room may be designed to be at human scale, with adequate circulation space between storage cabinets for wheelchairs and trolleys. It may have computers, storage, seating and leisure space for staff. Seating and accessible tables for personnel with disabilities must be provided (refer **General Instructions**). Storage in the Record Room may be determined

by the average number of cases filed every year, multiplied by an average file size and by the number of years they are required to be stored.⁵⁹

Technology: The record room may house data entry operators for dedicated digitisation of case files. This system must be connected to complete online record-keeping infrastructure for case files and other necessary data for the consumer forum at the district and state level, which may be placed alongside the Record Room. Smart storage equipment may be utilised to be compact and to occupy less physical space in comparison to the current open/ closed cupboard system that is followed in most courts.

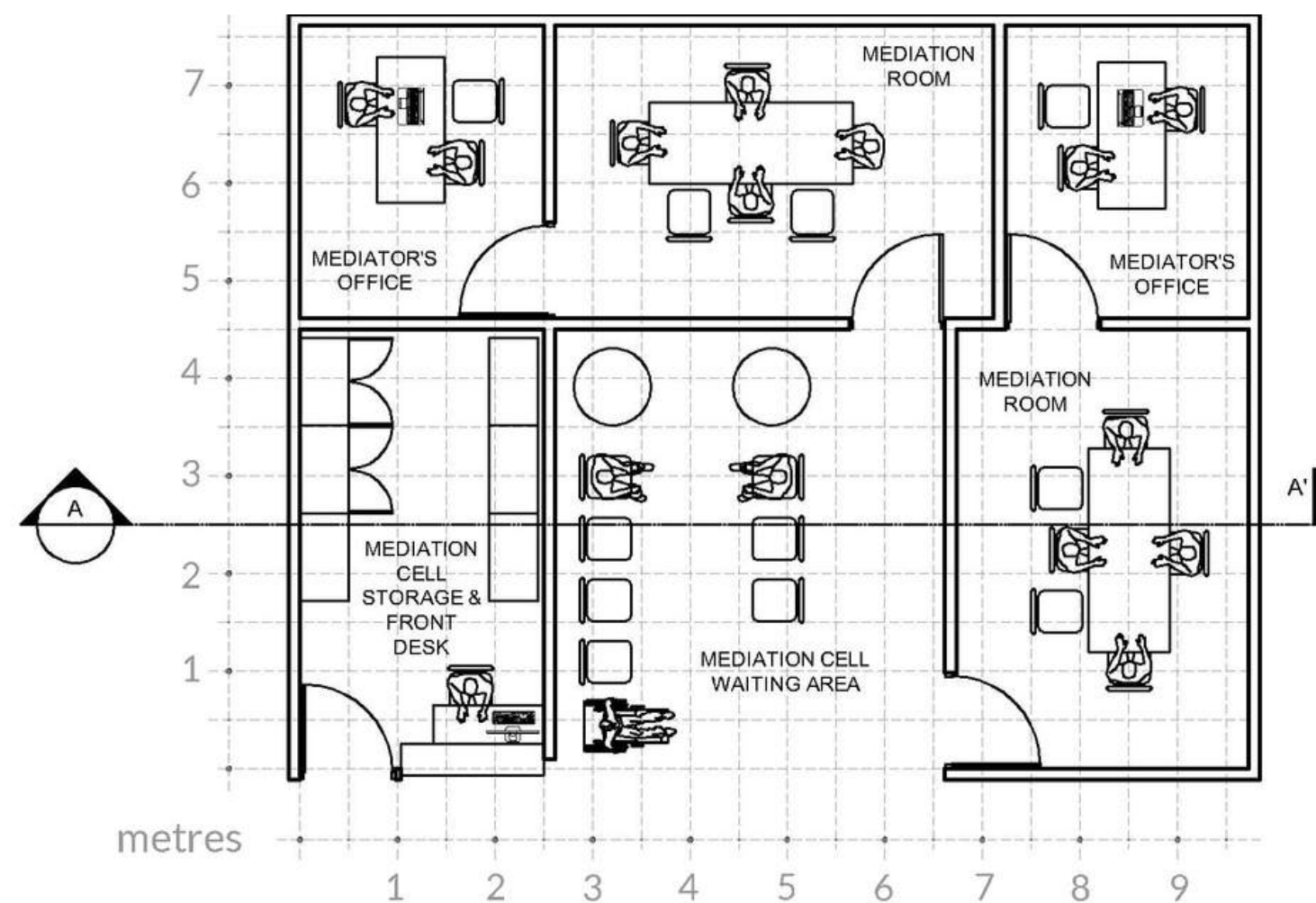


Room Height: 3.75 m

⁵⁸ (n 40).

⁵⁹ Consumer Protection (Consumer Commission Procedure) Regulations 2020, Regulation 20.

7. Mediation Cell



Room Size:
9.7 m x 7.6 m

No of persons:
1 personnel + 2 mediators + 10 consumers + 10 waiting

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, emphasizes alternative dispute resolution methods like mediation. The court infrastructure should include adequate facilities to reflect this.

Users of the Space:



Advocates



Consumers



Mediators



Office Staff

Location: The Mediation Cell⁶⁰ must be located within the proximity of staircases, lifts and ramps, in order to be easily accessible to those who have come specifically for mediation (mediators and parties). It must be easily found with appropriate signage.

Layout: Mediation is between parties who are equally placed and in a 'collaborative' role. Users will want this to be reflected in their arrangement in space. Appropriate provision must be made for parties facing one another as well as sitting side by side. The Mediation Cell may thus be welcoming and intimate, at human scale, with a table to seat all parties and Mediators. It should provide for a more casual setting, ample circulation space, adequate ventilation, light, and storage for mediation files. A waiting area for the parties can be provided.

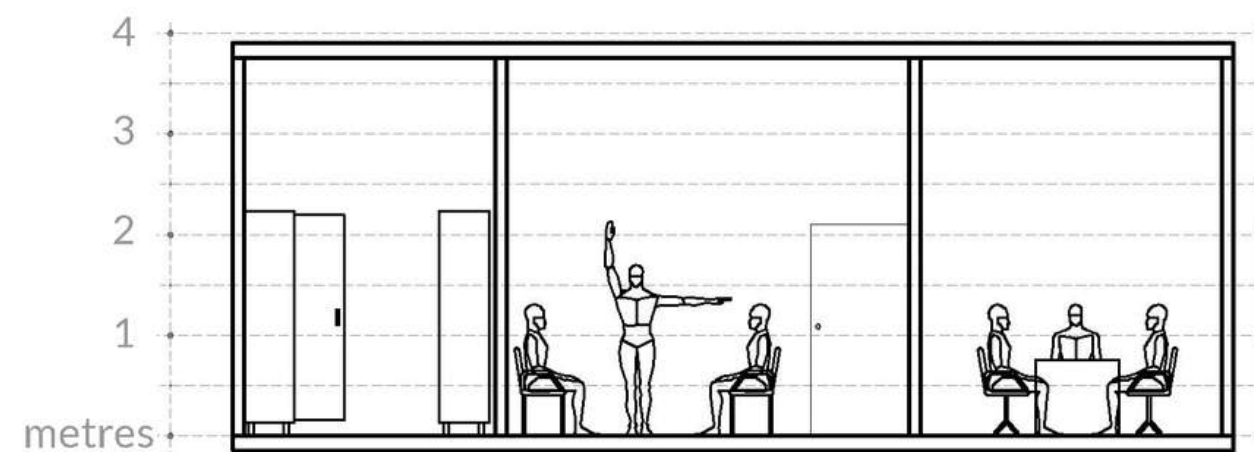
The functional area of the Mediation Cell may have moveable furniture and partitions to separate the mediation spaces, the mediators' offices, storage space for mediation files and spaces for other personnel. Mediators' offices as quiet working spaces to write up proceedings, may be provided.

It is desirable for the Mediation Cell to have an approach with tactile flooring materials, and appropriate doors and windows that permit usage by persons with disabilities.

All tables, counters, and work surfaces as well as seating in the Mediation Cell must be of accessible dimensions as mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

Information Architecture: The Mediation Cell must have information regarding the process of mediation, fees details, payment processes, list of empanelled mediators etc., displayed in a publicly visible manner. Additional information regarding the rights of consumers, process of appointment of mediators, availability of mediation processes, etc., must also be displayed clearly throughout the forum. The display boards should adhere to the accessibility rules mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

Technology: The Mediation Cell may be additionally provided with audio-visual equipment such as screens and cameras for video conferencing, and microphones for the mediators and parties. These may consist of two-way interactive televisions (IATV), a combo VCR/CD/DVD Player and speakers placed such that proceedings may be audible to the IATVs. Keeping in perspective that e-mediation as part of Online Dispute Resolution is gaining importance, the infrastructure should facilitate consumer forum annexed online mediation.

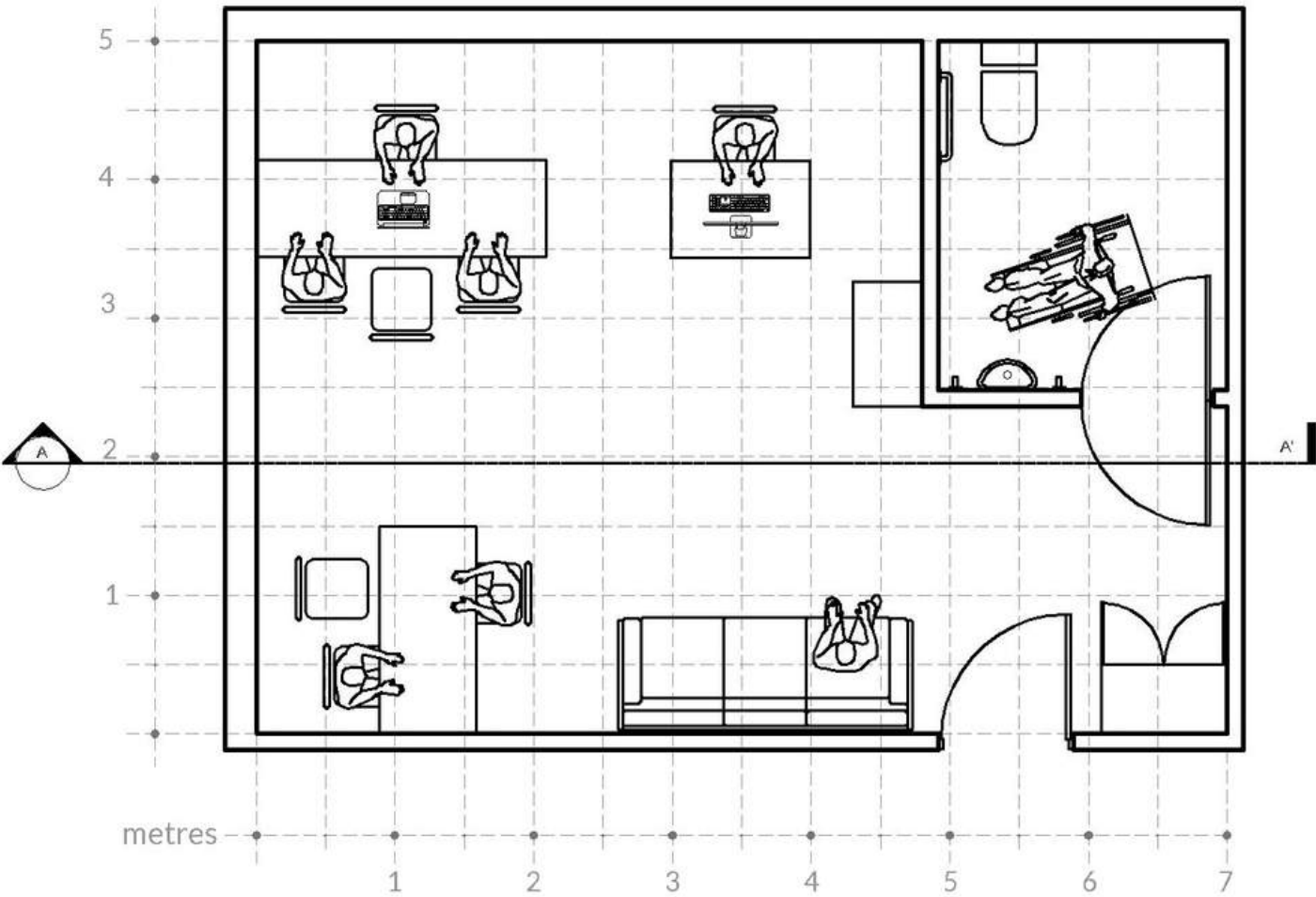


Room Height: 3.75 m

⁶⁰ The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Section 74.

The other functions that support the consumer forum can be navigated in the following sequence:

1.Registrar's Office



Room Size:
7.0 m x 5.0 m

No of persons:
3

Users of the Space:



Advocates



Consumers



Registrar



Sheristedar



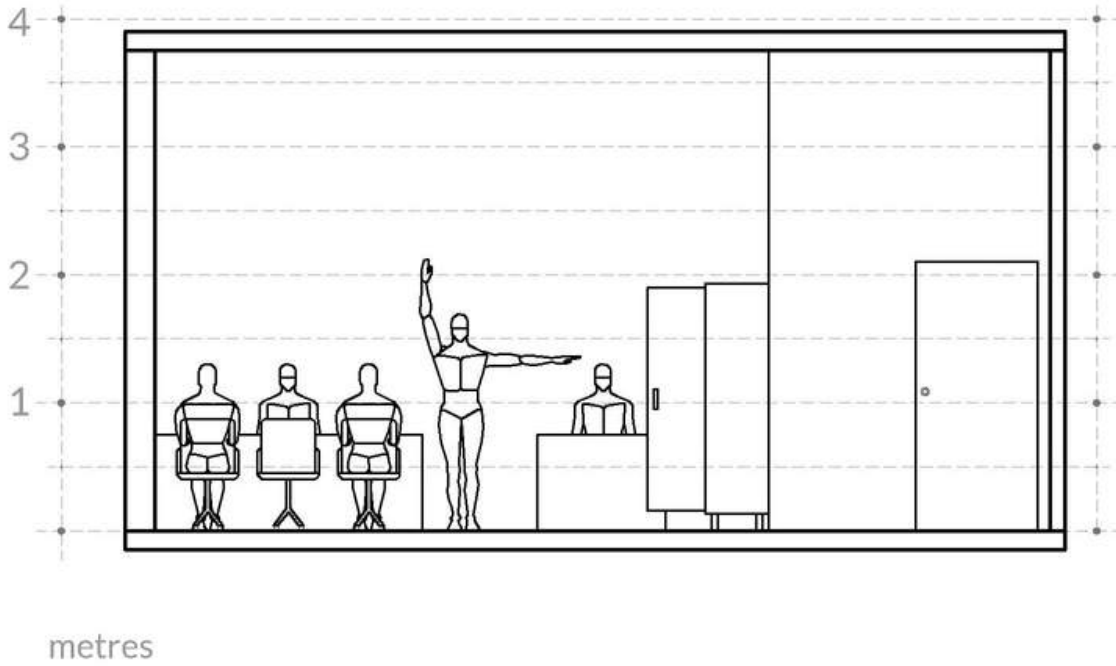
Secretary



Stenographer



All Administrative
Staff



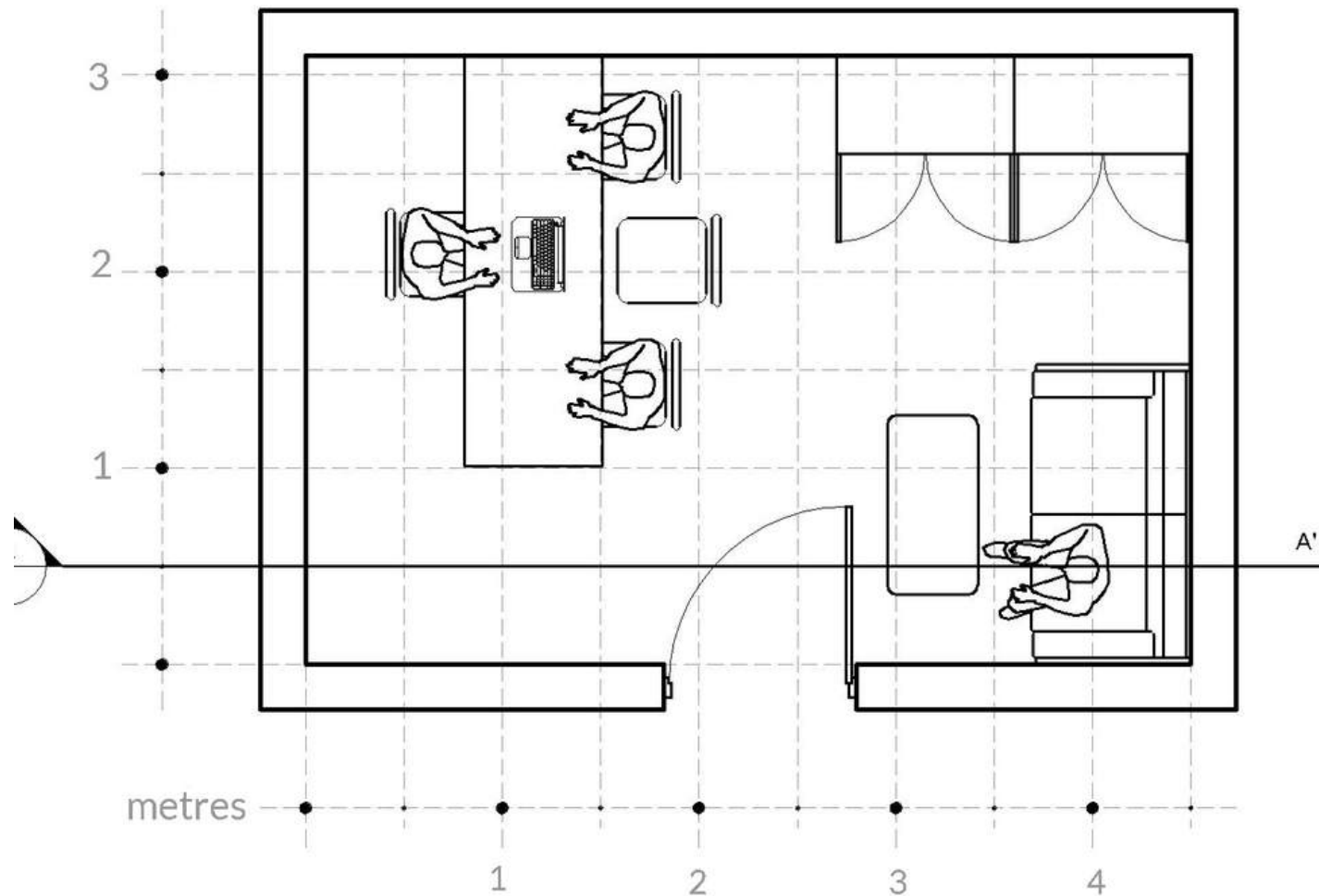
Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: The Registrar plays several roles within the consumer forum which are essential to its administrative stability. It may be located close to staircases, lifts and ramps and with as much proximity as possible to the filing section and other administrative offices.

Layout: While the Registrar's room must be at human scale, it needs to be larger in size to facilitate efficient handling of the varied functions. It must be provided with adequate storage for a day's worth of case files from all courtrooms (which will also accommodate storage for administration related files), a personal workplace with a computer for the Registrar, another workspace with a computer for the Registrar's personal secretary or stenographer, a conference table for meetings, and provision for additional seating.

The spatial roles played in the Registrar's office are both 'confronting' and 'collaborating', which can be provided for with moveable furniture. The confronting spatial roles include the interactions with the consumers and the collaborating spatial roles include interactions with other officers of the forum. All floors, tables and work surfaces as well as seating in the Registrar's office must be of accessible dimensions/materials as mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

2. Assistant Registrar's office



Room Size:
4.5 m x 3.1 m

No of persons:
1

Users of the Space:



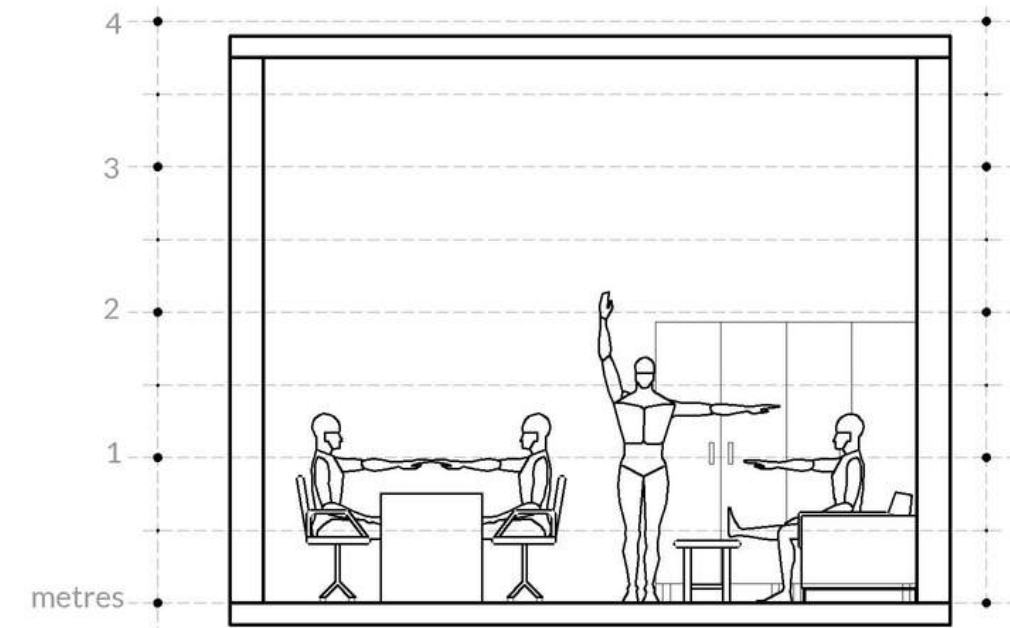
Assistant
Registrar



Sheristedar



ADMIN
All Administrative
Staff



Section A-A'

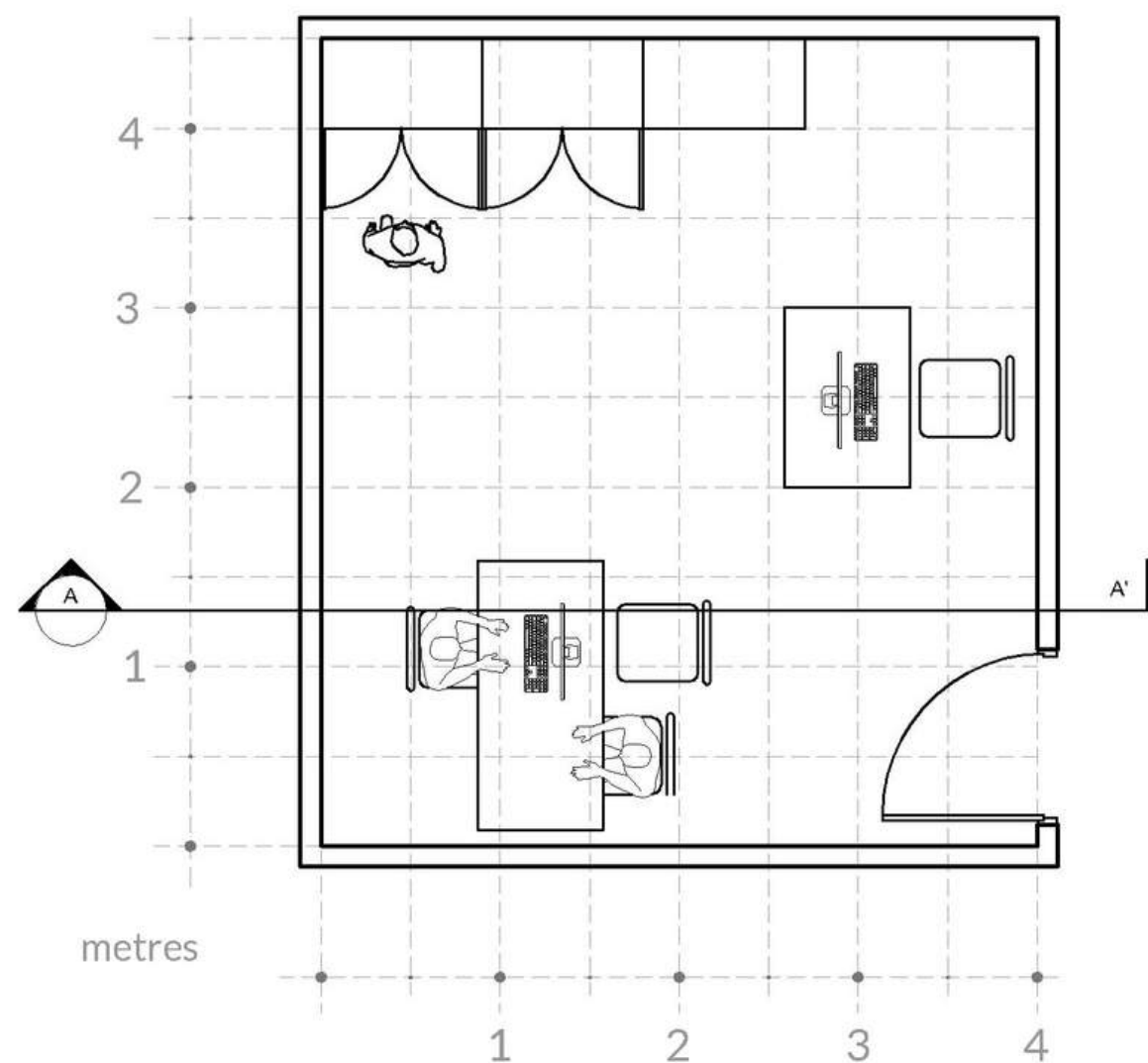
Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: The Assistant Registrar may assist the Registrar in several of her roles and take on the Registrar's role when necessary. It may be located close to the Registrar's office, as well as within proximity of staircases, lifts and ramps, but with limited interface with public common areas.

Layout: The Assistant Registrar's office may be provided with adequate storage for a day's worth of case files from all courtrooms (which will also accommodate storage for administrative files), a personal workplace with

a computer for the Assistant Registrar, and additional seating. It may be provided with moveable furniture. All floors, tables and work surfaces as well as seating in the office must be of accessible dimensions/materials as mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

3. Sheristedar's office



Room Size:
4.0 m x 4.5m

No of persons:
2

Users of the Space:



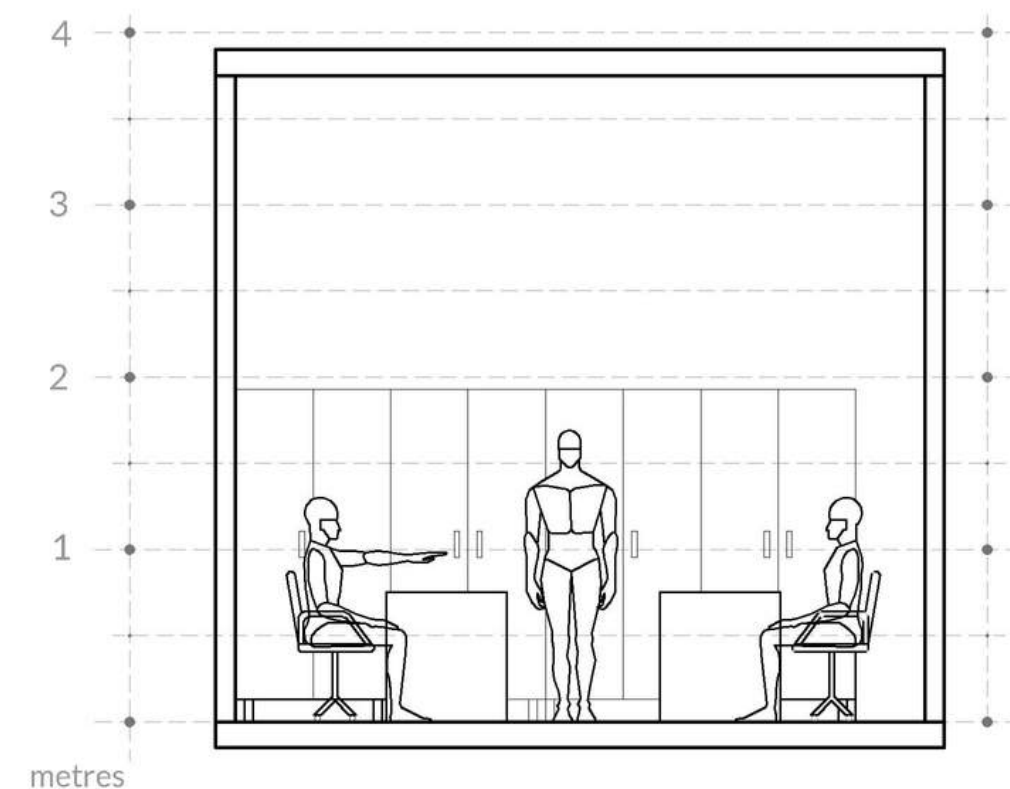
Advocates



Sheristedar



ADMIN
All Administrative Staff



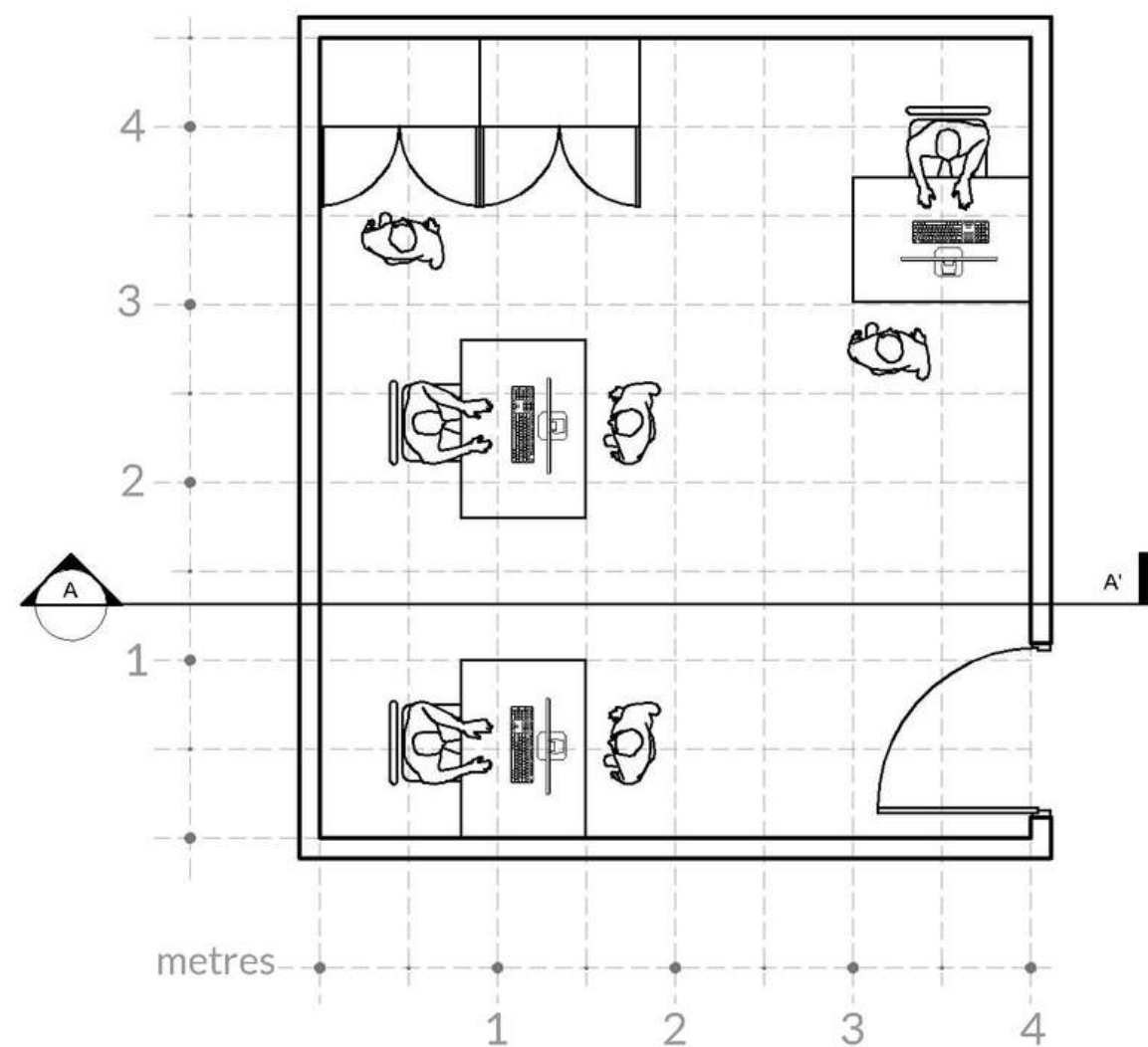
Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: The Sheristedar⁶¹ (or equivalent in other states) is an overseer who works closely with all personnel in the consumer forum. The Sheristedar may be provided with a cabin within proximity to the Courtroom, Registrar's office, Accounts Section, Dispatch Section, Filing Section and Record Room. Direct interface with public areas is permissible.

Layout: The Sheristedar's office may be provided with moveable furniture. All floors, tables and work surfaces as well as seating in the Sheristedar's office must be of accessible dimensions/materials as mentioned in the **General Instructions**. The Sheristedar's office may be provided with a personal worktable with a computer and seat for the Sheristedar, and seating for additional persons where possible.


⁶¹ Karnataka State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, 'RTI Disclosure' (KSCDRC) Chapter 2 Powers and duties of Officers and Employees <<https://kscdrc.kar.nic.in/statecommission.htm>> accessed on 01 August 2020.

4. Stenographer's Office

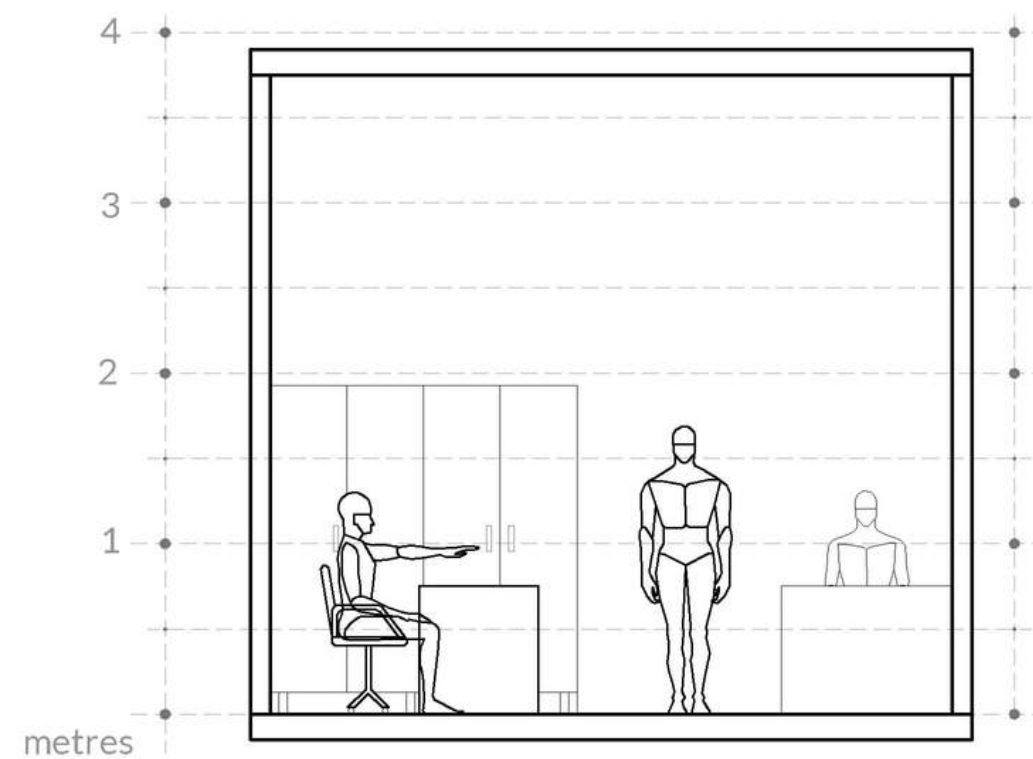


Room Size: 4.0 m x 4.5 m	No of persons: 3
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Users of the Space:



Stenographer

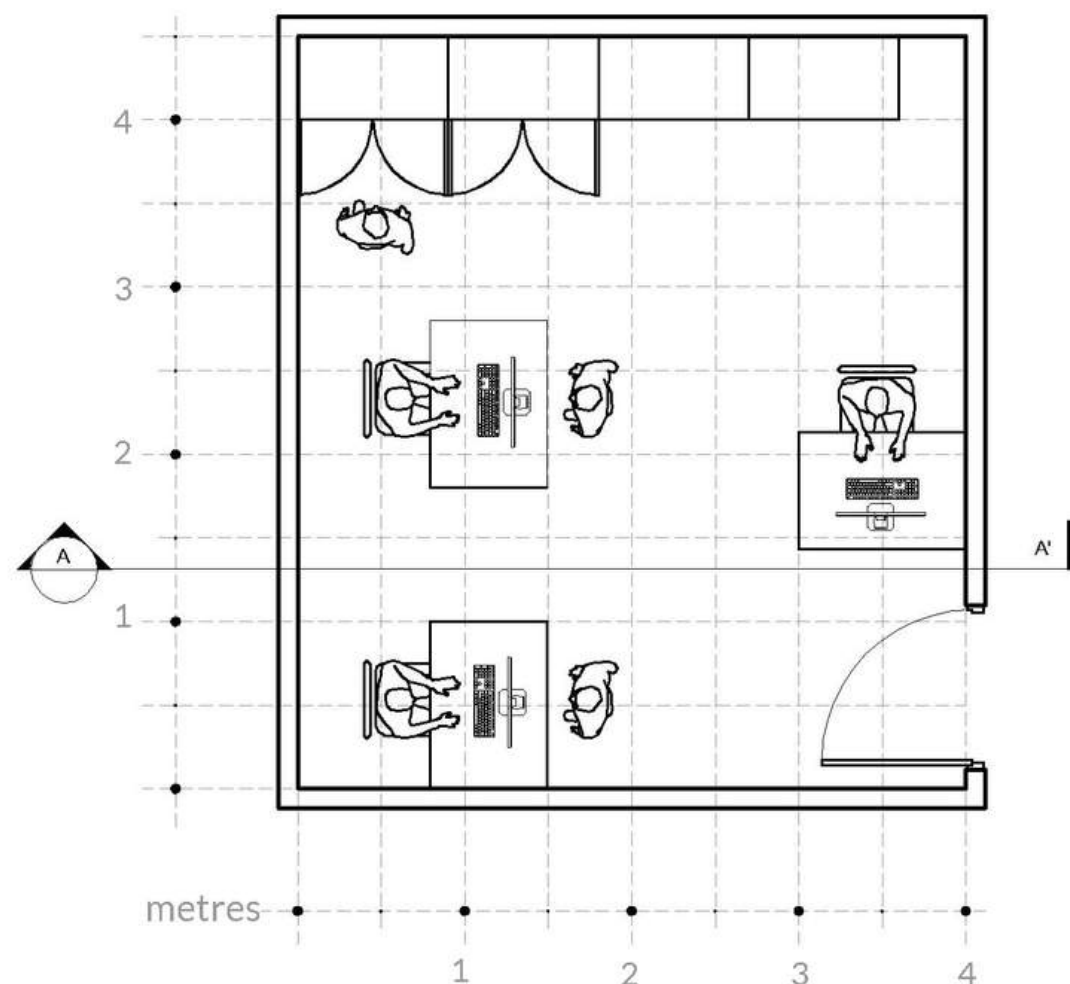


Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: Each of the courtrooms in the consumer forum must be designed to have direct access to a room for stenographers/judgement writers, and another stenographers' room may be provided near the Registrar's office.

Layout: The stenographers' room may be designed at human scale, to accommodate one worktable, seating for the stenographer/judgement writer, and additional seating, plus adequate circulation space to allow for wheelchair users. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided. The dimensions of the worktable and seating must be of the appropriate dimensions as mentioned in **General Instructions** to facilitate wheelchair access.

5. Accounts Section



Room Size:
4.0 m x 4.5 m

No of persons:
3

Users of the Space:



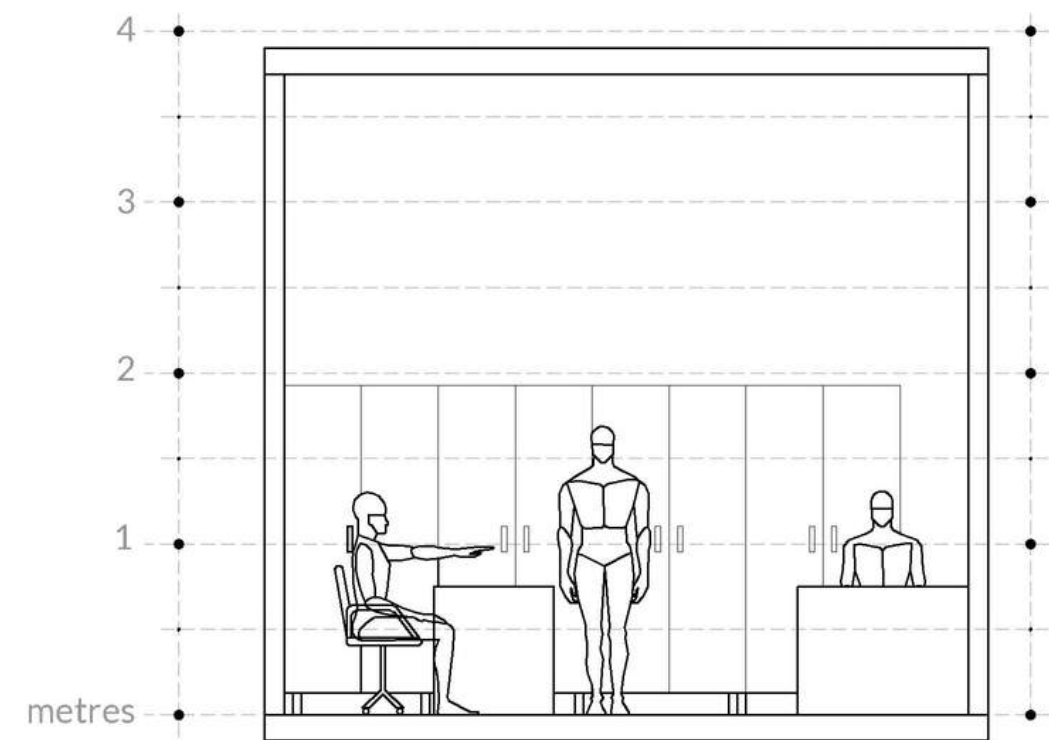
Advocates



Consumers



Accounts Section
Staff



Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: The Accounts Section may be placed such that it is within proximity of the Registrar's office.

Layout: The Accounts Section may be designed to be at human scale, with adequate circulation space between storage cabinets for wheelchairs and trolleys, worktables with computers for personnel and leisure space. Seating for personnel with disabilities may be provided and all tables must be designed for wheelchair access as mentioned in **General Instructions**. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided.

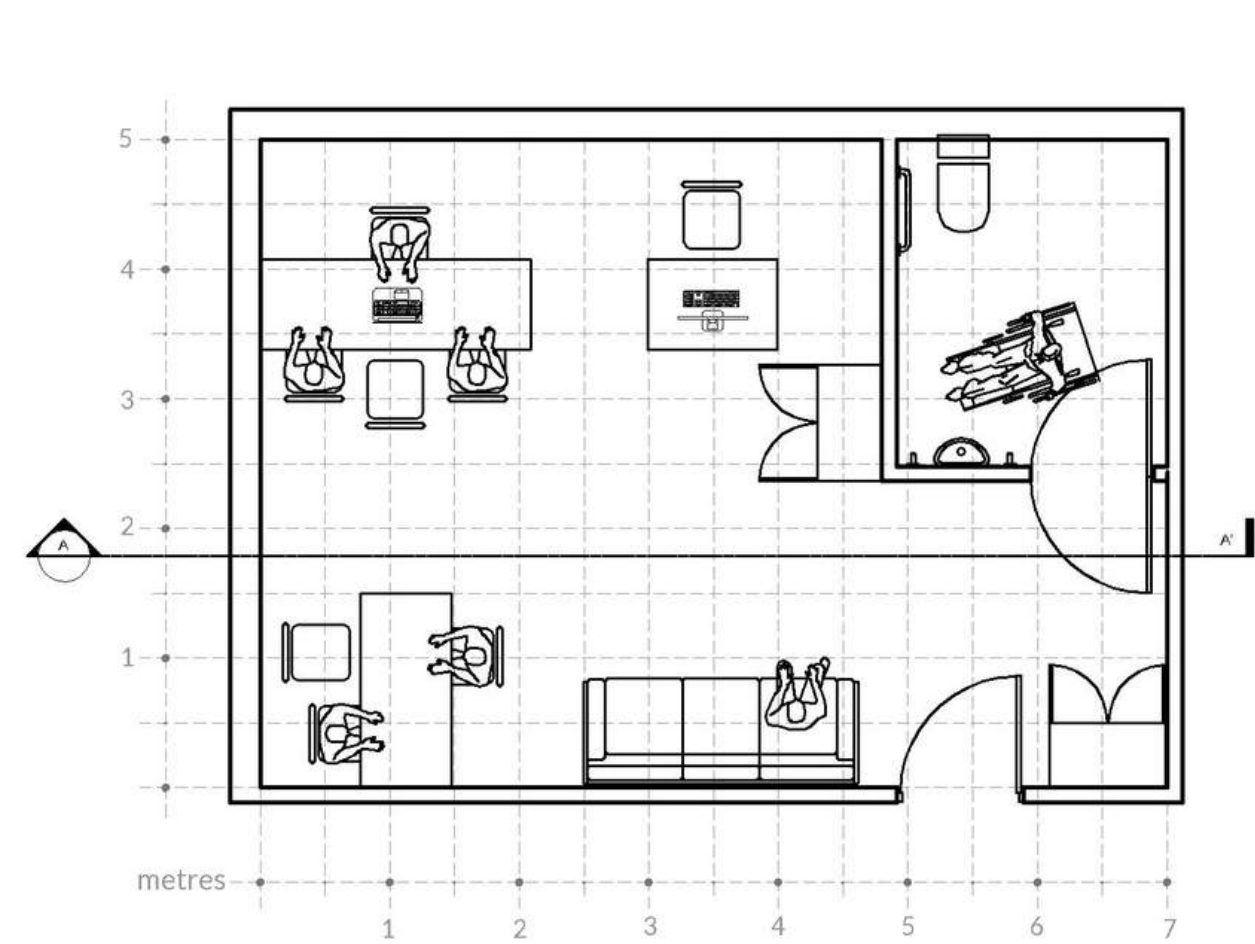
Storage in the Accounts Section may be determined by the space required for storage of forum's internal accounts for such duration as

determined by law or by the President of the Forum. In addition to this, some form of secured locker space must be provided to store any cash, related negotiable instruments and confidential financial documents within the Accounts Section.

A minimum storage space of 3.44 cubic metres (each cupboard of height 1.93 m) may be considered.

The cupboards must have handles no higher than 1200 mm. The Accounts Section may also house dedicated data entry operator(s) for digitisation of accounts.

6. President's Chamber



Room Size:
7.0 m x 5.0 m

No of persons:
1

Users of the Space:

President

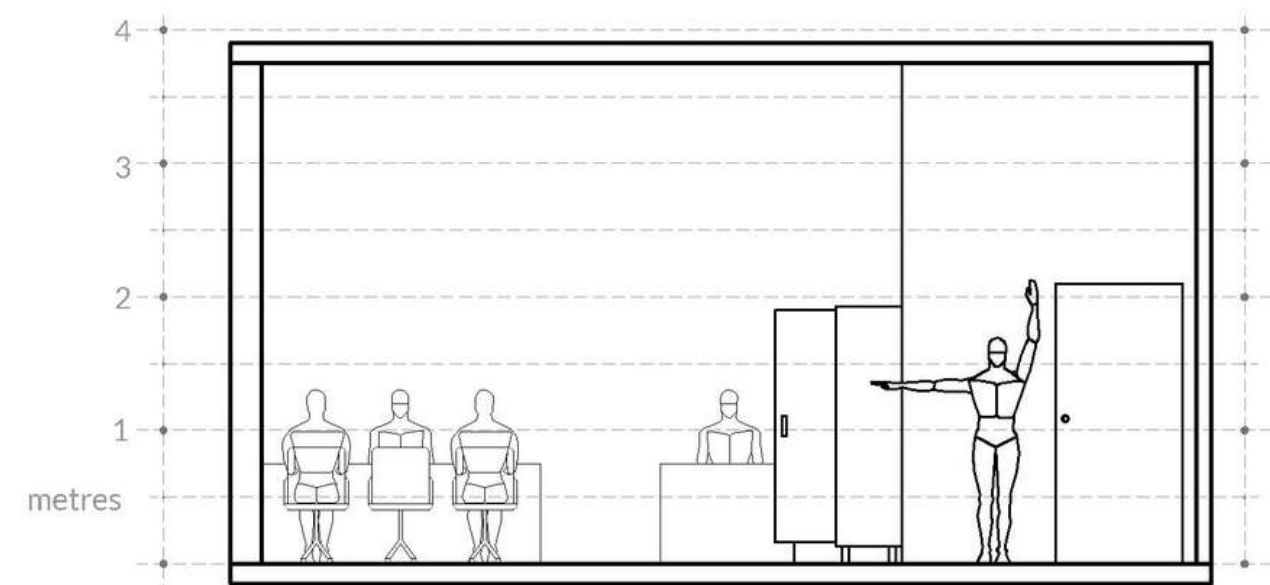
Registrar

Assistant Registrar

Stenographer

Members

Personal Secretary to the President



Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: The President plays several roles within the consumer forum which are essential to its functioning. The President's chamber must be placed adjacent to the principal bench. It must also have direct access to an office for her personal secretary and an attached accessible and unisex toilet.

The President's chamber may be located close to staircases, lifts and ramps such that they have limited interface with public common areas. In case of a wheelchair-using President, appropriate parking space must be provided (refer **Parking Section** below for details).

Layout: The President's chamber may be designed to indicate her place in the court's functioning, and to highlight the responsibilities she has over other Members. The President's chamber may be designed at human scale to accommodate one worktable with a computer for the President, an additional conference table with chairs, four sofas and a coffee table for informal discussions, seating for more personnel, and adequate circulation space to allow for wheelchair users. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided. The worktable and meeting table must be of appropriate dimensions keeping in mind the rules of accessibility as mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

7. Personal Secretary to President

Location: An office for the President's personal secretary should be provided with direct access to the President's chamber.

Layout: The President's personal secretary's office may be designed at human scale, to accommodate one worktable with a computer, seating for her and for additional personnel with adequate circulation space to allow for wheelchair users. The dimensions of her worktable and seating must be appropriate to facilitate wheelchair access. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided.

In such cases where there is a lack of resources or space to construct additional office space, the President's personal secretary can be allotted office space within the President's chamber.

Users of the Space:

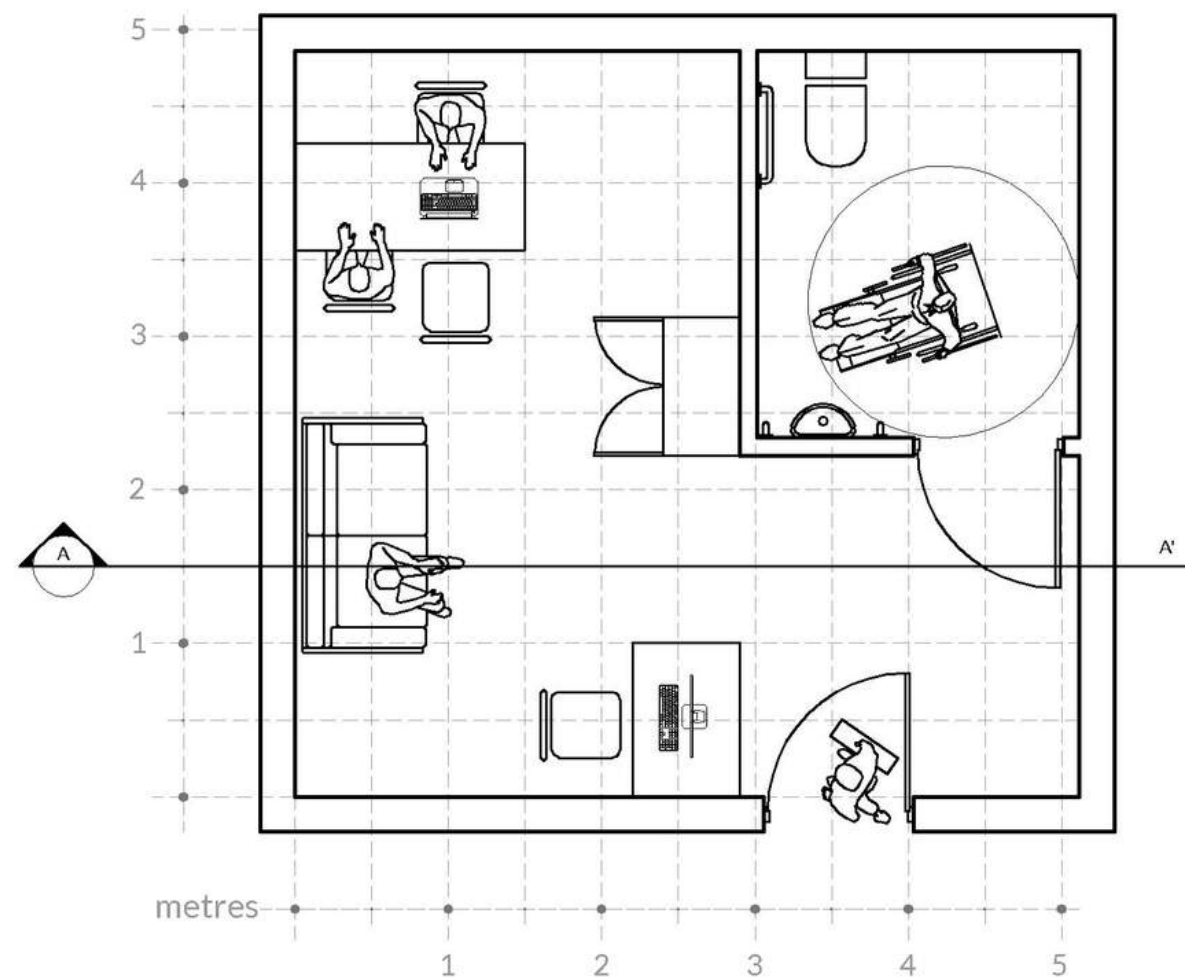


Personal Secretary



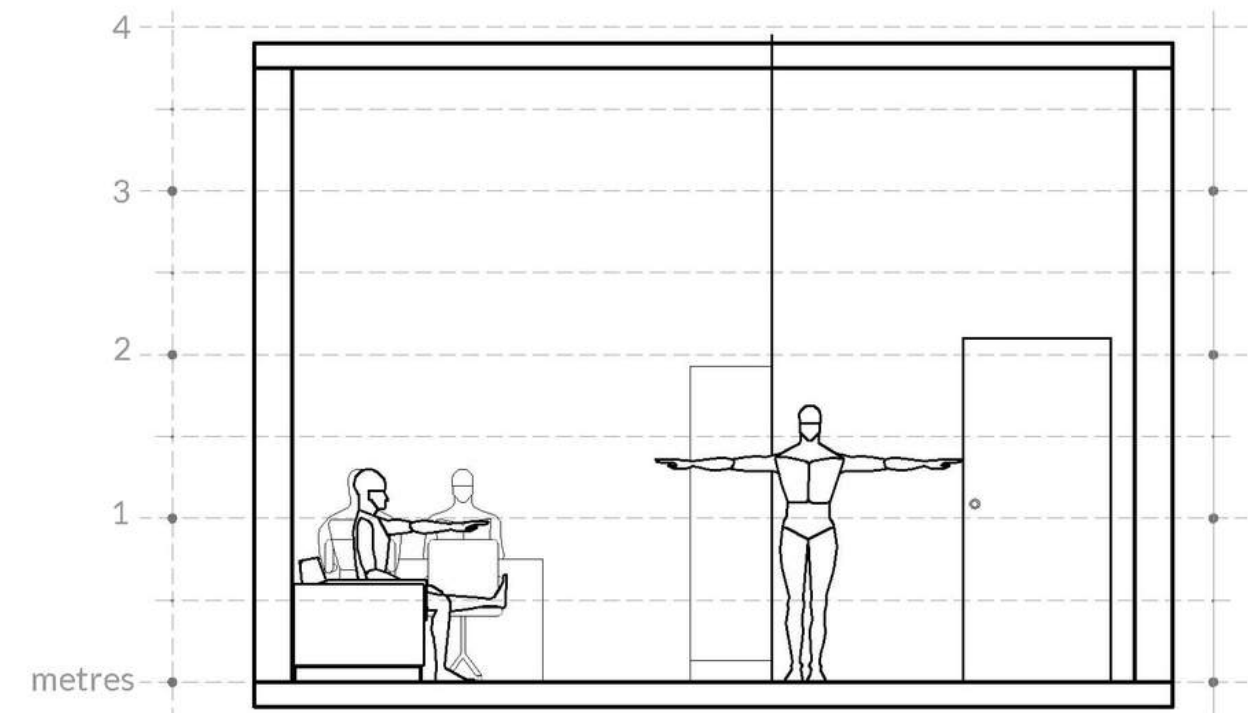
All Administrative Staff

8. Member's Chambers



Room Size:
4.86 m x 5.1 m

No of persons:
1



Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: Each of the courtrooms in the consumer forum must be designed to have access to Members' chambers. The chamber will have an office with an attached accessible and unisex toilet. All the Members' chambers should be located close to staircases, lifts and ramps such that they have minimum interface with public common areas. In the case of a wheelchair-using Member, appropriate parking space must be provided (please refer to **Parking Section** for further details).

Layout: Members' chambers may be designed at human scale to accommodate one worktable with a computer for the Member, two sofas and a coffee table for informal discussions, seating for additional personnel, and adequate circulation space to allow for wheelchair users. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided. The worktable and meeting table must be of appropriate dimensions keeping in mind the rules of accessibility as mentioned in the **General Instructions**.

Users of the Space:



Sheristedar



Registrar



Assistant
Registrar



Members



Personal Secretary
to the President



All Administrative
Staff

B. Design of liminal spaces

The functionally specific rooms of the consumer forum must be connected by walkways, corridors, staircases, ramps, lifts, waiting areas, courtyards, and other spaces which are liminal in nature.⁶² Their role is determined by their ability to be useful to the functionally specific rooms of the consumer forum. Such spaces may be divided into two main types: **Movements and Pauses**.

I. Movements

Movement spaces consist of all setbacks, pathways, walkways, corridors, staircases, ramps, including landings - spaces which are primarily used for accessing one or more parts of the consumer forum from another part.

1. Vehicular Movement and Outdoor Walkways

Vehicular movement into the consumer forum plot above ground must be kept to minimum and should allow for parking entrances and exits. No walkways should cross such vehicular movement. Outdoor walkways should be constructed of a non-slip, tactile material different from vehicular paths. Manholes, trees or any other obstructions in walkways should be avoided.

Protruding objects, such as directional signs, tree branches, wires, guy ropes,⁶³ public telephone booths, benches and ornamental fixtures should be installed with consideration of the range of persons with visual impairment canes.

P 2. Parking

Parking may be provided in the basement of the building as well as surface parking for persons with disabilities. The total number of parking spaces may be determined by providing 2 two-wheeler parking spaces and 1 four-wheeler parking space for every 10 consumer forum users.

Surface parking for two car spaces shall be provided near the entrance for persons with disabilities with maximum travel distance of 30 m from building entrance. The dimensions of the parking bay shall be a minimum of 5000 mm by 3600 mm.

The information stating that the space is reserved for wheelchair users must be conspicuously displayed. Guiding floor materials or audible signals for the visually impaired must be provided.



3. Security

Depending on the size of the court complex and expected footfall, adequate number of security personnel must be posted at the entrances and parking area. It must have a baggage scanner and a wheelchair-accessible metal detector booth with a cabin for the personnel. CCTV cameras must be placed in all movement and pause areas, with CCTV screens for monitoring in the security cabin.



4. Entrance to the Forum

The building should have at least one entrance accessible by wheelchairs, indicated by proper signage. This entrance shall be approached through a ramp, together with a stepped entry.

The minimum clear opening of the entrance door shall be 900 mm and it must not be provided with a step that obstructs the passage of a wheelchair user. The threshold must not be raised more than 12 mm. An entrance landing shall be provided adjacent to the ramp, with minimum dimension of 1800 mm x 1800 mm.

Finishes must have a non-slip surface with a texture traversable by a wheelchair. The entrance landing that adjoins the top end of a slope shall be provided with a brightly coloured floor material or a material that emits a different sound to guide persons with visual impairment.



5. Ramps⁶⁴

Ramps in the consumer forums must have a minimum clear width of 1500 mm with a maximum gradient of 1:12 (rise of 10 mm to each 120 mm of travel). The length of ramp run without a landing must not exceed 9.0 m, with a double handrail at a height of 760-900 mm on both sides, extending 300 mm beyond the

⁶² Lidwell, Butler & Holden (n 42) 146-147.

⁶³ Ching (n 5) 21.

⁶⁴ (n 52) 58-59.

the top and bottom of the ramp. In cases where the total horizontal run of the ramp is greater than 9.0m, a landing of 1500 mm by 1500 mm must be provided for every horizontal run of 9.0 m or less. A flat surface 1500 mm or more in length may be provided at the top and bottom of the ramp for a wheelchair to pause and prevent it from going out of control.

The ramp may be finished with non-slip material.



6. Staircases and Steps⁶⁵

The minimum clear width of a single tread must be 1500 mm. The height of the riser must be maximum 150 mm high and the tread must be minimum 300 mm deep. Handrails at a height of 760-900 mm must be provided on both sides and shall extend 300 mm on the top and bottom of each flight of steps. Tactile flooring must be installed 300 mm before the beginning and 300 mm after the end of each flight of steps.

The steps must not have abrupt (square) nosing⁶⁶ to prevent injuries resulting from falls. The maximum number of risers on a single flight without a landing shall be limited to 12.



7. Lifts

Lifts shall be made for users in the consumer forum bearing in mind that at least two wheelchairs users can use them.

A lift lobby of at least 1800 x 1800 mm must be provided. The following cage dimensions of lift are recommended for passenger lift of 13 persons capacity:

- Clear internal depth: minimum 1500 mm.
- Clear internal width: minimum 1500 mm.
- Entrance door width: 900 mm.

Within the lift cage, a handrail of not less than 600 mm long at 800-1000 mm above floor

level must be fixed adjacent to the control panel. The time of an automatically closing door should be minimum 5 seconds and the closing speed should not exceed 0.25 m/ sec.⁶⁷

The interior of the cage must be provided with a device that audibly indicates the floor the cage has reached and whether the door of the cage for entrance/exit is either open or closed.



8. Indoor Walkways and Corridors

All continuous passages must be a minimum width of 920 mm to allow for slight side-to-side movement of the wheelchair as it travels. A width of 1500 mm that allows for the turning of a wheelchair must be provided. Doors must be double-swing and automatic closing, and must be of a minimum width of 920 mm. Handrails must be provided in public corridors at a height of 760-900 mm from the floor, and signage must be provided at a height of 1200 mm.

There must be no thresholds on doors, and no level differences between rooms on the same floor. All indoor walkways and corridors may also be provided with analog display boards or screens displaying cause lists and allotted courtrooms.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ (n 52) 60.

⁶⁶ Ching (n 5) 239.

⁶⁷ (n 52) 62.

⁶⁸ (n 52) 6.

II. Pauses

Pauses refer to those parts of the consumer forum which are essential services or intermediate spaces like the reception lobby, information centre, storage, cafeteria, waiting areas, and toilets.⁶⁹ Drinking water stations, signage, dustbins, and electronic case display boards with audible announcements may be placed in all pause spaces.



1. Reception Lobby

It is crucial for the reception lobby and information centre to direct visitors to the place they wish to visit at the consumer forum.

Users of the Space:



Advocates



Reception Staff



Consumers



General Public

Location: The reception lobby must be situated immediately within the entrance and be spacious without being intimidating. It must be placed in the axis of the entrance to the consumer forum. Some seating for personnel with disabilities may be provided.

Layout: The lobby must either be directly accessible to other spaces of the forum or have signage leading the consumer to these spaces. In addition, the staircase and lift of the building may be placed within proximity of the reception lobby so that the visitor can immediately be directed. It should preferably not be closed by walls and have direct access to drinking water and toilets.

Information Architecture: Signage including a map of the forum and fire exit plan⁷⁰ must be placed within the direct visual axis⁷⁰ of the entrance beside or at the reception lobby. It must be provided with case display boards, preferably with audible announcements. Drinking water stations must be located in the reception lobby.



2. Information Centre/Help Desk

Users of the Space:



Advocates



Information Desk Staff



Consumers



General Public

Location: The reception lobby must connect directly to an information centre which may contain seating for the visitors. The information centre can have officials tasked to help litigants and advocates. The centre may also have Information Kiosks.

The keypad of the information kiosk must be located at a height of 1200 mm or less.

The information centre should preferably not be closed by walls and must have direct access to toilets. Drinking water stations must be located in the information centre. It may be combined with a library or legal services cell.

Information Architecture: It can have information infographics and signage explaining the entire process from filing to receiving a judgement. It may have information fliers or booklets which can be picked up by visitors which includes consumer rights and awareness related posters. All information must be available in an accessible format for persons with disabilities and in local languages.



3. Waiting Areas

Users of the Space:



Advocates



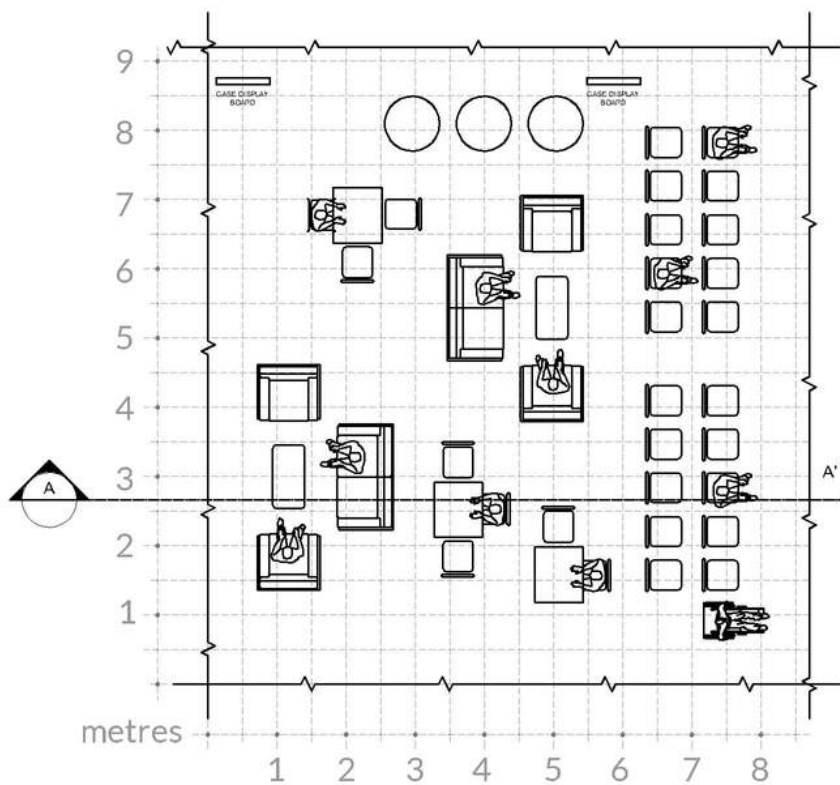
Consumers



General Public

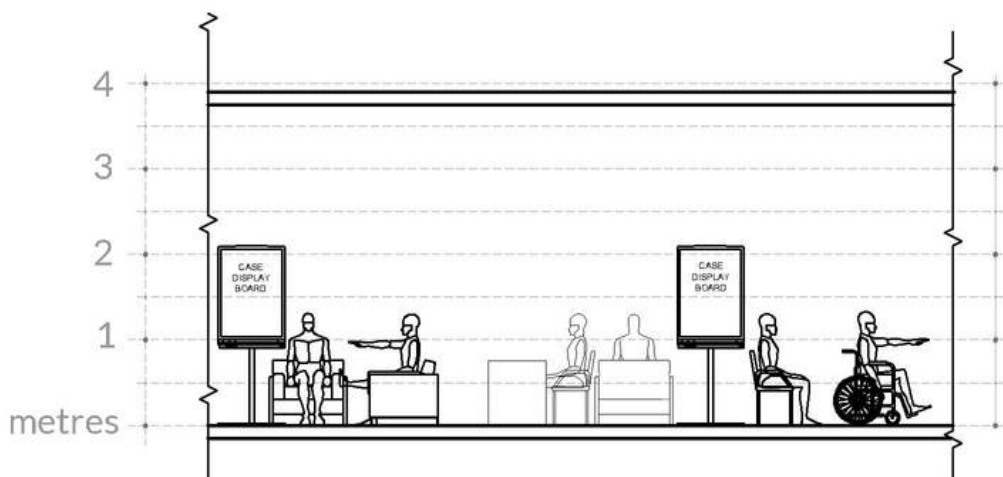
⁶⁹ Lidwell, Butler & Holden (n 42) 202-203.

⁷⁰ Ching (n 5) 340..



Room Size: 8.7m x 9.2m

No of persons: 40



Room Height: 3.75 m

Location: Waiting areas for consumers may be designed to be located in various parts of the consumer forum.

Layout: Rather than a row of chairs, a suitable sympathetic setting in a waiting area might consist of different kinds of seating arrangements with tables and chairs - cafe-like, cubicles, where laptops can be used or users can read if required - to allow the waiting people to choose the area that suits their circumstance and temporal needs. For seating specifications refer to **General Instructions**.

In addition, all waiting areas must have accessible charging points for phones and laptops, at a height of no less than 380 mm and no less than 1200 mm from finish floor level.

Waiting areas should preferably not be closed and must have direct access to toilets. Drinking water stations must be located in all waiting areas.

Information Architecture: All waiting areas must be provided with electronic case display screens, with audible announcements. It may also have information fliers or booklets which can be picked up by visitors which includes consumer rights and awareness related posters.



4. Cafeteria

Users of the Space:



Advocates



All Staff Members



Consumers



General Public

Location: The cafeteria must serve as an additional common space that is located away from the main court, as a public area to relax and mingle.

Layout: The consumer forum may be equipped with a cafeteria with adequate seating capacity. Seating in the cafeteria must be of appropriate dimensions, considering waiting times and staff numbers. For seating specifications, refer to **General Instructions**.

Counters to serve persons with disabilities should have a clear floor space of at least 900 mm x 1200 mm in front of the counters. It should have a knee space at least 750 mm high, 900 mm wide and 480 mm deep. The counter itself must not be more than 800 mm high.

Information Architecture: The cafeteria may be provided with an electronic case display screen, with audible announcements. It may also have information fliers or booklets which can be picked up by visitors which includes consumer rights and awareness related posters.



5. Library

Location: The library must serve as an additional common space that is located away from the main court, as a public area for access to case manuals, bare acts, rules related to goods and services and other consumer rights related documents.

Layout: The consumer forum may be equipped with a library with adequate seating capacity. Seating in the library must be of appropriate dimensions as mentioned in **General Instructions**.

Users of the Space:



Advocates



Judicial and
Technical Members



Consumers



General Public

There must be a clear floor space of at least 900 mm x 1200 mm in front of the counters. It should have a knee space at least 750 mm high, 900 mm wide and 480 mm deep. The counter itself must not be more than 800 mm high.

Information Architecture: The library may also be provided with an electronic case display screen. It may also have information fliers or booklets which can be picked up by visitors which includes consumer rights and awareness related posters. Templates of written complaints, affidavits, orders and other documents must be made available here for reference.

Technology: Computers/laptops should be provided to be able to access online databases and case related information.



6. Drinking Water

Location: Drinking water stations must be placed in the reception lobby, waiting areas, and in common areas.

The drinking water station must have a clear floor space of at least 900mm x 1200mm. A clear knee space at least 750mm wide, 200mm deep and 680mm high between the bottom of

the apron/basin and floor or ground with a toe space not less than 750mm wide and 230mm high must be provided.

A 100mm high water flow may be provided to allow for the insertion of a cup or glass.

The control mechanism should be push, lever or sensory type. A wall-mounted drinking water provision in an alcove is preferred, because it does not create a hazard for persons with visual impairments. The provision of two drinking facilities at different heights is convenient for standing adults, people in wheelchairs and children.⁷¹



7. Gender-Neutral Toilets

Location: Toilets must be placed in the reception lobby, waiting areas, and in common areas.

Layout: One accessible water closet (WC) cubicle in a set of every 4 toilets, and one accessible urinal for every four urinals shall be provided for the use of persons with disabilities. The accessible WC cubicle may be equipped with the western water closet as opposed to the Indian-style pan.

The toilet cubicle designed for a wheelchair user should be of internal dimensions not less than 1500 mm x 1500 mm with a clear space not less than 900 mm wide next to the water closet.

The cubicle must be equipped with grab-bars and tap/toilet roll dispenser mounted below it at not more than 300 mm from the front edge of the seat and at a height between 50 mm and 250 mm from the top of the WC seat. There should also be the provision of a clothes hook not more than 1300 mm from the finished floor level and projecting not more than 40 mm from the wall.

Water Closet (WC):

The top edge of the WC seat should be 500 mm from the finished floor level. It should be located not less than 300 mm and not more than 460 mm away from the adjacent wall with a clear dimension of 750 mm from the front edge of the WC to the rear wall to facilitate side transfer.

The WC must have back support in the absence of a seat lid or tank. It should be preferably of the wall hung type for easier access for persons with disabilities. It must have a lever-type/sensor flush control fixed towards the wheelchair transfer side to facilitate flushing after transfer.

The WC should be located not less than 300 mm and not more than 460 mm away from the adjacent wall with a clear dimension of 750 mm from the front edge of the WC to the rear wall to facilitate side transfer. One grab-bar, mounted on the side wall closest to the WC, must extend from the rear wall to at least 450 mm in front of the WC seat. Another one 750 mm long must be mounted behind the WC. All grab bars must be able to resist a load of not less than 1.3m applied vertically or horizontally.

Washbasins:

Washbasins must be mounted such that the minimum distance between the centreline of the fixture and the side wall is 450 mm. The top edge must be between 800 mm and 850 mm from the finished floor level. There should be a minimum knee space of 750 mm width by 200 mm depth and 750 mm height with an additional toe space of at least 750 mm width by 230 mm depth by 230 mm height from the finished floor level. It must have a minimum clear floor space of 750 mm width by 1200 mm depth around it, of which a maximum of 480 mm in depth may be under the wash basin.

The hot water and drainpipes within the knee space or toe space must be properly insulated.

⁷¹ (n 52) 37.

Accessible Urinals:

Urinals should be of the wall hung type with the rim not more than 430 mm from the floor and a clear floor space of 750 mm width x 1200 mm depth without steps in front of it. Privacy shields should not extend beyond the urinal unless they are at least 750 mm apart from each other. There should be vertical grab-bars on either side extending from 900 mm to 1500 mm above finished floor level and with a minimum of 120 mm between the bar and the wall. The flush, if manually operated, should be located between 900 mm and 1200 mm from the finished floor level.

Sensory flush may be preferred



8. Storage

Other than specific storage provided in the pending section, record room and other rooms the consumer forum may have as much built-in storage in the form of lockable cupboards as possible in common and public areas. This storage may be designed to be suitable for case files but also suitable for spare furniture, stationery, and other items which may be needed in the consumer forum.

All storage cupboards must have a clear floor space at least 750 mm x 1200 mm that allows either a forward or parallel approach by a person using a wheelchair.



9. Computerisation and Data Management Cell

The consumer forum should be equipped with high-speed internet connectivity. It may additionally be equipped with a Computerisation and Data Management Cell for complete

digitisation infrastructure for necessary data at the district and state level. Online e-filing status, digitisation of previously filed cases, pending cases, and judgements in district forums as well as State Commissions may all be kept updated, and the system administration for such an online database may be housed in this room.

Location: The room may be placed to be close to the Filing Section, Dispatch Section, and Copying Section.

Layout: The room may be provided with enough space for three computers, adequate circulation space, workspaces and leisure space.

The entire space may be designed to be at human scale: compact and allowing for clear lines of sight. For seating and worktable specifications, please refer to **General Instructions**.



10. Monitoring and Statistics Wing

The consumer forum may be equipped with a Monitoring and Statistics Wing, in regular touch with all personnel and officers.

Location: Since the Monitoring cell serves an administrative function which is 'observing' in nature, it may be placed to be close to other administrative functions like the Registrar's office, the accounts section, and the Computerisation and Networking Room, and may also have direct access to public corridors.

Layout: It may be provided with enough space for adequate personnel, each with workspaces with computers, adequate circulation space, and leisure space. The entire space may be designed to be at human scale: compact and allowing for clear lines of sight. For seating and worktable specifications, please refer to **General Instructions**.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has given policy drafters and decision makers an unprecedented opportunity to reassess the way courts function in this country. While the pandemic forced the judiciary to embrace technology to function during lockdown, it also showed that the future belongs to a hybrid model of physical and online courts. To embrace this future and to churn out its maximum potential, a wider adoption of technology and upgradation of infrastructure to support it is necessary.

Needless to say, consumer forums will not be spared from this shift and should utilise the ongoing situation as the right opportunity to transform into what they were originally envisioned to be- a consumer friendly space with informal and accessible processes. Consumer forum infrastructure cannot continue to be archaic, unwelcoming, and conventional court spaces that are hard to navigate. The intervention of the right kind of expertise and, design thinking would be the first steps towards creating a framework for consumer forums. This report is an attempt to bring together the needed expertise and the thought process, to the extent that was possible, to provide solutions which can be customised by a court according to their additional needs. The time is ripe for consumer forums to catch the wave of infrastructural upgradation and revamp the architecture to meet the needs of changing times.

Annexure A

► Number of Staff members at Karnataka Consumer Forum as provided on 31.08.2019.

A1: State Commission Dispute Redressal Commission

S. No.	Designation	Number
1.	Registrar	1
2.	Assistant Registrar	1
3.	Sheristedar	2
4.	Personal Secretary cum Judgement Writer (takes dictation in the court hall)	1
5.	Stenographer attached to the Court Hall	2
	Stenographer attached to the Administrative Section	4
6.	Bench Clerk	2
7.	Pending Section	5
8.	Record Room	2
9.	Filing Section	1
10.	Accounts Section	2
11.	Copying Section	1
12.	Dispatch Section	1
13.	Peon	
	Attached to the President	1
	Attached to the Registrar	1
	Attached to the Member and Record Room	1
	Attached to the Member (lady) and Accounts	1
	Attached to the Dispatch Section	2
	Attached to the Administrative and Judicial Wing	1
	Vacant	2
14.	Driver	
	Attached to the President	1
	Attached to the Registrar	1

A2: District Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission

S. No.	Designation	Number
1.	Assistant Registrar	1
2.	Sheristedar	1
3.	Bench Clerk & Pending Clerk	1
4.	Stenographer	2
5.	Typist	1
6.	Peon	3
7.	Driver	1

Annexure B

► State Departments with the charge of administration of consumer forums

State	Department dealing with Consumer Protection
Andhra Pradesh	Department of Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies
Arunachal Pradesh	Department of Legal Metrology and Consumer Affairs
Assam	Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Bihar	Food and Consumer Protection Department
Chhattisgarh	Department of Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection
Goa	Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Gujarat	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department
Haryana	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department
Himachal Pradesh	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department
Jharkhand	Department of Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs

State	Department dealing with Consumer Protection
Karnataka	Ministry of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Kerala	Department of Consumer Affairs
Madhya Pradesh	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection
Maharashtra	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection
Manipur	Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Meghalaya	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Mizoram	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Nagaland	Legal Metrology and Consumer Protection
Odisha	Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare
Punjab	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Rajasthan	Food and Civil Supplies
Sikkim	Food and Civil Supplies
Tamil Nadu	Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection
Telangana	Consumer Affairs, Food and Civil Supplies
Tripura	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
Uttar Pradesh	Consumer Protection and Weights & Measures
Uttarakhand	Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs
West Bengal	Department of Consumer Affairs

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