

Northern court will hear cases

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A northern court satellite will open in Dededo today to service area residents and alleviate pressure in the courts in Hagåtña.

Dededo Mayor Melissa Savares said residents often need to clear routine traf-

fic citations even if they want to apply for a job, and the new northern satellite court will provide them those services at a convenient location.

Additionally, it will decrease traffic to the site in Hagåtña, which she said currently has limited space in its parking lot. The

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IF YOU GO

Opening of the Northern Court Satellite

▲ 10 a.m., tomorrow

▲ Location: Dededo Mall

ON THE NET

▲ **Unified Courts of**

Guam: www.guamsupremecourt.com

Court: Still have to go to Hagåtña for court clearances

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opening of the Dededo branch will ease congestion and the caseload for employees in central Guam, so the offices can process requests faster and clients don't have to waste as much time waiting.

"Already we have families that have transportation problems," Savares said. "Just trying to get to Hagåtña is a task."

The new court will take on small claims, traffic citations, civil trials, magistrate hearings, criminal trials and occasional appellate hear-

ings, according to Dan Tydingco, the Judiciary's director of policy and planning.

However, court clearances will still have to be issued at the Hagåtña court because records are, for the most part, still paper documents, but the Judiciary is working to convert those files into digital format, Tydingco said.

"What we're doing right now is a digital archiving project, and it's taking all new cases currently, and we're working our way back," he said. "The records date back to the '30s and '40s."

Otherwise, the new court should

be able to accommodate the basic needs of many residents.

Tydingco said the courthouse is fully equipped with a 1,600-square-foot courtroom with an attached holding cage, jury box, and public gallery.

There are three service counters and one cashier to take care of fine payments, one chamber for the magistrate, one jury deliberation room, regular offices, and video conferencing technology. Tydingco said the equipment will be a "great convenience" to the Departments of Corrections and Youth Affairs to uti-

lize instead of having to transport detainees or clients from elsewhere.

Full-time judges will rotate at least once a week to handle their full calendars so residents from the north will be able to have their cases or their actions adjudicated in Dededo rather than having them to come down to Hagåtña, Tydingco said.

As far as similar projects planned for the future, Tydingco said the coming military buildup has prompted the Judiciary to take a close look at the physical space needs and caseload demands projected for the next 15 to 20 years to draw up a facilities

master plan.

"The reason why we had pursued the construction of this court was primarily driven by a study we commissioned the National Center for State Courts to conduct — a needs assessment study and caseload study," Tydingco said. "They indicated that we were short of judicial officers to meet current case levels and demands."

The Judiciary's projectional study should be completed soon, and it will give them an indication of what they're going to need to plan with the military influx, Tydingco said.