

# Fayette County Justice Center Buildout Needs Assessment Report

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Prepared for

**Fayette County Board of Commissioners**



Mallett Consulting, Inc.  
ENGINEERING - SURVEYING - PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to review and evaluate the Fayette County Justice Center facility. To determine the current and projected future needs of the departments working within the building and how their expansion needs can be accommodated. To identify the needs of other parties who frequently do business within the building but do not currently have office space there. And to develop a concept plan for completion of the currently vacant and unfinished 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, as well as the renovation needs for existing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor offices that would need to be repurposed as part of a Buildout Project.

Needs were assessed through a comprehensive series of questionnaires, interviews, site visits and interactive planning exercises with each of the stakeholders using the facility.

## **History**

The Fayette County Justice Center opened for business in 2003. The \$50M project included the Justice Center, an expansion to the adjacent Fayette County Jail and the renovation of the Fayette County Annex building to become the new home for the Fayette County Sheriff's Office.

The Fayette County Justice Center was constructed as a 3-story facility with approximately 153,000 sq.ft. of total floor space. Initially, all of the departments occupying the building were located on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was intentionally left unfinished and vacant with the intent of providing approximately 47,000 sq. ft. of space for future expansion of the court system without the need for constructing a new building. The vacant 3<sup>rd</sup> floor did include completion of elevator and stairwell access from the lower floors as well as provisions for a temporary external construction elevator during the anticipated future buildout scenario. This provision was intended to allow movement of construction materials and workman to and from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor without disruption of the working floors below.

## **The Court System**

The Justice Center is the home to the Fayette County Court System. This system contains multiple courts, support offices, complimentary departments, jury and grand jury facilities, security forces, record storage for legal, property and personal information and provides services to the public for personal business such as select licenses and permits. The occupants of the Justice Center currently include:

Superior Court	District Attorney's Office	Building Engineer
State Court	Solicitor General Office	
Magistrate Court	Constable's Office	
Juvenile Court	Clerk of Court (Legal and Real Estate)	
Probate Court	Court Services (Security - Sheriff's Office)	

## **Growth within the Court System**

The estimated population in Fayette County in 2022 is 118,141 persons. This represents a growth of approximately 26% since the Justice Center opened in 2003. Population growth has a related impact on increased caseload for the court system, increased real estate transactions and increased need for public interaction with County agencies providing documentation of person records, licenses and certifications.

Statistical Data collected by the Clerk of Court shows the following growth for representative courts within the Justice System serving Fayette County:

### **Superior Court**

Data Period: 2003 - 2019 *(Years 2020 and 2021 not evaluated due to COVID-19)*  
Number of Years: 17

<u>Year</u>	<u>Criminal Proceedings</u>	<u>Civil/Domestic Proceedings</u>	<u>Total Proceedings</u>
2019:	25,669	17,581	43,250
2003:	8,405	11,097	<u>19,502</u>

**17 Yr Growth: 23,748 (122%)**

### **State Court**

Data Period: 2005 - 2019 *(Years 2020 and 2021 not evaluated due to COVID-19)*  
Number of Years: 15 *(Years prior to 2005 unavailable.)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Criminal Proceedings</u>	<u>Civil Proceedings</u>	<u>Traffic Proceedings</u>	<u>Ordinance Proceedings</u>	<u>Total Proceedings</u>
2019:	47,221	22,880	13,528	1,339	84,968
2005:	7,894	12,765	10,803	1,362	<u>32,824</u>

**15 Yr Growth: 52,144 (159%)**

### **Magistrate Court**

Data Period: 2012- 2018 *(Years 2020 and 2021 not evaluated due to COVID-19)*  
Number of Years: 7 *(Year 2019 data was incomplete)*  
*(Years prior to 2012 unavailable.)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Criminal Proceedings</u>	<u>Civil Proceedings</u>	<u>Total Proceedings</u>
2018:	5,294	23,853	29,147
2012:	4,569	17,479	<u>22,048</u>

**7 Yr Growth: 7,099 (32%)**

## **Superior Court**

As defined by GeorgiaSuperiorCourts.org: *The Superior Courts of Georgia is a court of general jurisdiction handling both civil and criminal law actions. Superior Court Judges preside over cases involving misdemeanors, contract disputes, premises liability, and various other actions. In addition, the Superior Court has exclusive equity jurisdiction over all cases of divorce, title to land, and felonies involving jury trials, including death penalty cases.*

Fayette County Superior Court is a member of the Griffin Judicial Circuit, along with Superior Courts for Pike and Upson Counties. Judges within this circuit serve the superior courts within each of the three counties but have their main offices located within their 'home' county.

When the Fayette County Justice Center was completed in 2003, it served as home for two superior court judges and provided part-time chambers for two additional superior court judges from within the Griffin Judicial Circuit. These four judges shared three Superior Court courtrooms located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Justice Center.

Each judge requires a support staff including an administrative assistant, court reporter, transcriptionist, and court clerk. Additionally, Superior Court judges work closely with the District Attorney's Office, jury coordinators, Court Services (bailiff and security services) and with the Clerk of Court for court calendar scheduling and preservation of court case records and documents.

Since the Justice Center was opened, the Griffin Judicial Circuit has grown to now include five Superior Court judges. These five judges are currently required to share the three available Superior Court courtrooms while presiding over cases in Fayette County. By 2025, it is anticipated that the Griffin Judicial Circuit will likely add a sixth Superior Court judge. As noted above, each additional judge results not only in the need for added courtroom and chamber space but also space for their administrative and support staff, staff from other associated departments and for attorneys and public visiting the facility for their individual cases, hearings and jury obligations.

This increase in judges and caseload has caused the Fayette County Superior Court to reach the limit with regard to function and operational space within the finished portions of the Justice Center. The likelihood of a sixth Superior Court judge in the near future will further burden a Justice Center that is already struggling to provide necessary courtroom and support space with the available three courtrooms and office space to accommodate only four of the six judges.

With the understanding of these current constraints and the reasonable expectations for future growth of population and case load, it can be concluded that the growing needs of the Superior Court system cannot be met by the Fayette County Justice Center without the need for expansion. The Superior Courts would be well served by moving forward with the completion and occupation of the currently unfinished 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Justice Center. This would allow for a tailored design to meet the growth needs discussed above, space for future growth and space for departments critical to the operation of the Superior Courts, such as the District Attorney's Offices.

Concept Floor Plans for all proposed departmental expansions are provided later in this report.

## **District Attorney's Office**

As defined by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia: *The District Attorney represents the State of Georgia in the trial and appeal of felony criminal cases in the Superior Court for the judicial circuit and delinquency cases in the juvenile courts. The District Attorney is also the legal advisor to the grand jury and performs other duties prescribed by law.*

As discussed in above, the District Attorney's Office is a critical component of the function of the Superior Court system as well as duties associated with the Juvenile Courts and Grand Jury process. As such, the proximity of the D.A. offices to the Superior Court is an essential requirement for an efficient relationship between these two offices.

Currently, the Fayette County Justice Center provides office space for the D.A. on the second floor of the facility, near the courtrooms assigned to the Superior Court. Along with the Superior Court system, the District Attorney's Office has experienced substantial growth in caseload and staffing needs since the completion of the building in 2003. With the addition of each new Superior Court judge, the District Attorney must provide a minimum of 4 new staff members (prosecutors, investigators, caseworkers and assistants).

The National Association of District Attorneys recommends staffing requirements based on annual caseload as follows:

NADA Recommendation:	150 cases/Assistant D.A. team
Current Caseload for Griffin Circuit D.A.:	300-500 cases/Assistant D.A. team

This comparison illustrates that the District Attorney's Office serving Fayette County is currently managing two to three times the NADA recommended caseload. This problem will be compounded by the likely addition of the sixth Superior Court judge.

Since the Justice Center opened in 2003, the D.A.'s office has grown beyond the office space availability on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The current overcrowding has meant conversion and loss of other work, meeting, storage and conference room spaces in an attempt to accommodate the staffing growth. Even with that effort, this office remains understaffed and without available space for new hires. The current arrangement cannot be sustained long term and provides no space for additional growth. Additionally, the existing, secure, record storage vault is near capacity.

This review of the current and projected future needs of the District Attorney's Office results in the conclusion that this office would be best served by relocating, along with the Superior Courts, to the built out 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Justice Center. The ability to customize the new design to meet the growing needs of the D.A.'s office should allow that office to function more efficiently, staffed at a more reasonable caseload, while allowing for anticipated future growth within the Superior Court system. Additionally, this plan will maintain the close physical proximity and working relationship between the District Attorney and the Superior Courts.

## **State Court**

As defined by Georgiaencyclopedia.org: *In seventy counties in Georgia, state courts exercise jurisdiction over misdemeanor violations, including traffic cases, and adjudicate civil actions except in cases in which the superior court has exclusive jurisdiction. State courts are authorized to hold hearings on applications for an issuance of search and arrest warrants and to hold preliminary hearings.*

Fayette County's State Court consists of one elected Judge and one designated courtroom. It is anticipated that within the next few years, the rising State Court caseload will require a second judge and a second courtroom. Each judge within the State Court system is supported by critical staff including a staff attorney, administrative coordinator, administrative assistant and Accountability Court coordinator.

In 2012, the Georgia Legislature created a division of the State Court system called the Georgia Accountability Court Program. This program is an important component of several significant criminal justice reform initiatives established to provide effective alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders, to reduce the state's prison population and to offer a critical sentencing option for nonviolent property, DUI and drug offenders. It is also possible that the program will be expanded in the near future to monitor convicted offenders who suffer from mental illness.

The staffing needs for this program include not only the Accountability Court coordinator noted above, but also case managers, probation officers, surveillance officers, drug testing, DUI compliance and administrative assistants. Since the Accountability Court was not in existence in 2003, office space for the associated staffing needs were not provided for within the original Justice Center design.

The State Court is currently located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Fayette County Justice Center. Similar to the Superior Court/District Attorney relationship discussed earlier in this report, the efficient operation of the State Court relies on a close working relationship with the Solicitor General's Office, which is also located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Justice Center.

It is anticipated that the expansion needs of the State Court can be met effectively by utilization of the spaces vacated by the move of the Superior Court to the built out 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. This is expected to provide the State Court with access to a second courtroom, additional judge's chambers, staff offices and a suite of offices which can be dedicated to the staffing requirements of the Accountability Court.

By remaining on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, the State Court will also remain in close physical proximity to the Solicitor General's Office. An essential relationship for efficient function of this branch of the Fayette County Court System.

## **Solicitor General's Office**

*As defined by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia: In 66 of the 159 counties in Georgia, misdemeanor cases (cases where the maximum punishment cannot exceed 12 months in jail) are prosecuted by the Solicitor-General. The Solicitor-General is an elected county officer who represents the State of Georgia in the trial and appeal of misdemeanor criminal cases in the State Courts and performs other duties as required by law.*

As discussed above, the Solicitor General's Office is a critical component of the function of the State Court system and the proximity of the Solicitor's offices to the State Court is an essential requirement for an efficient relationship between these two offices.

Currently, the Fayette County Justice Center provides office space for the Solicitor General on the second floor of the facility, near the courtroom assigned to the State Court. Along with the State Court system, the Solicitor General's Office has experienced substantial growth in caseload and staffing needs since the completion of the building in 2003. With the potential for a second State Court judge and second State Court courtroom, the staffing and office space needs of the Solicitor General are expected to continue growing at a rapid rate.

Since the Justice Center opened in 2003, like the District Attorney's office, the Solicitor General office has grown beyond the office space originally provided on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This office is currently understaffed and without available space even if staff could be added. This staffing and office space shortfall will limit the ability of the Solicitor to properly serve the State Court and currently allows no space for additional growth. Additional shortfalls within this department include a record storage vault that is near capacity.

The evaluation of the current and projected future needs of the Solicitor General's Office results in the conclusion that this office would be best served by remaining on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, along with the State Court, but should relocate to the larger office space vacated by the District Attorney's move to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. With limited renovation to the former D.A. space, the growing needs of the Solicitor General's office can be met and should allow that office to function more effectively, to be better staffed for the continued rise in caseload and to allow for anticipated future growth within the State Court system.

The move to the former D.A. space will also benefit the Solicitor General with a larger record storage vault and will keep this office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, maintaining the close physical proximity and working relationship with the State Court.

## **Juvenile Court**

Per Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice: *When a child under the age of 17 commits a delinquent act (a crime, if committed by an adult) or an unruly act (runaway, truancy, curfew, etc.,) a complaint is filed in the Juvenile Court. The juvenile justice system in Georgia exists to address alleged criminal conduct and attempts to balance punishment and protecting the public with sentencing options that promote rehabilitation.*

Currently the Juvenile Court is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Fayette County Justice Center. This court has a Presiding Judge, and Associate Judge, one dedicated courtroom and associated offices for critical administrative and support staff. Due to the presence of minors, this court is required to provide physical separation of juveniles and adults who are held in custody during court proceedings. To meet this requirement, the Justice Center was originally designed to provide separate juvenile holding areas, within the building, immediately adjacent to the Juvenile Court courtroom. Also provided is a secure access way for safe movement of juveniles between the courtroom and offsite detention locations.

In addition to the full-time support staffing requirements, the Juvenile Court system includes routine interaction with juvenile advocates and support panels. Examples include a Court Appointed Special Advocate and Guardian Ad Litem.

Additionally, in 2014, the Georgia Code initiated the Child in Need of Service (CHINS) statute. CHINS is defined as: *...a child adjudicated to be in need of care, guidance, counseling, structure, supervision, treatment or rehabilitation.* The goal being to provide a panel that can help support a child at risk of continued delinquent behavior and to provide necessary guidance and care in an attempt to redirect the child's path away from future delinquent acts. The original 2003 Justice Center design did not anticipate or provide office or meeting space to accommodate the large CHINS panel and therefore these spaces are not currently available within the Juvenile Court offices.

Although the current courtroom, chambers and administrative offices are adequate for the Juvenile Court at this time, it is recommended that the Juvenile Court relocate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to occupy the administrative space vacated by the Solicitor General's move discussed above. This relocation will provide the Juvenile Court with more office space, room for added future staffing and direct access to an existing, large conference room sufficient for CHINS panel meetings. The Juvenile Court would occupy one of the three 2<sup>nd</sup> floor courtrooms vacated by the Superior Court. This will require some renovation of the courtroom to tailor it to meet the Juvenile Court function. The Court would also gain access to a second adjacent courtroom in the event of future 'overflow' caseload. Space will also be available to construct dedicated, secure holding areas for juveniles, adjacent to the primary courtroom.

The relocation of the Juvenile Court is also necessary for the overall buildout plan. This move will free up office and courtroom space on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor which will be critical for the needed expansion of the Magistrate and Probate Courts discussed later in this report.

## **Magistrate Court**

Per GeorgiaCourts.gov: *Magistrate Courts are county courts that issue warrants, hear minor criminal offenses and civil claims involving amounts of \$15,000 or less. Magistrate Court is the court of first resort for many civil disputes including: county ordinance violations, dispossessories, landlord/tenant cases, and bad checks. In criminal matters Magistrates hold preliminary hearings; issue search warrants to law enforcement and also warrants for the arrest of a particular person. No jury trials are held in Magistrate Court; civil cases are often argued by the parties themselves, rather than by attorneys.*

Magistrate Court is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Fayette County Justice Center, including one dedicated courtroom, chambers for four judges and office space for two Constables and administrative support staff. A portion of the administrative space is currently shared with staff from the Clerk of Court office. Magistrate Court is a high volume court with continuous interaction with the public. This function makes the current location on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor advantageous for efficient management of the Court's normal busy calendar.

Since 2003 the Justice Center has served the Magistrate Court well, however, the growth in caseload will soon require increased staffing needs including an additional Constable and added administrative staff. As noted above, the Magistrate Court is already sharing a portion of their original administrative staff space with the Clerk of Court. As discussed later in this report, it is anticipated that the Clerk of Court will expand fully into this administrative space as part of the Buildout Plan, leaving the Magistrate Court in need of more space for Constables and administrative staff elsewhere in the building.

Additionally, the Magistrate Court now requires litigating parties to complete a mediation process prior to appearing before the Court. This process is intended to encourage resolution between parties to lessen the burden on the Magistrate Court calendar. A typical mediation process requires a pair of small, closely spaced meeting rooms allowing attorneys and mediators to easily negotiate settlement terms between parties, while keeping the parties separated. The Justice Center does not currently have space dedicated for mediation, nor spaces in close proximity to the Magistrate Court which could easily be used for this process.

Lastly, the expectation for continued growth in the Magistrate Court caseload suggests that the Court would benefit from the ability to utilize a second courtroom during periods when the court calendar is particularly heavy or to use for special or extended hearings.

To accommodate the current and projected future needs of the Magistrate Court, it is recommended that the Court remain on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and expand into the nearby spaces vacated by the move of the Juvenile Court to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This space will provide ample area for Constable and administrative staffing needs, and recover floor space yielded by the Magistrate Court to the Clerk of Court staff. Additionally, the former Juvenile Court courtroom will be closely located and with some renovation, will provide the availability of the second courtroom discussed above. Dedicated mediation space can also be created nearby.

## **Court Services**

Court Services is provided to the Fayette County Court System by the Fayette County Sheriff's Office. The role of this office is to provide security forces throughout the building. This includes operation and management of the Security Check Point at the main lobby entrance, monitoring the 'pass card' access control and security camera systems, providing bailiff services within the courtrooms; and to provide safe transport, movement and holding of persons in custody who must be moved to the courts from the adjacent jail or from offsite facilities. Additionally, the office is currently involved with the issuance of gun permits.

Court Services is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Justice Center. In addition to this office area, dedicated security equipment rooms are located near the main entrance on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and directly above on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The office space assigned to this office is currently just adequate, but with the expansion of other departments and the completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, it is reasonable to conclude that additional staffing will be necessary to provide security for the related increase in courtrooms, court cases, juries, inmate movement, security monitoring, public interaction and traffic through the main security check point.

To best accommodate the expansion needs of the adjacent Probate Court, it is recommended that Court Services relocate to the nearby administrative space vacated by the move of the Juvenile Court to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This will allow the Probate Court to expand directly into the space vacated by Court Services (to be discussed later in this report). This will also provide Court Services adequate office space for additional staffing, future growth and maintains their presence on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

## **Clerk of Court**

Clerk of Court duties include maintaining and managing all records and documents related to legal proceedings and real estate transactions occurring within Fayette County. This office is also responsible for attending and recording court proceedings, managing revenue collection and disbursement per court judgments, coordinating the court calendars, management of jurors and issuance of Notary Public certifications and legal notifications to the public.

Clerk of Court is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Justice Center. This location is critical to the operation of this office due to the large, existing records vaults and the high volume of public traffic and interaction this office experiences from of the building's main lobby. The existing space serves this office well and with only minor modifications, will be able to serve the expansion needs of the other court offices and growth related to the buildout of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

It is recommended that the Clerk of Court expand into the remaining portion of the administrative offices currently shared with the Magistrate Court. With minor renovation this space will provide Clerk of Court with space for added staffing related to the buildout project and for future growth within the Fayette County Court System.

## **Probate Court**

Per Georgia-EstateLaw.com: *The Probate Court system in Georgia is in place to take care of clerical matters regarding estate planning, inheritance, the probate of wills, and issue marriage licenses, passports, birth and death certificates and firearm permits. Its purpose is to ensure efficiency in non-criminal legal matters that mainly involve filing paperwork.*

The Probate Court is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Justice Center, off of the building's main lobby, close to the front entrance. This location is important to the function of this office due to the continuous, high volume of public interaction. This space includes a small, dedicated hearing room, chambers for the Chief Probate Judge, administrative support staff areas, private and public access records vaults and counter area for interaction with the public.

Since the building opened in 2003, the work volume has increased to the point that a second, Associate Probate Judge has been added to the staff. Probate Court is also now able to conduct jury trials for certain cases. The original building design did not provide space to accommodate additional judge's chambers, nor space for a jury within the existing Hearing Room.

The Probate Court office is also in need of dedicated rooms within their area to allow the public to review record documents in a private setting. A larger staff conference room is also in need.

Lastly, the public reception counter is undersized and inadequate for the number of transactions and requests from visitors to this office. This issue creates delays and inefficient service as well as overcrowding in the reception/waiting area at the office entrance. This problem will continue to worsen without an expansion of the reception area.

To accommodate these shortfalls and the expected continued future growth, it is recommended that the Probate Court expand into the adjacent space, vacated by the Court Services office. This space can be easily connected to the existing Probate offices by creating access through a common wall. This will provide the Probate office with much needed additional public reception counter space, a dedicated conference room, room to create a second judge's chamber, rooms for the public to privately review record documents and space for future expanded staff.

Additionally, the former Juvenile Court courtroom can be shared with the nearby Magistrate Court. This will provide the Magistrate Court with a second courtroom for excess caseload and provide the Probate Court access to a standard sized courtroom when necessary for larger hearings or for the more recent need to conduct jury trials for certain cases.

Most importantly, this expansion plan will maintain the Probate Court at the current location, providing efficient ability to serve the public need near the building's main entrance.

## **Building Engineer**

The Building Engineer is responsible for managing the operational and maintenance requirements of the physical facility. These tasks include maintenance and repair assessments, troubleshooting; coordination with outside service technicians, janitorial services, grounds maintenance and utilities; warranty issues, in house renovation projects, routine repairs and to act as custodian of record drawings, product information and O&M literature.

The Building Engineer's office is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Justice Center, conveniently located near the building's main Electrical and Mechanical Equipment rooms. Additional service closets and storage areas are located throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors.

The need priorities for the Building Engineer are additional, secure equipment storage rooms and a small, designated Work Shop to facilitate in house equipment repairs. These needs will be accommodated within the newly finished 3<sup>rd</sup> floor area as well as being included within the select renovation requirements on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors.

## **Public Defender**

Per GApubdef.org: *Georgia's public defenders uphold the United States Constitution's Sixth Amendment right to counsel by representing those charged with a crime who cannot afford an attorney.*

Currently the Fayette County Justice Center does not provide designated office or meeting space for the services of the Public Defender. There is consensus within the Fayette County Court System that such spaces are necessary and should be provided within the facility.

To accommodate these needs, it is recommended that a small office and reception space should be provided for on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and assigned to the Public Defender's office. This space, along with other designated meeting areas on lower floors, will be included within the Buildout Concept Plans.

## **Visiting Counsel**

Input from the local chapter of the Georgia Bar Association yielded suggestions for additional private space for brief meetings between attorneys and clients, including between attorneys and persons in custody who are appearing in court. A private space within the courtroom for such attorney-inmate meetings is needed, especially within the Magistrate Court system.

Additional Bar Association requests include counters or tables outside of the courtrooms for signing of documents, facilities for copying and printing of documents and a more functional lounge area to provide visitors an informal place to meet or retreat to before, after or during breaks in court proceedings. Food service within this space would also be a benefit.

These suggestions can easily be accommodated within the Justice Center Buildout Project.

## **Other Considerations**

In addition to the specific needs of each of the resident departments discussed above, the following issues should be considered for inclusion in a Buildout Project scope of work.

**Parking** – The current parking capacity appears to be adequate with significant unused capacity. However, a better monitoring of this issue is necessary once visitor numbers return to pre-pandemic numbers. Due to recent COVID-19 protocols, it has not been possible to observe the parking situation during heavy court calendar events such as multiple jury trials, grand jury gathering and busy Traffic Court proceedings. These events have been postponed or eliminated. It is logical to conclude that the finishing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will increase the parking needs proportionally. The final project scope should include this evaluation upon lifting of COVID restrictions and provide accommodation for added parking needs.

**Vehicle Access Limitations** – The current movement of traffic around the Justice Center exterior provides close proximity between the building and vehicle lanes. This presents a security risk to the building that should be considered. A solution to this issue would be to eliminate close vehicle access along the front and sides of the building. Traffic flow could be routed around the “No Vehicle” area without much difficulty. A designated spot for delivery trucks and handicap dropoff could be provided at a safe distance from the building entrance. The former vehicle lanes closer to the building could be converted to pedestrian walkways.

**Improvement to the Secure Parking Lot** – The original Justice Center design included a fenced, gated “Judge’s” parking lot with a pass-card entrance to the rear corner of the building. The number of spaces within this lot is limited and does not currently provide enough parking for judges, department heads and other staff in need of a more secure entrance. For example – District Attorney or Solicitor prosecutors are at higher security risk during a trial. Secure parking for a prosecutor during a trial seems reasonable while they may not need this level of security at other times. The Buildout Project should provide additional secure parking as is reasonable and practical for the added safety of select staff.

**COVID-19 Impacts** – During the Pandemic, the normal workings of the Court System have changed. The person-to-person interactions have been purposely reduced for the health and safety of all parties. This is reflected in fewer jury trials, more business conducted by remote teleconferencing and suppressed caseload volumes. However, it is recommended that critical planning for a Buildout Project consider these downtrends as temporary and that the future operation of the Court System will return to means and methods considered typical prior to the Pandemic. With no additional expansion possible beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, it is prudent to consider the recent caseload reduction as temporary and plan the buildout requirements accordingly.

## **Other Considerations (con't)**

**Systems Upgrades** – Since the Justice Center opened in 2003, there have been significant changes and improvements in technology. This applies to existing Building Security, Voice and Data systems, Cellular, Radio and WIFI technologies. These systems currently function inadequately and in some cases have become obsolete making repair or replacement of equipment difficult or impossible. The Buildout Project scope should include upgrades to each of these systems to bring them up to current state of the art capability and functionality.

**Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment** – With the Justice Center 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor currently unfinished, the Buildout Project Scope will need to anticipate the need for new furnishing upon completion of construction. There may also be some additional furnishing needed within the spaces designated for renovation and repurposing on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors

**Remediation to the Inmate Tunnel** – The Justice Center and the adjacent Jail Facility are connected by an underground, concrete tunnel. This tunnel provides for secure movement of inmates between the Jail and the Justice Center courtrooms. Since constructed the tunnel has experienced repeated issues with subterranean water infiltration. Initial attempts to resolve this issue have been unsuccessful. It is recommended that the Buildout Project scope include an evaluation and proposed remedy by the selected Design Architect. The repair work necessary to implement the design remedy will be included in the Bid Documents and Construction Contract for the overall Buildout Project.

## **Summary of Proposed Departmental Layout**

3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor -	Superior Courts District Attorney's Office Public Defender's Office Food Service Lounge
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor -	State Courts Solicitor General's Office Juvenile Court Jury Assembly Grand Jury
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor -	Magistrate Court Constable's Office Probate Court Clerk of Court Court Services Building Engineer

*See attached Concept Floor Plans for more specific layout details.*

## **Preliminary Project Budget Estimate**

### **Justice Center Buildout Project**

3rd Floor Buildout  
1st & 2nd Floor Renovation  
Site Upgrades - Parking, Drives  
Voice and Data Cabling  
Update Cellular and WIFI systems  
Security System Upgrades  
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment

Architectural Design Services  
Construction Testing & Inspection

**TOTAL: = \$14,500,000.00**

## **Concept Floor Plans**

The floor plans on the following pages were developed through a multi-step process involving direct participation from key officials within each department. The current and projected future needs of each individual department have been considered for the Buildout scenario. These individual needs were then balanced with the needs of complimentary and/or neighboring departments and with the functional needs of visitors, the public and the Justice Center complex as a whole.

In some cases, departments were identified for relocation chiefly so their existing space could be repurposed for the necessary expansion of another neighboring department. This strategy has proven to be both acceptable for the relocated department and critical for satisfying the growth needs of the department expanding into the repurposed space. The willingness to relocate and the team attitude of all stakeholders has proven to be a benefit in development of a successful Concept for the Justice Center Buildout Project.

These Concept Plans should still be considered Preliminary and may change some throughout the remainder of the Planning and Design phases of work. They will however provide the specific template necessary to guide the selected Design Architect toward construction-ready plans which will satisfy the departmental needs identified within the Concept Phase of this Project.