

**AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

Case Number: SE-24-01
Hearing Date: Monday, February 5, 2024

Applicant: Charlotte Garnes
Property Owner: Applicant
Address of Property: 3202 Rushing Road
Augusta, Georgia 30906
Tax Parcel #: 121-2-091-00-0
Present Zoning: R-1A (One-family Residential)
Commission District: 5 (Bobby Williams) **Super District:** 9 (Francine Scott)
Fort Eisenhower (Gordon) Notification Required: No

Request	Proposed Use / Activity	Applicable Text
Special Exception to establish a Lodging/Boarding House	Boarding house	Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Sections 16-2(g), 26-1(u)

Summary of Request:

This request pertains to a 0.26-acre property in central Richmond County, located just south of the I-520/Windsor Spring Road intersection. The property is a corner lot currently zoned R-1A (One-family Residential), situated at the transitional point between Windsor Spring Road and a major cluster of single-family homes.

The applicant seeks a special exception to allow the property to be used for a women’s boarding house. (This use is permitted in R-3 zones via special exception, and in B zones by right. In both cases, the property must meet certain defined performance standards.) The applicant also, therefore, seeks rezoning to R-3A in order for the property to be eligible for a special exception; this petition is discussed separately in the report for Z-24-06. **Both petitions must be approved by the Augusta Commission for the boarding house to begin operations.**

Comprehensive Plan Consistency:

According to the 2023 Comprehensive Plan update, the property is located within the South Augusta character area. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the maintenance of “low-density single-family residential development in areas where it is already the predominant land use”. The recommended development patterns do not expressly address boarding houses.

Special Exception Standards:

Section 16-2(g) of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance states that a lodging or boarding house may be permitted in the R-3A zone by special exception “subject to performance standards

established in Section 26-1(u). These standards are outlined below, with any staff commentary in red:

- (1) The house must meet all code requirements for health, safety, and welfare of the occupants. Plans must be submitted for review by the Building Department and Fire Department. Plans must conform to the following, but may not be limited to:
 - a. International Building Code
 - b. International Plumbing Code
 - c. International Mechanical Code
 - d. International Gas Code
 - e. National Electric Code
 - f. ADA
 - g. Life Safety Codes
 - h. International Energy Conservation Code

Proof of compliance must be submitted with the application for Certificate of Occupancy and/or business license.

- (2) The maximum number of residents allowed for the House is dependent upon the specifications in the Home Design Requirements Section below and compliance with Building and Fire Department occupancy and safety determination. Under no circumstances may the House exceed the determined occupancy.
- (3) Only the primary residential structure may be utilized for the purposes of this request. No accessory structure may be constructed or modified to accommodate residents. *The concept plan presented with the application would satisfy this standard.*
- (4) Upon approval of the house an applicant shall make no alternations [sic] or additions to the structure for the purpose of increasing the occupancy unless an amended application is presented and approved.
- (5) If the house fails to maintain compliance with all building, safety, health, and zoning requirements it shall be grounds for termination of the Special Exception and/or business license, and the owner/operate [sic] shall thereafter be required to discontinue the use of the premises as a Lodging House or Boarding House.
- (6) Home Design Requirements:

Category	Requirement
Living Room	120 ft ² if 3-5 persons in residence 150 ft ² if 6 or more persons in residence
Dining Room	80 ft ² if 3-5 persons in residence 120 ft ² if 6 or more persons in residence
Bedroom or private living spaces	80 ft ² per person in residence
Functional toilet and lavatory ¹	1 per 4 residents
Showering facility ¹	1 per 4 residents

The home would satisfy all design requirements. The applicant seeks five residents for the house, with one resident manager on site.

¹ The house must comply with all ADA requirements.

- (7) Off-street parking must be provided at one space for each two beds and one space for the owner/resident manager. (Allowance may be made by the Planning and Development staff on a case-by-case basis if public transportation is available/utilized by the residents and/or on-street parking is available.) *Based on the plans for house as provided, four parking spaces would be required. The driveway and carport should combine to accommodate this requirement.*

Findings:

1. There are no prior zoning actions associated with this property.
2. The property appears to have access to municipal water lines; sanitary sewer lines are located nearby.
3. Per the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Functional Classification Map, Rushing Road is classified as a local road, while Windsor Spring Road is a principal arterial route.
4. Augusta Transit's nearest service to the property is at the corner of Peach Orchard Road and Windsor Spring Road.
5. According to the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) available on the Augusta-Richmond County GIS Maps, the property is not located within a Special Flood Hazard Area.
6. Augusta-Richmond County GIS data show no wetlands located on the property.
7. Site topography slopes generally west-to-east from 266 to 250 feet above sea level.
8. All properties adjoining the subject property have R-1A zoning. The nearest R-3 property is located at 3125 Richmond Hill Road.
9. At time of writing, staff have received a pair of public inquiries regarding the petition. The inquiries have been neutral-to-supportive, provided that the use of the property be limited to what has been proposed.

Recommendation: The Planning Commission recommend **denial** of this special exception.

Note: This staff report includes the information available approximately two weeks prior to the Planning Commission hearing. It represents an evaluation of the facts presented by the applicant, research done by the staff, and consideration of the relevant factors in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of Augusta, Georgia. New facts may emerge, and staff reserves the right to make a verbal recommendation at the hearing based on all the information available at that time.

December 11, 2022

Department of Planning and Development
Planning Division
535 Telfair Street, Ste. 300
Augusta, GA 30901

RE: Rezoning Letter of Intent Proposed R1 Zoning

Dear Planning Department,

Please allow this letter to serve as official notice of my intent to apply for rezoning for the property located at 3202 Rushing Road, Augusta, GA [Parcel Number: 1212091000], currently zoned as R-1A (Single Family Dwelling), to be rezoned as R-3A (Boarding House).

The purpose of this rezoning request is to accommodate the establishment of a boarding house within the framework of a single-family residence. The proposal allows the property to offer accommodations for multiple individuals while adhering to the standards and regulations outlined under the R-3A zoning classification.

Outlined below are the primary reasons for this proposed rezoning:

1. **Preservation of Property Structure:** The existing single-family dwelling at 3202 Rushing Road will remain unchanged structurally. The rezoning will allow for internal modifications to accommodate multiple occupants while preserving the external integrity of the property.
2. **Community Enhancement:** This proposal aligns with the community's evolving needs by offering housing options that cater to individuals seeking affordable, communal living arrangements while contributing positively to the neighborhood's diversity.
3. **Zoning Compliance:** The proposed use of the property as a boarding house under the R-3A zoning will adhere to all relevant regulations, including parking, occupancy limits, and property maintenance, ensuring it aligns with the city's zoning laws.
4. **Responsible Management:** Commitment to responsible management practices will be upheld to ensure minimal impact on the surrounding area, maintaining the property that contributes positively to the neighborhood.

I am eager to work closely with the City of Augusta and the Planning Department throughout the rezoning process. Through this collaborative effort, we can address any concerns, provide necessary documentation, and ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and requirements.

Please consider this letter as an initial step in the rezoning process for 3202 Rushing Road. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Your guidance on the next steps in the rezoning application process will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Garnes/Owner



ReNforce (pronounced *reinforce*) assists justice-impacted individuals in successfully reentering the community and the workforce through training, coaching, and professional development. In addition, ReNforce engages employers willing to learn about the benefits of hiring qualified job candidates with a conviction on their record. To provide a holistic approach to reentry, ReNforce expanded its portfolio and launched its Safe Housing initiative by providing supportive housing to system-impacted women rebuilding their lives after incarceration in Augusta, GA.

Charlotte Garnes founded ReNforce in 2020 in Savannah, Georgia, as a response to her own personal experiences with workplace discrimination. Ms. Garnes is a trained Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion professional with a DEI certificate from the University of South Florida. Despite holding both Bachelor's and Master's degrees, Ms. Garnes found herself without work after her employer learned of her conviction history. It became Ms. Garnes' personal mission to create a nonprofit organization that would work not only with businesses and organizations but also with individuals who experience barriers to employment relating to the criminal legal system. ReNforce quickly expanded to serve both Savannah and Augusta.



Early on, Ms. Garnes recognized that addressing employment discrimination alone was insufficient to overcome the barriers faced by formerly incarcerated people in the state – especially women. In Augusta, ReNforce collaborates with Community Supervision and various other community-based organizations to support women in custody awaiting their court appearances, women who confront housing instability due to prior criminal convictions, and women reentering society after incarceration. Unfortunately, a single domestic violence shelter is the only housing option for women coming out of jail in Augusta. Susan Burton, the founder of A New Way of Life Reentry Project (ANWOL), established the Sisterhood Alliance for Safety and Equality (SAFE) Housing Network in 2018 to address the need for stable housing for formerly incarcerated women. ReNforce has joined this network. The SAFE Housing Network is dedicated to supporting the replication of ANWOL's innovative, nationally acclaimed reentry model, which combines direct service with movement building and advocacy.

The Need

According to the Georgia Justice Project, Georgia has the country's highest rate of correctional control: 1 in 18 Georgians (5.6%) is either in prison, jail, on probation, or on parole at any given time, double the national average. More than 4 million people in Georgia have a criminal

record, or about 40% of adults in the state. Due to racist policing and prosecution practices, Black people represent 58% of all people incarcerated in the state but only 31% of the overall population (whereas white people are 33% of the incarcerated population and 56% of the overall population). According to the Prison Policy Initiative, more than 86,000 women are released from incarceration in Georgia each year (1,900 from prison and the rest from jails).

Imprisonment has increased more than 800% since the 1980s, and as such, women are the fastest-growing incarcerated population nationwide. Incarcerated women are disproportionately people of color, overwhelmingly poor and low-income, survivors of violence and trauma, and have high rates of physical and mental illness and substance use. Women's reentry needs are different from men's, particularly regarding children. Nearly 80% of women in jails are mothers and are usually the primary caregivers of their young children.

People who have been to prison are 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general population. People recently released from prison are at the highest risk of being homeless, with rates nearly *12 times higher* than the public, and women—black women in particular—are especially at risk. In Georgia, incarcerated people are not paid for the work they do while incarcerated, which becomes problematic upon their release as they are charged supervision fees once they are released. This makes it almost impossible to comply with supervision requirements (i.e., paying fees), and many women are reincarcerated as a result. In Georgia, 2 out of 3 people released from prison are reincarcerated within three years.

Our Work

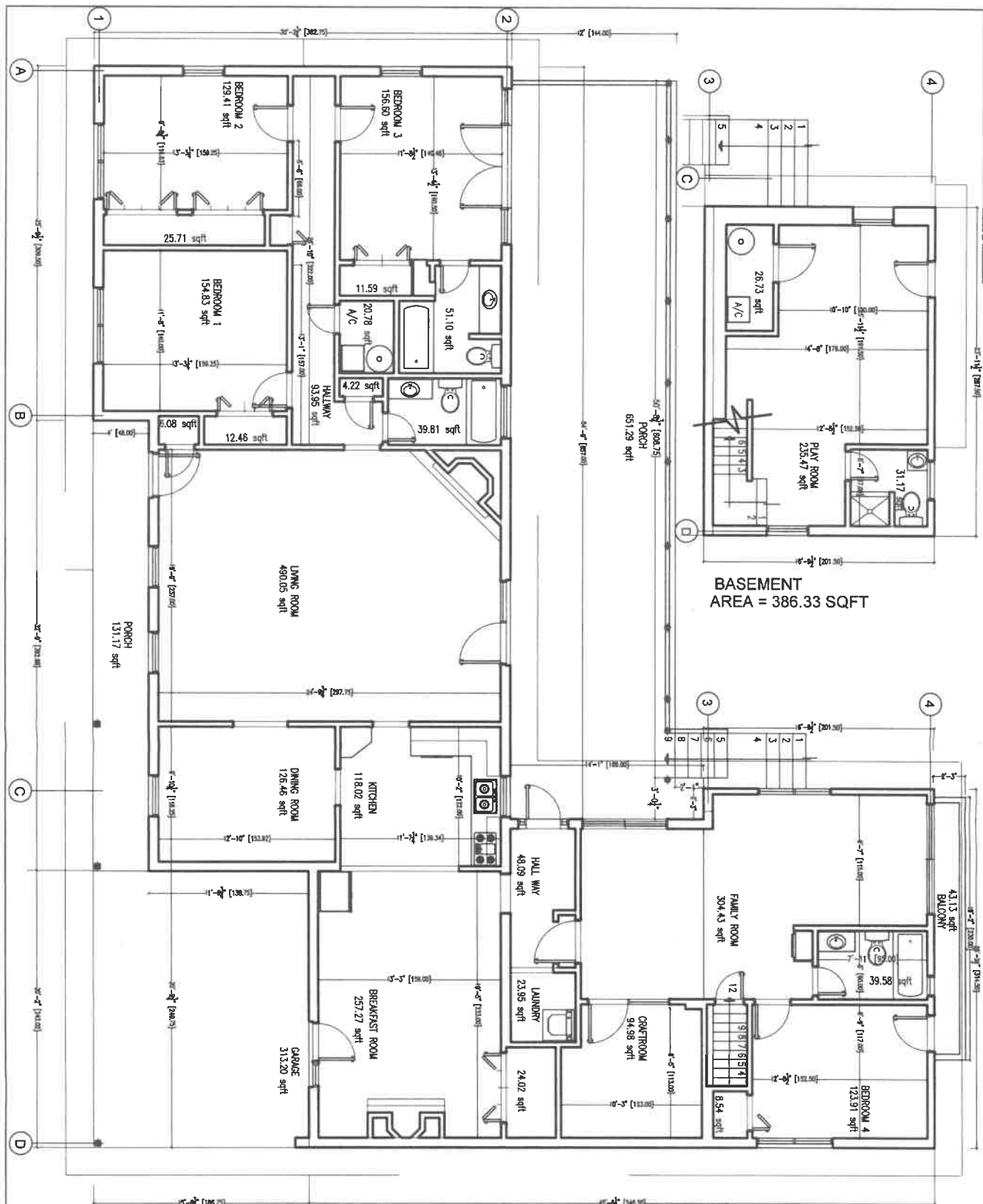
Ready, Willing, & Employable Project- ReNforce has developed a thorough curriculum to prepare and empower system-impacted people to engage with prospective employers, represent themselves well, be aware of their legal employment rights, and secure career-track employment. Through the project, we provide training, one-on-one coaching, and one-time material support to equip system-impacted individuals in Georgia with the knowledge, skills, documentation (e.g., state ID), and transportation (e.g., bus passes) they need to secure and maintain employment on a career track. We have expanded our *Ready, Willing, & Employable Project* from Savannah to Augusta.

Each graduate leaves the program with an Independent Employment Plan (IEP), which is developed with the client and is individualized to consider each client's education and work experience before, during, and after incarceration. In 2022, 40% of graduates were hired into career-track employment after they graduated from ReNforce's program. In 2023, we would like to increase the hiring rate to 50% without compromising the quality of employment secured (that is, career track) by our system-impacted graduates.

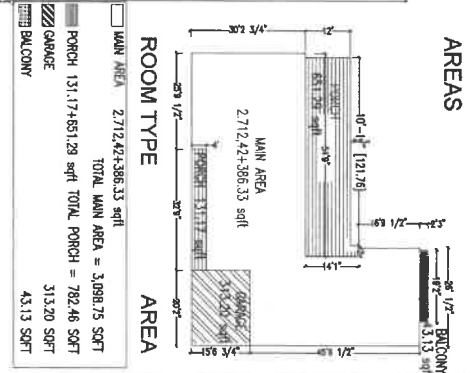
Redemption House (Augusta) – ReNforce has secured a single-family home in Augusta to expand our services to include a safe home for women returning to the community after incarceration. In addition to housing, ReNforce offers a wide range of supportive services aimed at helping our residents heal from trauma, achieve self-sufficiency, and thrive in their new lives, including

securing and maintaining career-track employment. ReNforce's safe home is based on the well-known women's reentry program that A New Way of Life in Los Angeles created in 1998.

Project Restart understands that one in seven jobs requires an occupational license, and because 40% of adult Georgians have a criminal record, they may be barred from obtaining these licenses. Occupational licenses can hinder well-qualified individuals from seeking good jobs and long-term careers. Every licensing applicant with a criminal record risks denial because of their record, even if it is old, pardoned, or expunged. ReNforce is partnering with the Small Business Majority and local attorneys to address policy work around [SB 157](#) and improve occupational licensing outcomes for system-impacted individuals while reducing recidivism and filling the gaps in workforce shortages. Again, using both personal and professional experiences of advocating for the reinstatement of her Mental Health license, Ms. Garnes understands the need to address this work on a legislative level.



LEVEL 1
AREA = 2,712.42SQFT



Owner
REHOME GROUP, LLC

PROJECT
SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE
Plan

FLOOR PLAN

Draw
RAUL REYES
PHONE 706.832.80.40

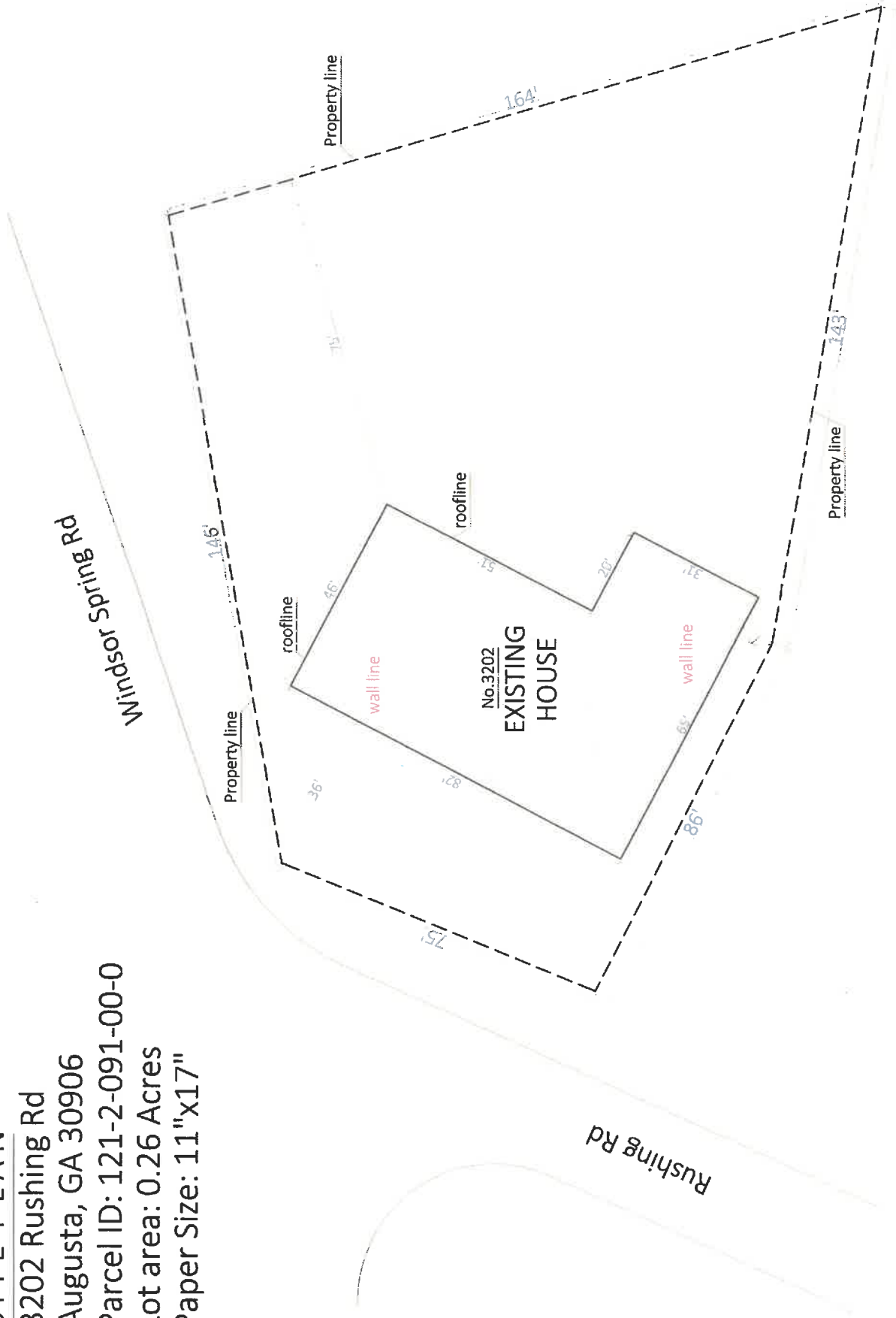
Location
3202 RUSHING RD
AUGUSTA, GA 30906

Date
December 2, 2023

Plan N.-
A-1

SITE PLAN

3202 Rushing Rd
Augusta, GA 30906
Parcel ID: 121-2-091-00-0
Lot area: 0.26 Acres
Paper Size: 11"x17"




Planning Commission
SE-24-01
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3202 Rushing Road

Aerial

Legend

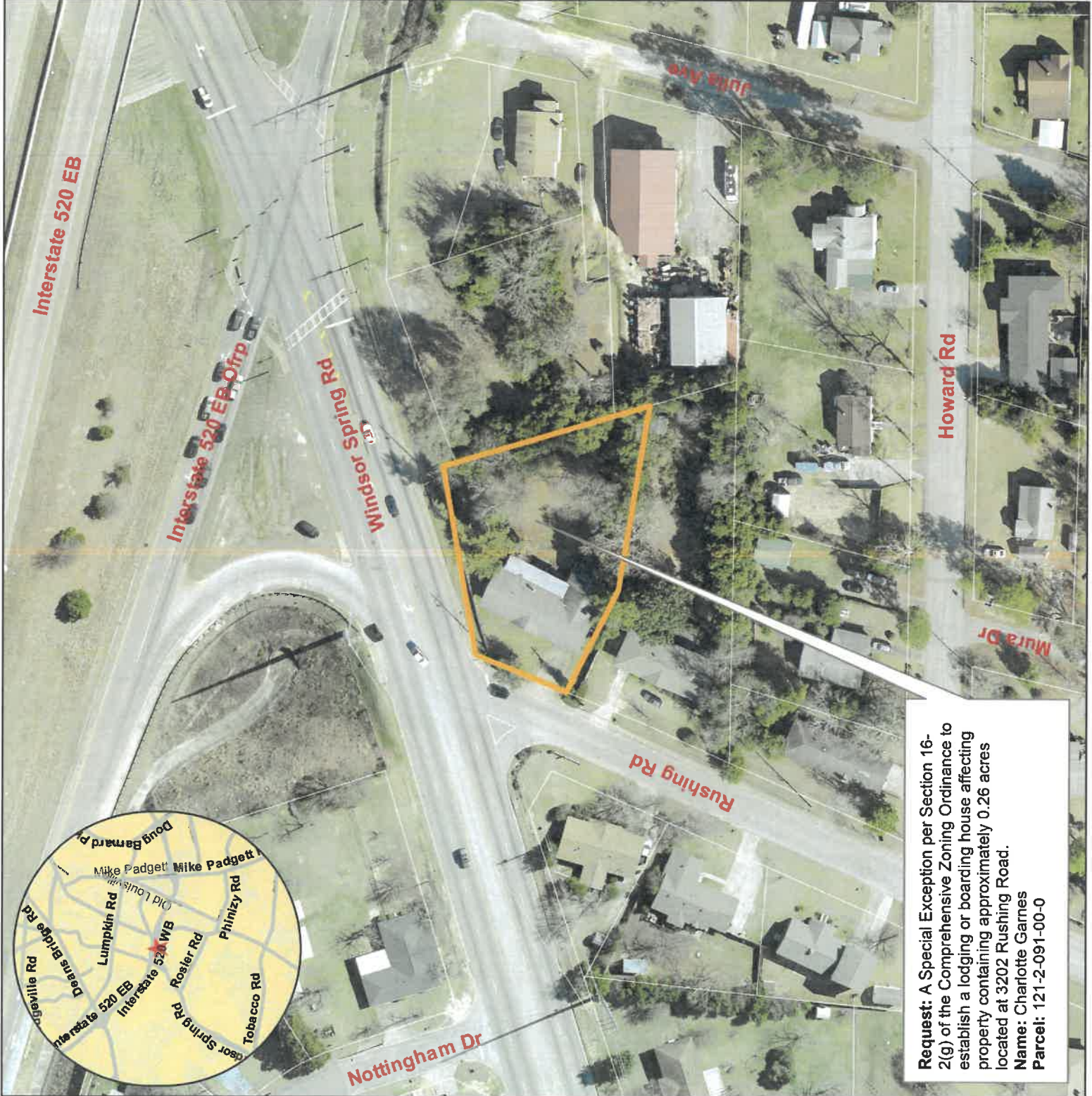
 Subject Property



Produced By: City of Augusta
Planning & Development Department
535 Telfair Street Suite 300
Augusta, GA 30901
1/12/2024 MH18072

Augusta, GA Disclaimer

The data represented on this map has been compiled by the best methods available. Accuracy is contingent upon the source information as compiled by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The City of Augusta, Georgia, and its employees are not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The City of Augusta, Georgia, and its employees are not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data. The City of Augusta, Georgia, and its employees are not responsible for any errors or omissions in the data.




Request: A Special Exception per Section 16-2(g) of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to establish a lodging or boarding house affecting property containing approximately 0.26 acres located at 3202 Rushing Road.
Name: Charlotte Garnes
Parcel: 121-2-091-00-0

Planning Commission
SE-24-01
February 5, 2024

3202 Rushing Road

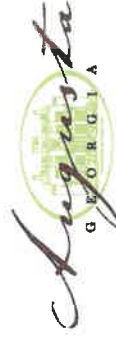
Current Zoning

Legend

 Subject Property

Zoning Classification

 R-1A: One Family Residential



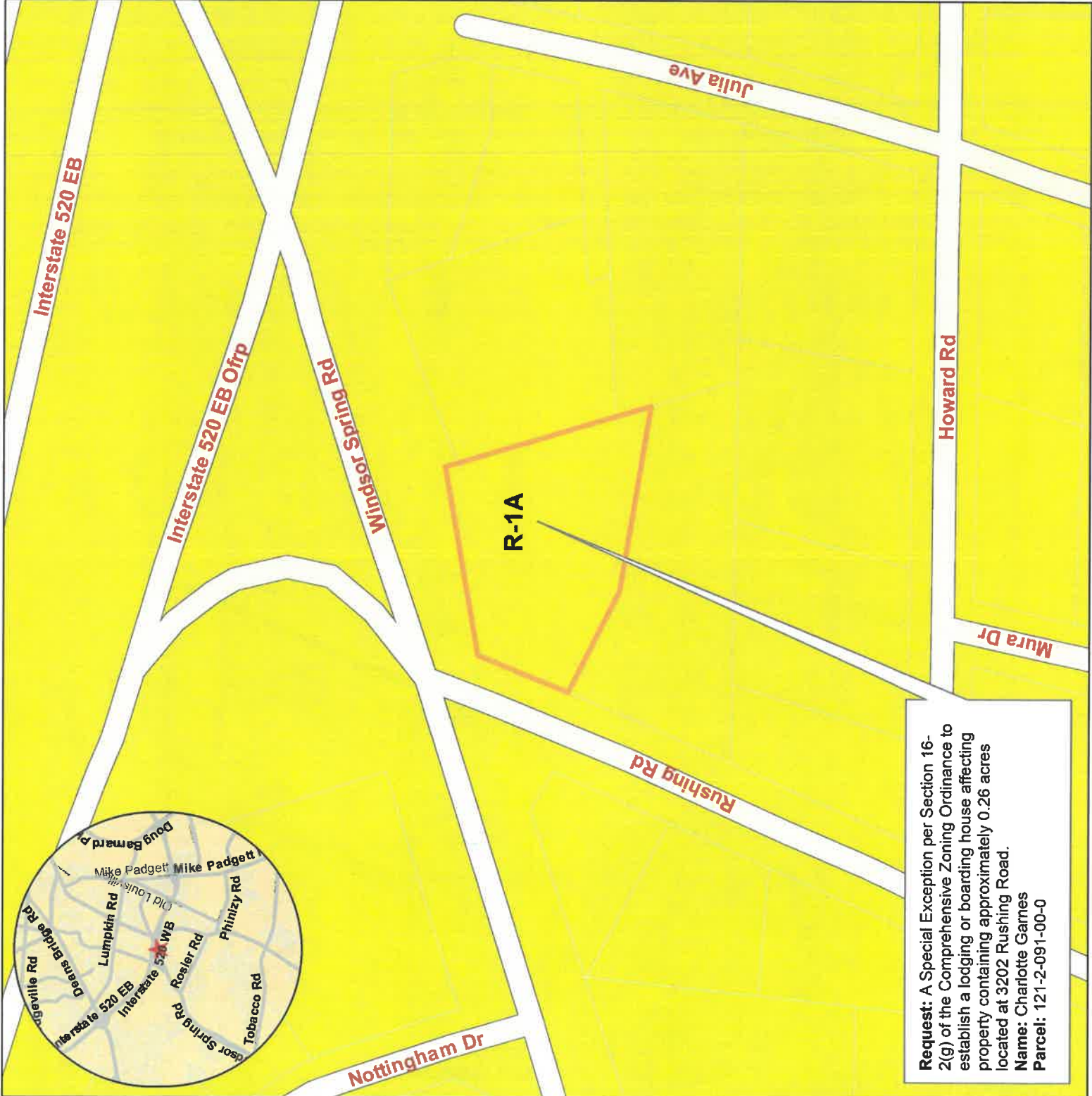
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0 100 Feet



Request: A Special Exception per Section 16-2(g) of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to establish a lodging or boarding house affecting property containing approximately 0.26 acres located at 3202 Rushing Road.
Name: Charlotte Games
Parcel: 121-2-091-00-0

