

Hearing Date: September 2, 2026
Case Number: SE-26-14
Applicant: Nolan Martin
Property Owner: Augusta Georgia
Property Address: 1001 Fourth Street
Tax Parcel No: 060-1-036-00-0
Current Zoning: LI (Light Industrial)
Fort Gordon Notification Required: N/A
Commission District 1: Jordan Johnson
Super District 9: Francine Scott



REQUEST	PROPOSED USE/ACTIVITY	APPLICABLE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE SECTION(S)
Special Exception	Augusta Juvenile Justice Center	Section 26-1(p)

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

This special exception applies to the Augusta-owned property at 1001 Fourth Street, Tax Parcel No. 060-1-036-00-0, which is zoned LI (Light Industrial). The submitted boundary survey identifies the tract as approximately 4.85 acres and shows the existing former school building fronting Fourth Street. Augusta proposes to renovate the former Craig Houghton Elementary School for use as the Augusta Juvenile Justice Center, consolidating Juvenile Court judicial offices, courtrooms, support offices, meeting space, holding cells, and related parking on the site. The applicant states that Juvenile Court judges and staff are currently located in leased space on Broad Street and that the Augusta Commission has approved consolidation of the Court's operations at this property, with project funding approved through SPLOST VIII and SPLOST IX. Renovations are proposed in three phases: Phase I would create temporary offices for Juvenile Court judges and support staff; Phase II would construct permanent offices, courtrooms, holding cells, meeting spaces, and additional parking; and Phase III would convert the temporary office area to additional offices and meeting space. Phase I is expected to be completed by December 31, 2026, with the remaining phases estimated for completion by December 31, 2027.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY:

According to the Envision Augusta-Richmond County 2023 Comprehensive Plan, the property is within the Old Augusta Character Area. Old Augusta is characterized by a broad mix of commercial, office, cultural, entertainment, government, institutional, and residential uses, with civic and institutional uses located throughout the area. The plan's vision calls for maintaining the area's historic character and unique mix

of land uses while adapting to changing needs and specifically identifies new civic and institutional facilities and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings as appropriate redevelopment.

Recommended development patterns also include public infrastructure and public buildings that support and complement surrounding development. The plan identifies LI (Light Industrial) as a recommended zoning district within Old Augusta. The proposed reuse of a former public school as a consolidated Juvenile Justice Center is therefore consistent with the character-area vision and recommended development pattern, subject to compliance with applicable development standards.

FINDINGS:

1. The subject property is located at 1001 Fourth Street, Tax Parcel No. 060-1-036-00-0, and is zoned LI (Light Industrial). The survey submitted identifies approximately 4.85 acres.
2. The application identifies the proposed development as the Augusta Juvenile Justice Center. The letter of intent describes judicial offices, courtrooms, support offices, meeting space, holding cells, and related parking within and around the existing former Craig Houghton Elementary School building.
3. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance defines 'Local Government Enterprises' as Augusta Commission governmental functions such as schools, municipal or county office buildings, police stations, and similar institutional uses. The proposed Juvenile Justice Center is a governmental/institutional use; however, because the project includes holding cells and otherwise relates to detained persons and the justice/corrections function, Section 26-1(p) is the applicable Special Exception provision.
4. Section 26-1 provides that listed special exceptions may be permitted in any zone when the use is deemed essential or desirable to public convenience or welfare and is in harmony with the objectives of the applicable planning document. Section 26-1 also requires a preliminary development plan showing buildings, curb cuts, driving lanes, parking areas, and existing or proposed walls, fences, and screen plantings.
5. Section 26-1(p) applies to uses that involve detained persons or otherwise relate to corrections or incarceration. The proposed Juvenile Justice Center includes holding cells; therefore, special exception approval is required for the proposed use.
6. The LI Zone permits B-2 uses and specified light-industrial uses, prohibits residential uses and uses that are noxious or injurious by reason of dust, refuse, odor, fumes, noise, vibration, radiation, or similar conditions, and establishes a maximum height of 165 feet.
7. The LI Zone requires minimum setbacks of 40 feet in the front, 10 feet on each side, and 25 feet in the rear. Any final site plan and building/site modifications must demonstrate compliance with the applicable LI dimensional standards or otherwise document lawful nonconforming conditions where applicable.
8. The conceptual site plan depicts renovation of the existing building, a secured judges' parking area, non-secured parking, a new driveway connection on Walton Street, and modification of an existing Walton Street driveway connection. Approval of the Special Exception should not be construed as final site plan approval.

9. The applicant states that the intended use is expected to generate less traffic than the property's prior use as a school and, based on the pre-application discussion, a traffic study would not be required. Final access, circulation, parking, and traffic requirements remain subject to review by the appropriate Augusta departments during site plan review.
10. The applicant also states that, based on the pre-application discussion, a Development of Regional Impact form is not required and that the property is outside any local historic preservation district.
11. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan places the property within the Old Augusta Character Area, where government and institutional uses are part of the existing land-use mix. The plan encourages new civic and institutional facilities, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and public infrastructure that supports surrounding development.
12. The Comprehensive Plan lists LI (Light Industrial) among the recommended zoning districts for the Old Augusta Character Area. The proposal does not request a change to the existing LI zoning classification.
13. The Augusta Tree Ordinance applies to public and private development proposals requiring site plans under Section 30-2 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. Except for listed exemptions, a Tree Protection/Tree Establishment Plan is required for development requiring a site plan.
14. The Tree Ordinance and Illustrated Guide require a minimum 30 percent tree canopy for land undergoing development, achievable through preservation, new planting, or a combination of both. The canopy calculation, tree survey/inventory, tree protection, tree establishment, landscaping, street yard, and parking-lot landscaping requirements must be addressed during site plan review to the extent triggered by the proposed redevelopment.
15. For parking lots with more than five spaces, the Tree Ordinance requires interior landscaped areas for parking areas built after adoption of the ordinance, including at least five percent (5%) of the interior parking area devoted to tree-planting islands and limits on consecutive parking spaces between planting islands. The final parking design must be reviewed for compliance with these standards and any applicable retrofit provisions.
16. Existing trees proposed for preservation must be protected in accordance with the Tree Ordinance and Illustrated Guide, including protection of critical root/tree protection zones from grading, trenching, material storage, parking, and construction encroachment. Required tree protection measures must be shown on the Tree Protection/Tree Establishment Plan before land disturbance.
17. The Limited Warranty Deed submitted with the application documents conveyance of the property from the County Board of Education of Richmond County to Augusta, Georgia in 2021, consistent with the application identifying Augusta as the property owner.
18. Based on the materials submitted, the proposed adaptive reuse as a Juvenile Justice Center is consistent with the 2023 Comprehensive Plan and may be compatible with the existing site and surrounding area if developed in accordance with the approved Special Exception, final site plan, Tree Ordinance, and all other applicable Augusta development standards.

CRITERIA FOR GRANTING SPECIAL EXCEPTION:

The granting of a special exception is subject to a finding by the Planning Commission that a petition meets all nine (9) criteria:

1. Whether the proposed special use is consistent with the stated purpose of the zoning district in which it will be located;
The property is zoned LI (Light Industrial). The LI Zone permits B-2 uses and specified light-industrial uses, while Section 26-1 allows listed Special Exceptions in any zone when the use is essential or desirable to public convenience or welfare and is in harmony with the applicable planning document. The proposed Juvenile Justice Center is a public governmental/institutional use, and Section 26-1(p) specifically provides the Special Exception mechanism for uses involving detained persons or otherwise relating to corrections or incarceration.
2. Whether the establishment of the special use will impede the normal and orderly development of surrounding property for uses predominate in the area;
The proposal is an adaptive reuse of the former Craig Houghton Elementary School rather than development of a new incompatible industrial use. The Old Augusta Character Area contains a mix of government, institutional, commercial, office, and residential uses, and the Comprehensive Plan recognizes civic and institutional uses as part of the established development pattern. Compliance with final site plan, buffering, landscaping, parking, and Tree Ordinance requirements will further reduce potential impacts on surrounding property.
3. Whether the location and character of the proposed special use are consistent with a desirable pattern of development in general;
The 2023 Comprehensive Plan encourages adaptive reuse of existing buildings, new civic and institutional facilities, and public infrastructure that supports surrounding development within Old Augusta. The proposed reuse of a former public school as a consolidated Juvenile Justice Center is consistent with those policies and retains an established institutional site.
4. Whether the type of street providing access to the use is or will be adequate to serve the proposed special use;
This is subject to final site plan review. The conceptual plan utilizes the existing street network and depicts driveway access associated with the site. The applicant states that the proposed use is expected to generate less traffic than the former school use. Final driveway geometry and street-access requirements remain subject to review by the appropriate Augusta-Richmond County departments.
5. Whether access into and out of the property is or will be adequate to provide for traffic and pedestrian safety, the anticipated volume of traffic flow, and access by emergency vehicles;
Subject to final review. The conceptual plan depicts secured and non-secured parking and modifications to site access. The applicant indicates that a traffic study was not required based on the pre-application discussion. Final access, internal circulation, pedestrian safety, parking layout, and emergency-vehicle access shall be reviewed through the site plan, engineering, fire/life-safety, and permitting processes.

6. Whether public facilities such as schools, water or sewer utilities, and police or fire protection are or will be adequate to serve the special use;
Subject to agency review and permitting. The project is an Augusta-Richmond County governmental facility proposed on a previously developed public-school site within the urban service area. No information submitted with the application identifies an inability of public water, sewer, police, fire, or other public services to serve the proposed use. Any project-specific utility and fire/life-safety requirements must be satisfied prior to final approval and occupancy.
7. Whether refuse, service, parking and loading areas on the property will be located or screened to protect other properties in the area from such adverse effects as noise, light, glare or odor;
Subject to final site plan approval. The conceptual plan identifies parking areas associated with the proposed facility. Final parking, service, refuse, lighting, fencing, screening, landscaping, and buffering shall comply with the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, Augusta Tree Ordinance, and applicable development standards so that adverse impacts on adjoining properties are minimized.
8. Whether the hours and manner of operation of the special use will have adverse effects on other properties in the area;
No significant adverse effect is anticipated based on the materials submitted. The proposed use consists primarily of judicial offices, courtrooms, support offices, meeting areas, and secure holding functions within an existing institutional building. The use is not expected to generate the dust, refuse, odor, fumes, vibration, or similar noxious conditions prohibited in the LI Zone. Any operational impacts shall remain subject to applicable Augusta-Richmond County ordinances and conditions of approval.
9. Whether the height, size or location of the buildings or other structures on the property are or will be compatible with the height, size or location of buildings or other structures on neighboring properties.
The project principally renovates and adaptively reuses the existing former school building. No substantial increase in building height is identified in the submitted materials. Any additions or site modifications must comply with applicable LI dimensional standards, including required setbacks and the 165-foot maximum building height, or document any lawful nonconforming conditions during site plan review.

ENGINEERING/UTILITIES COMMENTS:

Traffic Engineering Comments:

- Recommendation for approval. Provide Preliminary Traffic Impact Worksheet.

Engineering Comments:

- None

Utilities Comments:

- None

RECOMMENDATION: The Planning Commission recommends Approval of the special exception to establish a Juvenile Justice Center with the following conditions:

1. The Special Exception shall be limited to a judicial and detention facility, including associated judicial offices, courtrooms, administrative and support offices, meeting and conference space, holding cells, secured and non-secured parking facilities, and other customary accessory functions, substantially consistent with the use, scope, and operational characteristics described in the application and letter of intent.
2. The final development shall comply with the LI (Light Industrial) zoning standards and all other applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, including parking, access, circulation, setbacks, and any lawful nonconforming-site requirements determined during site plan review (Sections 4, 5, 23 of the Augusta Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance)
3. Approval of this special exception request does not constitute approval of the conceptual site plan submitted with the special exception application. Prior to construction or land disturbance, the proposed development shall obtain all required site plans, building, land disturbance, engineering, utility, fire/life-safety, and other applicable approvals.
4. Existing trees to be retained shall be protected from construction activity in accordance with the approved Tree Protection/Tree Establishment Plan, and no regulated or protected tree shall be removed except in accordance with the Augusta Tree Ordinance (Title 8 - Chapter 4 of Augusta-Richmond County Code of Ordinances)
5. The development shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Augusta Tree Ordinance and the Illustrated Guide to Implementing the Augusta Tree Ordinance, including tree survey, minimum tree canopy, street yard, parking-lot landscaping, tree protection, tree establishment, and Tree Protection/Tree Establishment Plan requirements.
6. All project-specific comments and requirements issued by Augusta Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Utilities, Fire, Building, and other reviewing agencies shall be addressed prior to final site plan approval and/or issuance of applicable permits.
7. Any material change in the approved use that expands or changes the detention/corrections-related component beyond the scope described in the application shall be subject to review by the Augusta Planning and Development Department to determine whether additional zoning approval is required.
8. Approval of this Special Exception Request request does not constitute approval of the conceptual site plan submitted with the application. The proposed development shall obtain site plan approval in compliance with Site Plan Regulations of Augusta, Georgia prior to construction commencing on the property.

NOTE: This staff report includes the information available approximately two weeks prior to the Planning Commission hearing. The report is an evaluation of stated information presented by the applicant, research done by the staff, including the relevant factors in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of Augusta, Georgia. New facts may emerge at the hearing based on all the information available at that time.



AUGUSTA LAW DEPARTMENT

James T. Plunkett, Interim General Counsel

July 24, 2026

Ms. Adleasia Cameron
Director
Augusta Planning and Development Department
Suite 300
535 Telfair Street
Augusta, Georgia 30901

RE: Letter of Intent
Special Exception request for 1001 Fourth Street
Juvenile Justice Center
(judicial office and court facilities)

Dear Director Cameron:

Please accept this Letter of Intent on behalf of Augusta, Georgia in connection with its request for a Special Exception to allow the above referenced property to be used as a Juvenile Court Center. Currently the offices for the judges and staff of the Juvenile Court are located in leased space on Broad Street. The Augusta Commission has approved consolidating the Court's operations, including offices and courtrooms, by moving the Court's operations to the former Craig Houghton Elementary School. Voters approved the funding for this project in SPLOST VIII and SPLOST IX.

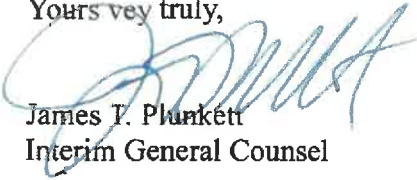
Should the special exception be granted, renovations of the facilities will be conducted in three phases. Phase I will consist of the conversion of existing space to temporary offices for the Juvenile Court Judges and support staff. By constructing the temporary office space, Augusta will be able to vacate the leased Broad Street property resulting in significant savings to Augusta.

Phase II will be the larger renovation project which will include construction of permanent office space, courtrooms, holding cells, meeting spaces, and the installation of additional parking. Upon the completion of Phase II, the Judges will be relocated from the temporary offices to their permanent offices after which Phase III will begin. Phase III will consist of converting the temporary offices into additional offices and meeting space for court staff.

Phase I is expected to be completed by December 31, 2026 and the remaining phases are estimated to be completed by December 31, 2027.

Should you need additional information regarding the project or the various phases, please do not hesitate to call.

Yours very truly,



James T. Plunkett
Interim General Counsel

cc: Mr. Nolan Martin
Mr. Ron Lampkin

SITE DATA:
PROPERTY LOCATION..... 101 FOURTH STREET
PROPOSED LAND USE..... JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER
EXISTING ZONING..... L1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
L1 ZONING SETBACKS..... 40' 10' 25' (FRONT/SIDE/REAR)
TOTAL SITE AREA..... 4.80 AC

BUILDING DATA:
EXISTING FOOTPRINT..... 51,300 S.F. +/-
GROSS FLOOR AREA..... 78,500 S.F. +/-

PARKING CRITERIA:
TOTAL EXISTING PARKING..... 23 SPACES
TOTAL PROPOSED PARKING..... 107 SPACES

FLOOD ZONE:
THIS SITE IS LOCATED IN FLOOD ZONE X, AREA OF MINIMAL FLOOD HAZARD ACCORDING TO F.I.R.C.M. MAP #1224C01306, EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 15, 2019.



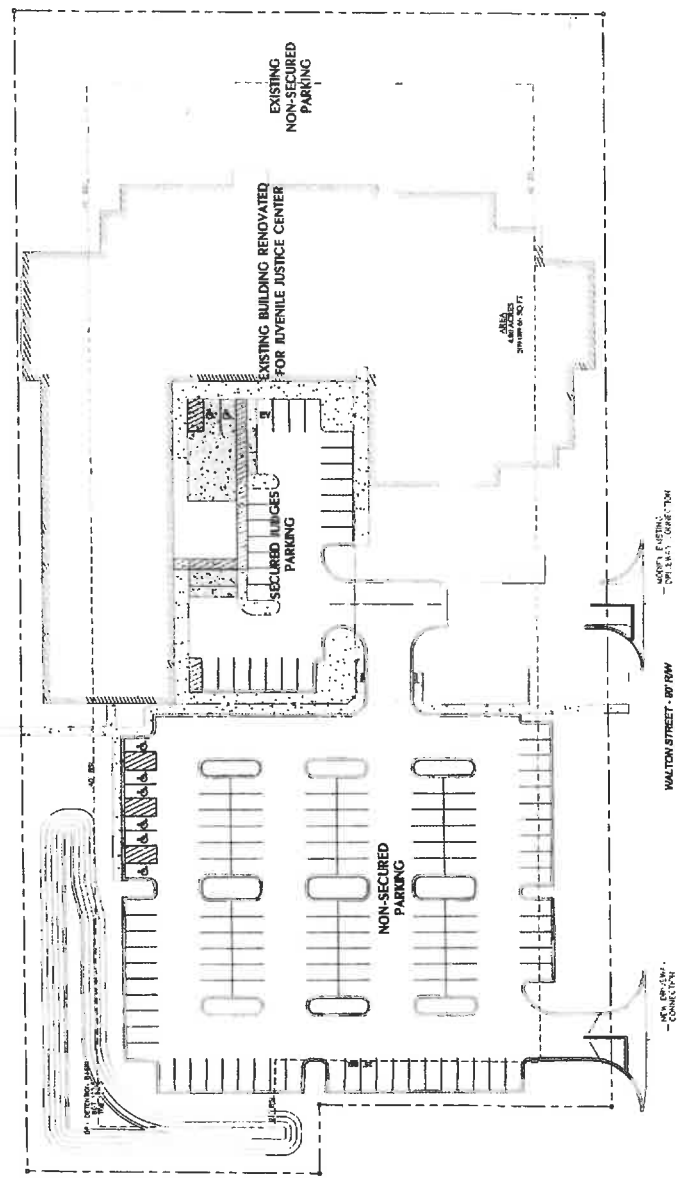
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY
AUGUSTA JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER
CONCEPT SITE PLAN
DATE: JULY 1, 2026 SCALE: 1" = 30'

HUSSEY GAY BELL

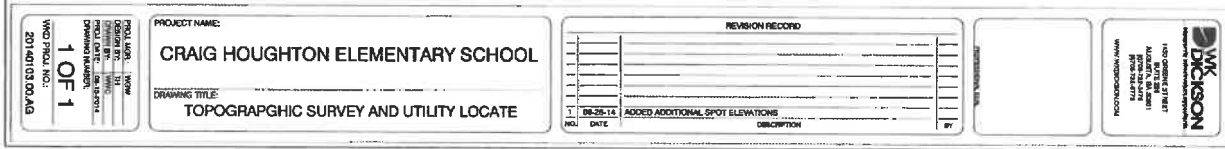
Established 1958

329 Commercial Drive SAVANNAH, GA 31406 (779) 235-4626

HALE STREET - RW/WR

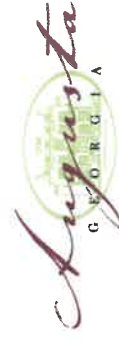


BY
DATE
PROJECT NO.



Planning Commission
SE-26-14
September 2, 2026
1001 Fourth Street
Aerial

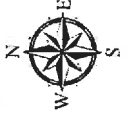
 Subject Property



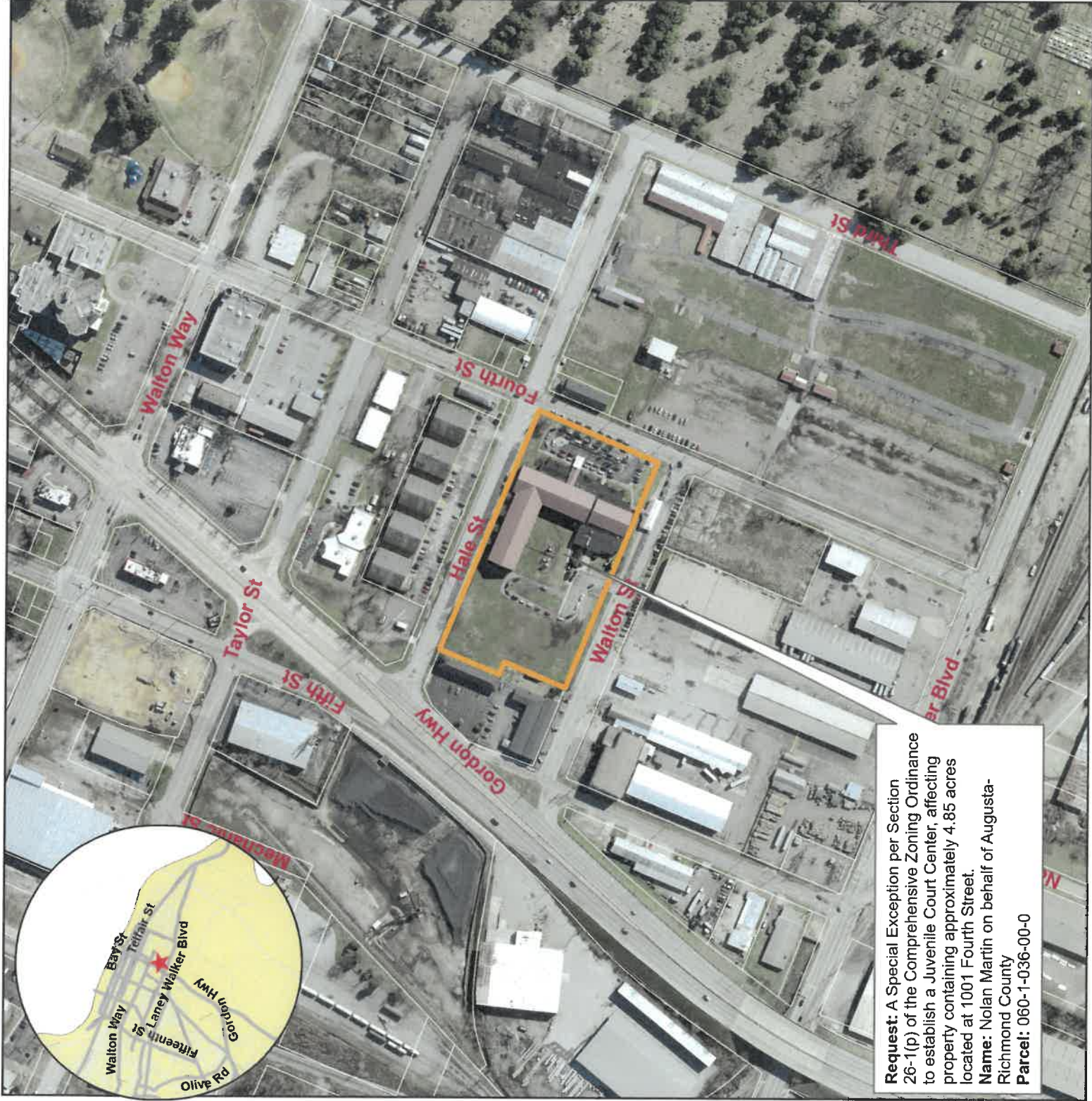
Produced By: City of Augusta
Planning & Development Department
535 Telfair Street Suite 300
Augusta, GA 30901
8/17/2026 PE22633

Augusta, GA Disclaimer

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0 600 Feet



Request: A Special Exception per Section 26-1(p) of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to establish a Juvenile Court Center, affecting property containing approximately 4.85 acres located at 1001 Fourth Street.

Name: Nolan Martin on behalf of Augusta-Richmond County
Parcel: 060-1-036-00-0

**Planning Commission
SE-26-14
September 2, 2026**

1001 Fourth Street

Current Zoning

 **Subject Property**

Zoning Classification

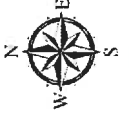
-  **B-1: Neighborhood Business**
-  **B-2: General Business**
-  **HI: Heavy Industry**
-  **LI: Light Industry**
-  **R-3A: Multiple-Family Residential**
-  **R-3B: Multiple-Family Residential**
-  **R-3C: Multiple-Family Residential**



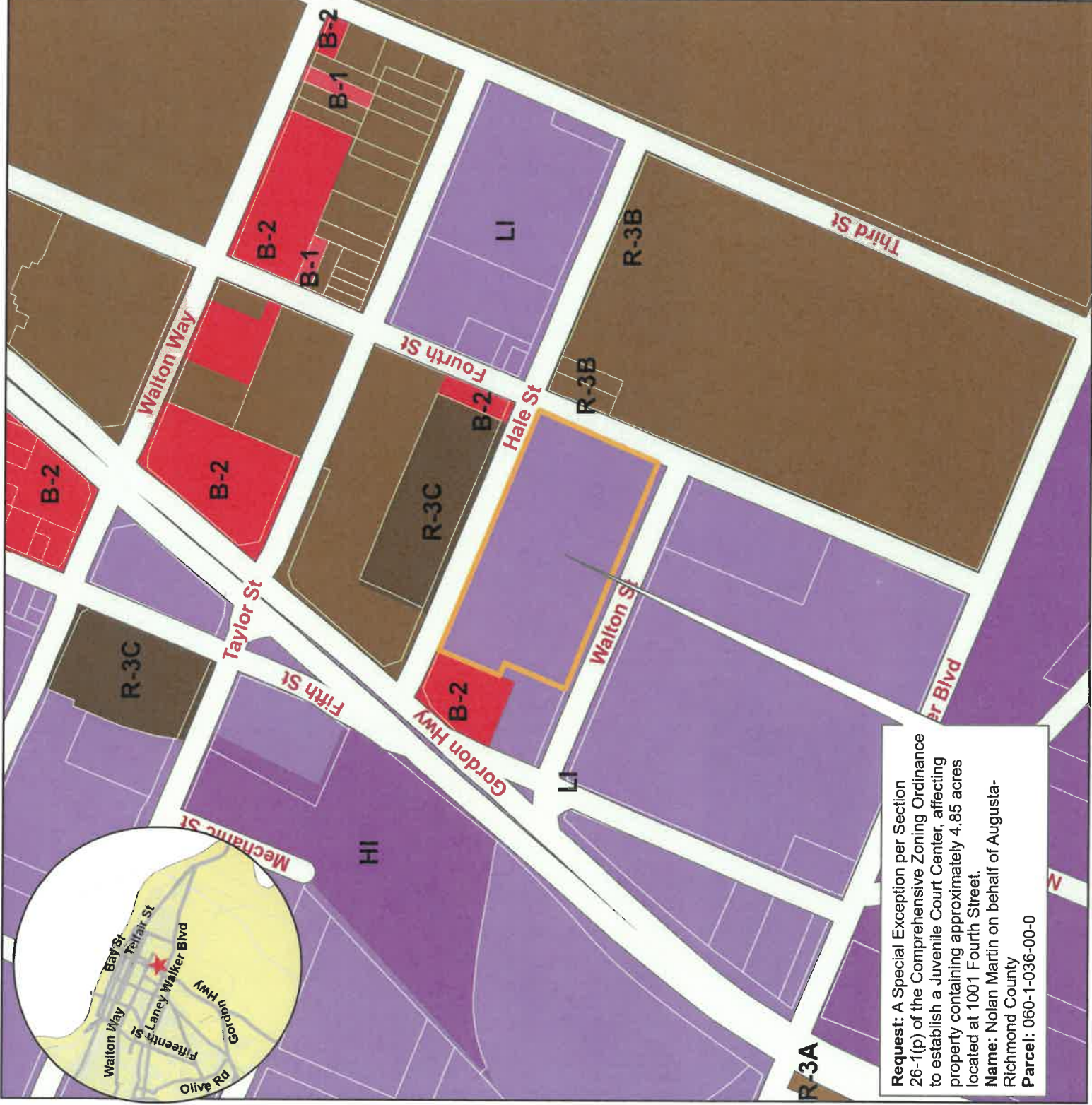
Produced By: City of Augusta
Planning & Development Department
535 Telfair Street Suite 300
Augusta, GA 30901
8/17/2026 PE22633

Augusta, GA District

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