

# The Augusta Chronicle

## Judicial center plans on track

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Plans for Augusta's new judicial center at Walton Way and James Brown Boulevard are moving rapidly, on schedule and under budget, the project's architect told city commissioners Tuesday.

Frank Greene, of RicciGreeneAssociates, said the design team is halfway through the design phase, which it plans to complete by the end of the year. It also plans to break ground on the \$67 million facility by year's end, he said. The expected occupancy date is 2010.

"We've been working on this project for quite awhile -- 2003-04 -- something like that, and it's very gratifying to be in a position to make this kind of report to you," he said.

The building, which is slightly under the maximum size of 183,000 square feet that architects were allowed, will house all Richmond County courts except for juvenile court, which will move into the former site of the U.S. District Bankruptcy Court on Broad Street.

The design meets all the performance objectives, which is a very good measure of the designers' hopes that they would be able to stay under budget, Mr. Greene said.

"Right now, we're under budget," he said.

The entrance of the courthouse faces east on James Brown Boulevard, across from property the Augusta Canal Authority could develop into a park. A four-story section parallel to Walton Way will be designated for courtrooms, holding cells and judges' chambers.

A large, two-story circular section will contain all of the public access functions.

The designers intend for the building to be very open and user-friendly. Other than courtrooms, most of the public business can be done on the first or second floor, said Ken Ricci, of the design firm.

There is a large public lobby and stairs and elevators to the upper floors. The first floor houses all of the court clerk departments, the jury assembly area and the probate clerk. The rest of the first floor is not accessible to the public because it is designated for utility or mechanical rooms and prisoner rooms.

Prisoners will be delivered to the four-story section through sally ports and brought to holding areas out of sight of the public.

They will be taken directly up to courtrooms on prisoner elevators and placed in holding cells so they can be brought immediately to courtrooms, Mr. Greene said.

The second floor of that section will house the state court solicitor's and district attorney's offices and grand jury. The back side of the floor is for staff, judges and juries.

The third floor is similar to the second floor and contains courtrooms, and the fourth floor is for judges' chambers and mechanical equipment.

Mr. Greene said the design is simple, the result of a lot of hard work by everyone involved.

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### **PROPOSED JUDICIAL CENTER**

The Plans for a new judicial center are on schedule and under budget. Groundbreaking should begin later this year. The center's occupancy date is scheduled for 2010.



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