



Gwinnett County Government
Communications Division
NEWS RELEASE

Heather Sawyer
Deputy Communications Director
Office: 770.822.7035
Fax: 770.822.7189
www.gwinnettcounty.com

Story contact: Angelia Parham, Director
Department of Support Services
770.822.8011
angelia.parham@gwinnettcounty.com

**OFFICIALS TURN DIRT ON NEW PARKING DECK
FOR COURTHOUSE EXPANSION**

(Lawrenceville, Ga., Feb. 20, 2018) – Gwinnett County officials and judges broke ground Tuesday for the first phase of construction on a \$75 million parking deck and courthouse addition behind the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center at 75 Langley Drive in Lawrenceville.

Phase 1 includes 850 new parking spaces scheduled for completion by the end of this year. The next phase will demolish the current two-level parking deck to make way for the rest of the parking deck with another 850 spaces and a four-story, 180,000-square-foot courthouse addition.

District 1 Commissioner Jace Brooks outlined some of the details of the parking deck and courthouse addition.

“Parking decks aren’t very glamorous as far as buildings go. But when it’s finished, the new parking deck will almost double the number of available spaces here,” he said. The new courthouse facilities will provide space for a jury assembly room, holding cells, workspace for the District Attorney, mediation rooms, and up to 14 additional courtrooms, although not all the courtrooms will be needed immediately, Brooks said.

County Administrator Glenn Stephens said that designing and constructing a courthouse was a team effort involving judges, clerks, prosecutors, the sheriff’s office and County staff.

“Building a courthouse addition is more complicated than most buildings because of the nature of its service, security issues and the technical aspects of making courtrooms function properly in the interest of justice, not to mention the close proximity to a building that needs to stay operational during the entire time of construction,” Stephens said. “It takes a lot of forethought, a lot of give-and-take, and time and commitment.”

District 4 Commissioner John Heard said that when the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center was built in 1988, people thought it was too big to ever be filled. However, in a few years, as county growth exploded and the County staff grew to keep up, GJAC did fill up, and

-more-

GJAC Expansion – Parking Groundbreaking/Page 2

departments had to move out for more space. Heard said the County has known for a while that court system needed to expand more, and he thanked the judges for their patience.

“This project was originally planned as part of the 2009 SPLOST,” Heard said. “Then, the recession hit and we couldn’t afford the operating expenses so we had to put it off. Sometimes people forget that building projects aren’t as simple as just putting up bricks and mortar. After the dust settles, you have to be able to afford the electric bill, the maintenance bill, the employees to staff it, and those are ongoing costs. Now, after years of judicious stewardship of our citizens’ tax dollars, and with some careful financial planning, we can now afford to build, operate, and maintain this new parking deck and courthouse addition.”

District 2 Commissioner Lynette Howard focused on the human aspect of the project, saying, “This is a place where people come for life-changing events. It could be for a marriage license, a birth certificate, adoption of a long-sought child, or to resolve a civil or criminal case. I am excited about all the people who were involved in the project to have a voice to make it the perfect project. It is very respectful of all the people who come here for whatever reason. It’s a very stressful time in their lives and we don’t need to add any kind of stress.”

Speaking on behalf the judiciary, Chief Superior Court Judge Melodie Snell Conner recalled that when GJAC was built in 1988, the Gwinnett court system had five superior court judges, three state court judges, a part-time magistrate judge, and a probate court judge. Now, the County has 10 superior court judges, six state court judges, a full-time magistrate plus six associate magistrates, a chief probate judge and an associate probate judge.

“We have more than doubled,” she said. “The growth of the judiciary is the direct result of the population boom we’ve experienced over the years.”

Gwinnett’s population was about 300,000 when GJAC opened. It is expected to reach more than 1.5 million in 2040.

Conner said judicial officials were consulted on big issues and small details, which will make the courthouse addition a more inviting and functional facility, including a break area for jurors and other amenities.

“It was truly a collaborative effort and I think the citizens of Gwinnett County will be the ones who truly benefit from that,” she said.

###

Note: Photos from the groundbreaking are available on [Flickr](#).