

Part 3 — Why Not Use an Existing County Building?

Posted on August 16, 2025 by Carey Fauscett-Anderson

TRENTON, Ga. — Some citizens have suggested that Dade County repurpose an existing facility—such as the Depot, the old Trenton Telephone building, the Historic Courthouse, the Trenton Civic Center, the High School, or the Senior Center—as a permanent elections office. At present, voting takes place in the Administration Meeting Room, which measures about 1,920 square feet.

While these suggestions come from a desire to save money and reuse what the county already owns, the reality is that none of these facilities meet Georgia's standards for a secure, accessible, and efficient elections operation.



State Standards Narrow the Options

Under Georgia law and State Election Board rules, an elections facility must be able to:

- Securely store all voting equipment and supplies, with climate control and fire safety measures (O.C.G.A. § 21-2-300, SEB Rule 183-1-12).
- Provide adequate space for Logic and Accuracy testing of all voting machines before each election.
- Allow training for all poll workers prior to each election in compliance with state guidelines (Georgia Poll Worker Manual, 2021).
- Meet ADA accessibility standards for both the public and election workers.
- Have proper electrical capacity, network infrastructure, and loading access for equipment delivery and pickup.

Why the Suggested Locations Fall Short



Senior Center – Heavy daily use, limited space, and no facilities for secure equipment storage or year-round testing operations.



The Depot – Limited square footage (1,974 square feet); no secure, climate-controlled storage; insufficient electrical capacity for simultaneous machine testing. The Depot also contains the offices of the Public Defender, Building Code Enforcement, and Soil and Water Conservation.



Old Trenton Telephone Building – Recently sold to the neighboring telephone company due to its extremely limited size and outdated condition. It contained only two small offices of about 12 by 12 feet each; with the bathroom included, the building totaled just 651 square feet. It lacked adequate outlets, staging space, secure storage, and training space.



High School – An extremely active school campus with strict access controls. Use is limited to polling days and not available for daily operations.



Historic Courthouse – Recently remodeled, the building appears large from the outside but is small inside. The downstairs holds only five offices, all currently in use. The upstairs, formerly the courtroom, is only slightly larger than the Administration Building's polling space and is accessible only by stairs or a small elevator. The building's layout, space limitations, and accessibility constraints make it unsuitable for secure equipment storage, poll worker training, or Logic and Accuracy testing.



Trenton Civic Center – Frequently booked for community events, weddings, and public meetings. Scheduling conflicts prevent year-round dedicated use. The facility also lacks secure storage space and dedicated office space for elections operations, and it is not owned by the county, limiting control over access.



North Dade School – Located in Wildwood, outside the corporate limits of the City of Trenton. Because the new elections facility must be designated as the Trenton Precinct, this site does not meet jurisdictional requirements. In addition, the structure is in severe disrepair and considered unsafe, rendering it unsuitable for election purposes.

Operational Realities



Elections Supervisor Lowanna Vaughan, her five-member Board of Elections, and representatives from the Board of Commissioners have personally assessed these and other locations over the years. Each presents major limitations—whether size, layout, security, accessibility, or scheduling—that would still force elections operations to be split across multiple sites. This would not resolve current logistical challenges and could make some of them worse.

Attempting to operate out of an unsuitable building would mean Vaughan and her volunteers, poll workers, and board members continuing to spend weeks moving equipment, setting up temporary workspaces, and coordinating training in borrowed rooms—exactly the inefficiencies the county is seeking to eliminate.

Conclusion

While reusing an existing county building may seem appealing, the practical realities of election administration make it unworkable. Splitting operations across multiple sites increases chain-of-custody risks for voting equipment and ballots, with each location adding more points of access, transfers, and opportunities for error or security breaches.

A dedicated, purpose-built elections facility would centralize operations, satisfy all state standards, improve security, and ease the workload of the county's sole full-time elections employee.