

City's development, business groups consider joint office

By Erin Zureick
Staff Writer

Augusta's economic development and business organizations are exploring the possibility of a new permanent home that would house all of the groups.

The idea is in the early stages and there are no plans to hire an outside group to study the matter, said Walter Sprouse, the executive director of the

Development Authority of Richmond County.

He said the development authority's board of directors first talked of finding a new facility in 2007.

The potential building - which could be an existing structure or a new facility - would possibly house the development authority, the Downtown Development Authority of Augusta, the Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Augusta

Convention and Visitors Bureau, Augusta Tomorrow and the Greater Augusta Sports Council.

The organizations are in buildings across the city, though most are not far from one another.

"When you take a look at the amount of rent we are paying as a group, then it could be a permanent facility for all of us probably makes sense," Sprouse said. "We're just studying the idea. We

have really no specific site or building or location. We're just saying, 'Hey, is it feasible for us to do this?'"

It's more of a long-range plan, and a move would almost certainly not happen in 2011, he said.

The idea also would make sense to help market the city, said Margaret Woodard, the executive director of the Downtown Development Authority.

"I think we're looking at it from a

consumer's point of view," she said.

A visiting company could visit all of the organizations in one short trip, said Barry White, the president and CEO of the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"The idea would be a great presentation for our clients," he said. "They could see us all under one roof."

Reach Erin Zureick at (706) 823-3217
or erin.zureick@augustachronicle.com.

2/11/11
Augusta
Chronicle