

# West Broad / Hawthorne Area TAD Priority List

May, 2025

## Introduction

The West Broad / Hawthorne Area Tax Allocation District (TAD) represents a unique opportunity to drive strategic investment and revitalization in a key area of Athens-Clarke County. As part of the planning process, the West Broad / Hawthorne Area TAD Committee conducted a series of community input sessions to gather public feedback on funding priorities. These sessions aimed to ensure that TAD investments align with the needs and aspirations of local residents, businesses, and stakeholders.

Through in-person meetings, an online survey, direct mail outreach, and engagement via ACC Transit routes, the committee collected valuable insights on four primary focus areas: Economic Development Partnerships, Housing Opportunities, Public Infrastructure, and Youth Development. This report provides a summary of the community input received and outlines the next steps in the process of shaping the TAD's investment strategy. By incorporating these priorities, the Athens-Clarke County government can ensure that the TAD funding is used to foster sustainable growth, enhance quality of life, and create long-term benefits for the West Broad / Hawthorne area.

## Primary and Secondary Priorities

The Committee was able to gain input from several ACC Departments and Specialists including the Public Utilities Department to better understand current and future projects and the capacity for those needs. The Committee learned that the West Broad / Hawthorne Area (WBHA) TAD was comprised of two distinct sewer lines (ACC Redevelopment Plan, WBHA TAD, Appendix F), divided by the Middle Oconee River creating an 'East of the River / West of the River' bifurcation. The East Side of the TAD, from the river up to Hawthorne Ave/ Alps Rd., faces a constrained sewer capacity for the near future and while construction for expansion is underway, full capacity will not be available for that area until 2030/2031. The West Side of the TAD has no such constraints.

Given the East Side sewer constraints, the Committee felt that the ability for economic development projects might be limited on the East Side of the TAD. This constraint requires any new development to provide the extra expense required to store sewage on any new facility's premises during periods of high rain volume, thus increasing construction and development costs significantly. The Committee, therefore, decided that emphasizing Public Infrastructure (50%) overall as a primary priority was a more prudent and realistic recommendation with Economic Development (25%), Affordable Housing (15%) and Youth Development & Community Resources (10%) being secondary.

## WBHA TAD Committee Recommendations

### Public Infrastructure Improvements (50%):

- Demand for **safer pedestrian and cycling infrastructure**, including protected bike lanes, improved sidewalks, and better street lighting.
- **Improving major intersections** Broad and Old Epps / Broad and Alps
- Requests for **expanded public transit access** with more bus stops and shelters.
- Interest in **environmental conservation and beautification efforts**, such as tree planting, trash management, and the creation of green spaces.
- **Buy and preserve green space** - maintaining open land for community use such as Converting Beech Haven into a public park and Protecting the Middle Oconee River corridor -

### Economic Development Partnerships (25%):

- Strong support for **small business development**, particularly for **minority- and women-owned businesses**.
- Calls for investments in **walkable commercial spaces** to attract businesses and make the area more inviting.

### Housing Opportunities (15%):

- Priority on **affordable housing initiatives**, including preservation of existing units and restrictions on luxury or student-focused developments.
- Interest in **rent control policies** and measures to hold landlords accountable for property maintenance.

### Youth Development & Community Resources (10%):

- Calls for more **recreational spaces** (parks, sports fields, indoor activity centers).
- Interest in **youth education and enrichment programs**, including after-school activities in arts, science, and vocational training.

## Conclusion

The Committee chose to reinforce the community's desire for **balanced, sustainable development** that prioritizes **affordability, safety, and accessibility**. Respondents overwhelmingly support **investments in infrastructure, housing, and local business growth** that benefit both current residents and future generations. These insights support the Committee's **final recommendations** to the Athens-Clarke County government, ensuring that TAD funds are allocated in a way that reflects community priorities.

## Public Infrastructure Initiatives (50%)

The community provided a wide range of suggestions regarding **public infrastructure improvements** during the West Broad / Hawthorne Area TAD community input sessions and the online survey. These responses focused on enhancing **pedestrian safety, transportation, accessibility, beautification, and public spaces**.

### Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure:

- **Sidewalk improvements** - improving sidewalk accessibility for all, including individuals with disabilities, repairing existing sidewalks and adding new ones to improve walkability.
- **Additional and Protected bike lanes** - similar to those on Prince Avenue, expanding the network to make biking safer and more accessible.
- **Maintaining sidewalk shade** – planting and preserving street trees for a cooler and more comfortable pedestrian environment.
- **Improving major intersections:**
  - Broad and Old Epps – enhancing safety measures.
  - Broad and Alps – improving lighting and traffic management.

### Public Transit Enhancements:

- **Adding bus stops with seating** – increasing access to public transportation and providing resting places for elderly riders and those with disabilities.
- **Increased public transportation access** – expanding bus routes and service frequency.

### Public Space & Beautification Efforts:

- **Buy and preserve green space** – maintaining open land for community use.
  - **Converting Beech Haven into a public park** – transforming the area into a green space.
  - **Protect the Middle Oconee River corridor** – ensuring environmental conservation.
- **Street beautification efforts** – adding planters, fencing, and proper trash management.

### Other Infrastructure Requests:

- **More walkability improvements** – expanding pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- **Warming areas and public restrooms** – adding facilities at bus stops and public spaces.
- **Buried utilities** – eliminating above-ground power lines to improve safety and aesthetics.

The community feedback underscores a strong demand for **safer streets, improved transit access, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and the preservation of green spaces**. These recommendations will be crucial in guiding the allocation of TAD funds toward public infrastructure projects that enhance mobility, safety, and quality of life in the West Broad / Hawthorne area.

## Economic Development Initiatives (25%)

Community members provided valuable input on how **Tax Allocation District (TAD) funds** should be used to support **economic development** in the West Broad / Hawthorne area. These responses focus on **small business growth, infrastructure investments, commercial revitalization, and community-driven economic initiatives**.

### Small Business & Entrepreneurship Support:

- **Micro-business training programs** – especially for minorities and women to promote economic inclusion.
- **Support for small and local businesses** – encouraging entrepreneurship through financial assistance or incentives.
- **Business incubators or co-working spaces** – providing affordable spaces for startups and small enterprises.

### Commercial Revitalization & Infrastructure Investments:

- **Invest in infrastructure improvements** – such as sidewalks, street planters, and other beautification efforts to create a more attractive commercial environment.
- **Support mixed-use development** – combining residential and retail spaces to enhance walkability and local commerce.
- **Buried utilities** – eliminating above-ground power lines to improve aesthetics and safety.

### Strengthening Local Commerce:

- **Encourage community-focused businesses** – ensuring that commercial developments align with community needs rather than large corporate chains.
- **Commercial zoning policies** – guiding development to foster locally-owned businesses and prevent unwanted commercial activities.

### Recreational & Entertainment Business Ideas:

- **Family-friendly entertainment venues and destinations**

The community emphasized the need for **small business support, commercial revitalization, and infrastructure improvements** to create a vibrant, locally-driven economy. Key priorities include **empowering entrepreneurs, beautifying commercial areas, and discouraging predatory businesses** to ensure long-term, community-led economic growth. These insights will help guide the allocation of TAD funds to foster **sustainable economic development** in the West Broad / Hawthorne area.

## Affordable Housing Initiatives (15%)

Community members expressed a strong desire for **affordable housing initiatives** in the West Broad / Hawthorne Area Tax Allocation District (TAD). Their feedback focused on **preserving existing housing, increasing affordability, and implementing policies to prevent displacement and predatory development.**

### Preserving & Expanding Affordable Housing:

- **Preserve existing affordable housing** and **Create more affordable housing units** – increase availability for low- and middle-income residents.
  - **Buy or subsidize housing** – using TAD funds to support affordable housing projects and prevent displacement.
  - **Develop artist housing grants** – provide financial assistance for creatives to access affordable living spaces.

### Policy & Regulation Changes:

- **Implement land-use restrictions tied to** ensure affordability protections remain in place even if ownership changes, prevent gentrification and maintain affordable housing stock.
  - **Implement rent control policies** to stabilize housing costs and prevent excessive rent increases.
  - **Hold negligent landlords accountable** for property maintenance and tenant safety.
  - **Limit new luxury and student-focused developments** – prevent the area from becoming unaffordable for long-term residents.
  - **Restrict predatory businesses** and the need for commercial zoning policies that promote community-focused enterprises.

### New Housing Development Ideas:

- **Develop a housing complex in the *At Home* parking lot** – utilize existing underdeveloped land for housing.
- **Increase multi-family housing options** – encourage the development of mixed-income apartment complexes.

The community supports **preserving and expanding affordable housing while preventing displacement** through rent control, land-use restrictions, and financial incentives. Respondents also advocate for **holding landlords accountable, limiting luxury developments, and using TAD funds to create new affordable housing options.** These insights will help shape policies that prioritize **housing security, affordability, and community stability.**

## Youth Development & Community Resources Initiatives (10%)

Community members emphasized the need for **youth-focused investments and community resources** to enhance education, recreation, and overall well-being in the West Broad / Hawthorne Area Tax Allocation District (TAD). The feedback highlights the importance of **safe play areas, after-school programs, and environmental conservation efforts** that support young residents and their families.

### Youth Recreation & Activity Spaces:

- **Establishing a dedicated space for organized and recreational play**, ensuring youth have access to structured sports programs.
  - **Athletic fields and bigger playgrounds** – expanding existing play areas to accommodate more children.
  - **Indoor pool / water park and Trampoline Park** – creating a safe and accessible space for water activities and indoor recreational facility for year-round physical activity.

### Educational & Enrichment Programs:

- **Grants and public art initiatives** – funding community-based art projects that engage young people and make funding more accessible for grassroots organizations offering after-school programs.
- **Expand access to after-school arts, science, and activity programs** – ensuring students have opportunities for creative and educational growth.

### Community Infrastructure for Youth & Families:

- **Add public restrooms and water fountains** – adding these amenities to parks and public spaces for accessibility.
- **More bus stops with seating** – ensuring public transit is comfortable and accessible for all ages.

### Environmental & Green Space Preservation:

- **Buy and preserve green space** – maintaining undeveloped areas for community use.
- **Protect the Middle Oconee River corridor** – ensuring environmental conservation efforts safeguard natural resources.
- **Convert Beech Haven into a public park** – transforming the area into a green space.

Residents advocate for **expanded recreational facilities, educational programs, and infrastructure improvements** to support youth development and enhance the overall **quality of life** in the community. The community also prioritizes **environmental conservation, increased public amenities, and accessible transportation options** as essential components of a thriving, family-friendly neighborhood. These priorities will guide TAD fund allocations to create a **safer, healthier, and more engaging environment for young residents and their families**.

## Conclusion

The **West Broad / Hawthorne Area Tax Allocation District (TAD) Community Input Summary** highlights a strong, community-driven vision for **sustainable development, economic growth, housing affordability, infrastructure improvements, and youth resources**. Through extensive public engagement—including open houses, an online survey, direct outreach, and transit-based feedback—residents have clearly articulated their priorities for TAD investment.

This input provides a **clear roadmap for TAD funding**, prioritizing **Public Infrastructure** as the primary priority. These priorities represent the formal recommendation for the **Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission**, ensuring that the TAD serves as a catalyst for thoughtful, community-centered development.

By aligning TAD investments with these identified priorities, the **West Broad / Hawthorne Area can become a more vibrant, accessible, and inclusive neighborhood—one that fosters improved public spaces, economic opportunity, and a thriving environment for future generations.**