

## **Facilities and Services / Intergovernmental Coordination Subcommittee**

### *Vision Statements:*

Athens-Clarke County will support and sustain local government services and facilities that respond to the needs of our population and make our community a safe, attractive and healthy place to live.

### *Issues and Opportunities:*

1. There are frequent conflicts between the Athens-Clarke County Future Land Use Plan and Land Use Plans and the development projects in the surrounding counties. These conflicts put undue pressure on Athens-Clarke County infrastructure and have an impact on the environment and overall quality of life.
  - a. A Regional Land Use Plan, with incentives and deterrents, should be developed among the following counties: Athens-Clarke County, Oglethorpe, Barrow, Oconee, Madison, and Jackson.
  - b. A regional approach to land use planning would benefit not only Athens-Clarke County but also the surrounding counties. This approach should support both increased communication and collaboration between the various governmental entities.
  
2. The “Brain Train” project between Atlanta and Athens should be monitored and designed so as to control and limit any adverse development pressure on our community and manage the access to the commuter rail corridor as it is developed
  - a. Establish Commuter Bus Routes for UGA students that will mimic the routes for the Brain Train.
  - b. The “Brain Train” will be as fast and convenient as driving to Atlanta and will be connected to other transportation options at both its termini.
  
3. Regional air service should be encouraged from Ben Epps Airport and access to Atlanta Hartsfield should be improved through the more

- efficient use of shuttles in order to attract and facilitate business and UGA travelers. The broadest range of travel options should be available.
- a. Athens Clarke County should explore contracts with private vendors to provide more efficient means of transportation.
4. Transit should be coordinated regionally: buses should access critical services and commercial centers in other counties.
  5. The Greenway and Rails-to-Trails corridors should be utilized to create and support regional multi-use (bikes and pedestrians) transportation systems that are safe and separate from the major roadways.
    - a. Measures should be taken to support continued development of the greenway.
    - b. The Greenway has functionality issues that need to be addressed.
      - i. Safety should be improved by providing call boxes along the greenway.
      - ii. The Greenway should host more special events to target a wide audience and raise awareness.
  6. Athens-Clarke County should be more pro-active regarding the “retrofit of existing primary roadways with bike lanes. Consideration should be given to the ‘rideability’, particularly of the slopes, when prioritizing retrofit projects.
    - a. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) should be encouraged to make bike lanes a priority on state routes, such as Prince Avenue and Milledge Avenue.
    - b. Athens-Clarke County will promote and enforce bike safety, which becomes more important as bike ridership increases.
  7. The areas surrounding parks and recreational facilities should support the access to the facility by both bikes and pedestrians with safe and efficient pedestrian bike access, crosswalks and Transit Access.
  8. Athens-Clarke County’s cultural resources should be promoted as part of a ‘regional package’ to bring visitors and tourism into the area.
    - a. Regional attractions, such as a Natural History Museum, a system of public art should be created and existing regional attractions,

such as the UGA campus, the State Botanical Gardens, house museums, Georgia Art Museum and the like should be supported.

- b. Short Term Work Plan Recommendation: 1% of the budget for major construction projects in Athens-Clarke County should be earmarked for the arts.
9. Athens-Clarke County's infrastructure plans (transportation, water and sewer, and the like) should support and reinforce the Future land use plan and protect the Rural Areas as identified on the Future Land Use Map.
  - a. Short Term Work Plan Recommendation: Conservation Easements and a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program should be considered as a means to protect the Rural Areas as identified on the Future Land Use Map permanently.
  - b. Impact fees should be considered.
  - c. Encourage sustainable farming practices and potential garden rentals for people who live outside of the AR areas.
  - d. Hire a rural historic preservation consultant to identify and preserve significant areas.
  - e. Athens-Clarke County will encourage organic farming and explore incentive to create and maintain organic farms within the community.
10. Create and support a system of pocket parks, linear parks and public squares and greens.
  - a. Study existing land holdings compare any other community programs.
11. Transportation Corridors should be designed in such a way as to provide gateways into both the County and the City, including such features as linear parks.
  - a. Design Standards for Transportation Corridors will be established to protect Athens-Clarke County's sense of place.
  - b. Gateways into and out of our community will be chosen carefully so as not to place undue traffic and development pressure on rural corridors.

- c. Gateways will be enhanced with design features that indicate entrance into Athens-Clarke County and welcome the traveler to our community.
  
- 12. The beauty of Athens-Clarke County should be preserved and enhanced with efforts to improve the visual appeal of our county and to encourage tourism and support the health and welfare of the residents of our community.
  - a. The work of the Athens-Clarke County Clean and Beautiful Commission should be supported and maintained.
  - b. Efforts to visually enhance our community should be encouraged, including, but not limited to: 1) planting of wildflowers on public space, medians, and rights of ways 2) trash pick-up programs, 4) Adopt a Highway programs, 5) Scenic Area signage
  - c. Private and public trash collection should be held to a high standard so as to assure that the collected trash is secured in the garbage and recycling trucks.
  - d. Education and enforcement of the Litter Ordinance (3-12-1) should be enhanced and maintained within our community, particularly on construction sites.
  
- 13. SPLOST projects should be supported with adequate consideration in the annual budget for personnel and maintenance. More factors than just the up front cost should be taken into consideration.
  - a. Athens-Clarke County will make a concerted effort to inform Citizens of the long term costs (i.e. maintenance and staff) of SPLOST (Special Local Option Sales Tax) projects prior to the ballot being placed before the electorate.
  
- 14. The improvement of public perception of the Clarke County School is important to Athens-Clarke County's ability to be a regional economic leader.
  - a. A sense of ownership should be encouraged with the schools. Schools should relate to neighborhoods and foster a sense of community.
  - b. The entities of the Clarke County School System, Athens Clarke County and UGA as well as the media should be encouraged to work together and improve the perception of Clarke County

- Schools. Work with local realtors to develop a “welcome wagon” packet that highlights the school system.
- c. Create a public relations program that includes all of the above listed parties to promote the positive aspects of Clarke County schools.
  - d. Seek out cooperative ways for the Board of Education and Athens Clarke County to interact.
15. The shortage of Regional Economic Cooperation and coordination hampers our region’s ability to attract the type and quality of development we desire for Athens-Clarke County and the Region.
- a. Short Term Work Plan Recommendation: Create a Government owned Research Park / business park / incubation park.
  - b. Athens-Clarke County should take the lead to formalize and seek funding for regional economic development partnerships.
16. Currently, there is some negative perception as to the ridership of public transit.
- a. Provide an educational advertising campaign and incentives to improve public relations and encourage ridership.
17. Athens Clarke County Leisure Services Department needs to fully utilize the volunteer resources available through local organizations.
- a. Develop a program that will allow Leisure Services to coordinate projects and volunteers.
18. The safety of our community is ensured by supporting the work of the Fire Department and the Police Department and keeping their systems up-to-date and current.
- a. Outdated emergency systems hamper the timely response of the Fire Department. To address this, new GPS navigation systems should be acquired so as to pinpoint fire locations and take the fire crews directly to the scene.
  - b. During HAZMAT cleanups, the coordination of traffic is essential to the safety of the HAZMAT crews and to the community. A

streamlined plan of coordination is needed, both within Clarke County and between Clarke County and the surrounding counties.

- c. The community benefits from the involvement of the citizens in both crime prevention and training exercises for disasters. Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility; Athens Clarke County should work to form partnerships within the community and to support and develop programs to prevent crime. Neighborhood Watch programs increase awareness and should be supported and expanded.
- d. Police patrol units provide the community with the bulk of police services. Patrol cars should be equipped with appropriate and up to date equipment, including efficient communication systems (such as upgraded computer-based communication systems and unified systems.)
- e. Impact fees should be explored as a potential funding source for Police and Fire services to newly developing areas of our community.

19. The safety of our community is supported by the Public Works Department.

- a. It is important that departments within the government are able to communicate during big events and disasters. Specifically, the communication between the Police Department and the Public Works department is currently accomplished via cell phone. A communication system that is also workable during an emergency and is compatible with the police system would provide greater protection.
- b. Public Works employees require essential protective gear in order work a large scale disaster. The community safety would benefit from acquisition and training in the use of such protective equipment.
- c. The Public Works Department and other government departments would benefit from formal descriptions of the roles of all government entities (local and state) during an emergency. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Public Works Department and other governmental agencies that clearly delineates the responsibilities and roles of the Public Works Department is desired.

20. Athens-Clarke County should continue to analyze and assess the workload of government departments as the population increases. The number of employees, type of equipment, training should respond to the new demands placed upon government services as the population increases.
  
21. There is mutual benefit for a coordinated approach to new selection of locations for the any new school. In particular, coordination between the Clarke County School Board and the Mayor and Commission of Athens Clarke County would ensure that the schools will be located in areas with sufficient infrastructure as well as the potential to become the focal point of new neighborhood centers.