

Vision Statements, Issues and
Opportunities

for the Athens-Clarke County
Comprehensive Plan from the
Subcommittees

June 18, 2007

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Population Subcommittee

Vision Statement

To include the community in an open process of public decision making.

Issues and Opportunities / Policies:

- A. We will actively encourage and facilitate public involvement in planning and decision-making processes of our government.
- B. We will take pro-active steps to coordinate various public sector and private sector entities with the Comprehensive strategies and policies of Athens-Clarke County
 - 1. Create a process for promoting community awareness, involvement, and development in land use issues.
 - 2. Identify community planning districts to increase involvement in the planning and implementation of improvements at the residential, mixed-use, and commercial level.
 - 3. Involve public and private sector entities in the community planning district process

Vision Statement

To establish Athens-Clarke County as a community that supports and encourages life-long learning.

- A. University vocational education and public schools will be life-long learning opportunities for our residents and visitors.
- B. Education {Early learning, pre-k through 12, University and vocational, and adult education - public, private and home} is the foundation of our community's long-term prosperity.
- C. Quality of life will be supported and enhanced by the educational function of our parks and recreational services, public libraries, museum, other cultural amenities, other public and non-profit and

faith-based entities.

D. We will recognize the importance of providing life-long learning in the following areas:

- Job Skills And Work-Force Development
- Environmental Concerns
- Arts And Entertainment.
- Retirement Interests
- Personal Enrichment
- Cultural Exchanges
- Adult Basic Education And GED Preparation
- Language Skills, Including Additional Languages
- Health Education

Policy

1. Establish and maintain an effective working relationship between the Athens-Clarke county and the Board of Education to develop mutually beneficial locations for schools and appropriate land uses adjacent and/or near school property.
2. Establish and maintain an effective working relationship between the Athens-Clarke County government and the Board of Education to address the cultural diversity of county students while assuring equal access to educational opportunities and richness of educational choices.
3. Promote the concept of schools serving their neighborhoods as focal points for life-long learning.
4. Support educational institutions and encourage development of new opportunities to educate Athens-Clarke County population.
5. Communicate with all institutions of higher learning in Athens-Clarke County to encourage commitment to accommodate the needs of non-traditional learners by providing access, services, and instruction.
6. (New - change number) Require inmates in Clarke County facilities to be involved in education, with a goal of acquiring a high school diploma.

7. Schools to be learning focal points for all of our population - adults as well as children.

Establish and maintain an effective working relationship between the Athens-Clarke County and the Board of Education to address the cultural diversity of county students while assuring equal access to educational opportunities and richness of educational choices.

Effectively teaching children

Address the diversity issue

Notes - for short term work plan –
uniforms / all girls, all boys schools.

Learning Disability - students should have opportunities to higher education - a question of addressing the diversity.

UGA - not friendly to retired, working, part-time students for classes (4 year).

Vision Statement

To support transportation policies that offer viable alternatives to the automobile and design thoroughfares that support pedestrian access.

- A. Policies shall encourage multiple modes of transportation which provide access to employment, education, recreation and services for all residents.
- B. The multi-modal transportation network will be used to support efficient land use, minimize traffic congestion and facilitate community -wide and regional mobility.
- C. We will ensure that urban density will be located in areas that are conducive to walking and biking and are served by transit.
- D. We will coordinate high density land use with public transportation.
- E. The greenway corridor will be expanded and connected to support individual transportation needs.

- F. Transportation and greenway corridors will be supported by the community standards of aesthetic, urban design and environmental stewardship in both location and design.
- G. We will take measures to ensure that vehicular traffic will not harm the residential nature of our neighborhoods.
- H. Traffic calming features that slow the speed of traffic and enhance safety and aesthetics without creating congestion will be a part of our street network design.
- I. Foster a Regional (MPO) approach to Public Transit emphasizing critical services outside of Clarke County, such as Health Care, Education, Employment and Recreation.
- J. Designs of the pedestrian access should consider the needs of our aging population, children and persons with special needs and other pedestrians to include features such as 'islands' in the center, crossing guards, longer walk lights and reduced distances.

Potential Policies

- A. Continue to utilize the Official Street Map identifying the planned location of all new major roadways and connections, including alternate transportation pathways, between major residential and commercial developments.
- B. Design all new and reconstructed roadways to reflect community standards of aesthetics, environmental stewardship and urban design. Athens-Clarke County will commit to maintaining these standards with government projects.
- C. Design new or reconstructed streets to accommodate fully multiple functions, including pedestrian movements, parking, alternate modes of transportation and local vehicular circulation.
- D. Include sidewalks and bicycle lanes in the design of all new or reconstructed roadways.

- E. Use public transit, such as the Athens Transit System, as a tool to organize the arrangement of higher density land uses, particularly multi-family developments, in the community.
- F. Encourage high density development adjacent to the multi-modal center.
- G. Provide increased via a county-wide network of greenways or pathways.
- H. Address increased capacity within the Athens Perimeter through multi-modal options and high occupancy vehicle incentives.
- I. Create internal circulation networks (add) and interconnections within commercial and industrial developments to avoid overdependence upon Athens-Clarke County's arterial street network.
- J. Design parking and circulation routes within commercial centers as distinct streets with landscaped sidewalks, shade trees, small courtyards
- K. (Note - as a short term work program - consider adding this to the ordinance.)
- L. Provide for vehicular circulation routes in new neighborhoods that distribute traffic evenly, avoid excessive traffic and speed on any one street and have street block lengths that discourage speeding. Integrate traffic calming designs and techniques to reduce the speed of traffic as a part of all development and redevelopment.
- M. Require internal street systems within multi-family and non-residential development that enhance circulation and provide for on-street parking.

Vision Statement

To enact land use policies that support Smart Growth.

Potential Issues and Opportunities

- A. Our community will use land effectively to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.
- B. We will preserve the rural character and the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of our community.
- C. We will develop a recognizable transition from the urban to the rural areas of our community.
- D. We will support urban and suburban development where it can be adequately served by public facilities as designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- E. A higher level of urban services (sewer, water, fire, police, recreation, etc.) will be provided to areas of our community that we want to develop at urban-level densities.
- F. We will be committed to redeveloping and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas located within our community.
- G. We will encourage developments that provide a mix of shopping, housing, recreation, and jobs.
- H. We will support opportunities for residential and non-residential in-fill development that positively impacts the character of existing neighborhoods.
- I. Recreation and greenspace will become an integral facet of our community's land use.

Potential Policies:

1. Create incentives for agricultural areas on the periphery of the urban area to remain as productive agricultural lands by using techniques such as transfer of development rights, conservation easements and open space subdivisions.
2. Designate areas that are predominantly rural in character as a boundary for limiting expansion of urban development.

3. Extend water and sewer service into existing and future urban areas where urban densities are desired and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
4. Promote increases in residential densities in areas that meet community design standards, environmental constraints and available infrastructure capacities.
5. Make as a priority the development of mixed uses, redevelopment and revitalization of existing underutilized commercial and industrial areas over development of new land for commercial purposes.
6. Permit appropriately designed mixed use developments that facilitate efficient and attractive employment and residential opportunities and enable these areas to function as centers of community life.
7. Facilitate, through incentives and standards, commercial development and redevelopment as distinct commercial centers while discouraging "strip commercial" (development characterized by shallow commercial frontages along major thoroughfares, with multiple curb cuts, large front yard parking, single-storied and often single-purpose buildings, with minimal pedestrian access).
8. Encourage redevelopment and in-fill over development of new property on the periphery of the urban area.
9. Implement redevelopment of Downtown-East.
10. Encourage downtown parking structures to incorporate retail opportunities.
11. Encourage development of additional retail shopping and restaurants in the downtown area.

Economic Development Subcommittee

Vision Statement:

Athens-Clarke County will be the educational, cultural, medical, and economic hub of Northeast Georgia. Athens-Clarke County's strengths and qualities will make it a world-class center for research and innovation. Athens-Clarke County's workforce will be capable of supporting existing and new enterprises. Athens-Clarke County will have a resilient, diverse economic base that provides a stratified range of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, making Athens the best place in the world to live, work, and retire.

Potential Issues and Opportunities:

- A. Increased utilization of the University of Georgia's unique resources will advance local and regional economic development.
- B. Local small businesses need substantial increases in technical, financial, and logistical support.
- C. The community lacks workforce development coordination between employment and training. The Department of Labor could play an important role in fulfilling this need.
- D. Athens has areas that could be developed as regional industrial parks.
- E. The community needs a substantial increase in moderate income jobs.
- F. Athens is the regional center for health services.
- G. Athens has a significant and growing life sciences (biotech) research and technology industry.
- H. The potential satellite campus of the Medical College of Georgia will greatly enhance opportunities for medical research, training, and services.
- I. Athens schools and academic institutions offer business and specialized technical curricula.

- J. There is potential for increased regional planning and cooperation. Athens is the regional commercial center, but not all industries are suitable for Athens-Clarke County.
- K. Athens and the region have a significant and growing small-scale agricultural industry.
- L. Athens diverse economy has the market potential to satisfy the mutual needs of local businesses, governmental entities, and consumers. (“Buy Local”)
- M. There is lack of guiding principles for business recruitment that reflect the economic goals of Athens-Clarke County citizens.
- N. Athens needs measurable data for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of its business recruitment incentives.
- O. Athens needs formal procedures for the retention of businesses.
- P. Declining daily commercial flights will have a negative impact on local economic development.
- Q. Athens has a significant and growing Arts Industry.
- R. Athens is recognized nationally as a center for music. The economic impact of the music industry has not been formally researched.
- S. Downtown Athens will benefit from continued preservation and development as a vibrant center for all ages.
- T. Athens historic heritage provides economic opportunities for tourism and enhances quality of life.

Policies:

- A. Policies for Enhancing the Local and Regional Business Climate
 - 1. Create an effective business resource center that serves as a single point of contact for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

2. Implement and promote a “buy local” campaign that targets business-to-business, governmental and personal buying decisions.
 3. Measure the economic impact of Ben Epps Airport and investigate methods of enhancing daily commercial air service.
 4. Encourage the preservation and development of Downtown Athens as a vibrant center for all ages.
 5. Focus on creating moderate income jobs.
- B. Policies for Workforce Development
1. Partner with local schools and academic institutions to enhance business, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of the workforce.
 2. Enhance coordination between employers, training providers, and the members of the workforce with leadership from the Georgia Department of Labor and the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center.
- C. Policies regarding Agriculture
1. Promote and support local and regional small-scale agriculture.
 2. Investigate alternatives for a local farmers market.
- D. Policies towards Arts and Music
1. Retain the appropriate University of Georgia entity to conduct an economic impact study of the music industry.
 2. Establish a committee that will investigate opportunities to expand Athens-Clarke County’s niche as a provider of value added services to the art and music industries.
 3. Continue to encourage development of downtown and neighborhood arts districts.
- E. Policies for Health Care and Biomedical Sciences
1. Promote and support the vitality and growth of the Athens-Clarke County health care industry.
 2. Promote and support life sciences (biotech) research and technology.
 3. Identify methods by which Athens-Clarke County can economically capitalize on the opportunities for research, training and services from a potential satellite campus of the Medical College of Georgia.
- F. Policies regarding Economic Recruitment and Retention
1. Define guiding principles that reflect the economic and quality of life goals of Athens-Clarke County citizens.

2. Establish formal procedures for the retention of existing businesses, including the identification of a focal point retention representative.
 3. Establish government-owned industrial and/or research park(s) to enhance recruitment, growth and retention efforts.
 4. Establish a formal data measurement process to evaluate the effectiveness of economic development incentives.
- G. Policies for Enhancing Regional Planning and Development
1. Actively participate in regional planning in partnership with other North Georgia communities.
 2. Partner with the University of Georgia to advance local and regional economic development.
 3. Use the University of Georgia's Carl Vincent Institute of Government to develop, implement and evaluate the results of this plan.
- H. Policies towards Tourism
1. Protect the historic heritage of the community.
 2. Support the Carl Vincent Institute of Government's efforts to market Athens-Clarke County as a tourist destination.

Environmental Subcommittee

Vision Statement

Clarke County will be an environmentally sustainable and aesthetically pleasing community in which air, water, soil, plant, animal and scenic resources are protected and enhanced, and not degraded or depleted..

In pursuit of this goal, Athens-Clarke County will adopt and enforce ordinances and regulations that minimize the harmful impacts of human activities on the natural world and educate and empower citizens to adhere to principles and practices that promote responsible environmental stewardship.

ISSUES COVERED BY THIS SUBCOMMITTEE:

1. Air Quality and Energy Conservation
2. Water Quality and Conservation
3. Natural Areas
4. Solid Waste
5. (Community)Environmental Education

Issues, Opportunities, And Work Plan Policies

1. Air Quality and Energy Conservation

Issue: Vehicle emissions, industrial discharges, diminished tree canopy and the effects of global climate change are polluting the air and moving Athens closer to non-attainment status under the Clean Air Act.

Opportunities: Provide more transportation options, limit tree canopy loss, reduce emissions from all sources, promote alternative fuels, encourage LEED-certified construction, require energy-efficient lighting.

Policies:

Encourage reduction in emissions from stationary sources:

- Investigate methods to require existing local industries to install the most effective and efficient pollution abatement technology.
- Encourage alternative energy sources (e.g., solar panels) through tax/government incentives.

Develop, adopt, and implement a county energy plan. Components of this plan should include:

- Targets and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the county;
- Implementation of county energy conservation policy;
- Coordination with UGA energy conservation committee;
- Monitoring to ensure that the targets are being met;
- A lighting ordinance that emphasizes energy-use reduction;
- Encourage the use of energy-efficient lighting and appliances by individuals, businesses, and partner agencies (such as the Athens Housing Authority) through government-supported incentives;
- Promote green building techniques; and
- Compare energy use in new LEED buildings with old buildings to quantify savings.

Provide measures to limit tree canopy loss:

- The Athens-Clarke County Tree Canopy should be closely monitored by funding a community forest tree canopy study every 5 years. The Tree Management Ordinance and the Environmental Areas Ordinance should be amended as necessary to ensure minimal reduction in tree canopy.
- Amend the tree ordinance to provide greater specificity and incentive for the protection of trees that have value due to their size, species, condition, etc. Provide more canopy credit for preserving existing trees.
- Apply the tree ordinance to developments of one acre or greater.

Provide transportation options that reduce the dependence on private automobiles

- Increase operating funds in ACC budget for Athens Transit;
- Support state level legislation that provides state operating funds for Athens Transit;
- Work on agreements with large local employers to encourage ridership;
- Support the development of the “Brain Train” passenger rail service to Atlanta.
- Seek additional opportunities for park-and-ride lots for UGA and downtown destinations. Encourage regional park-and-ride opportunities that work in conjunction with transit.

Encourage alternative transportation by improving cycling infrastructure:

- Update the ACC Bicycle Master Plan and create additional bike lanes as specified under the plan;

- Investigate additional opportunities for rail-trail extensions;
- Take all opportunities to implement the ACC Bicycle Master Plan and planned bicycle facilities in other Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) plans;
- Re-direct some funds for locally funded projects in the MACORTS Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) toward bicycle and/or pedestrian uses;
- Increase funds in ACC budget for bicycle facilities;
- Encourage the addition of bike parking facilities at all commercial establishments; and require them in commercial areas accessible by routes on the Bicycle Master Plan;
- Attend to safety details such as positioning sewer grates perpendicular to traffic flow, repainting stripes that separate bike lanes, and regularly sweeping bike lanes free of debris;
- Pursue federal Transportation Enhancement funding.

Encourage the use of alternative fuels and fuel conservation

- Expand use of bio-diesel and other low-emissions fuels in county vehicles.
- Replace aging county vehicles with hybrids or other clean alternative vehicles.
- Provide education and incentives that would reduce the use of gas-powered mowers, edgers, blowers and other lawn maintenance tools.
- Provide progressive tax incentives (e.g. ad valorem discounts) to businesses that reduce their fleet emissions, and to individuals' vehicles with consumption specifications exceeding 30 mpg.

2. Water Quality and Conservation

Issue: Erosion and sedimentation, stormwater run-off, illegal dumping and wastewater system defects are compromising the quality of surface and underground water resources, as well as damaging properties adjacent to and/or downstream from tracts of land being developed. Continuing drought conditions and excessive use of water threaten our water resources.

Opportunities: Stricter enforcement of erosion and sedimentation laws, increased restrictions on mass grading, better monitoring and regulation of wastewater systems, use of additional vegetation to limit erosion and stormwater run-off, increased use of permeable surfaces, and development of water conservation education and incentives.

Policies:

Improve the erosion and sedimentation ordinance by:

- Hiring more inspection personnel;
- Training and certification of all personnel involved with E&S control;
- Increasing frequency of inspections and monitoring;
- Education of the judiciary about the seriousness of E&S violations;
- Increasing use of stop-work orders when obvious and avoidable water-quality violations have occurred;
- Improving inter-departmental coordination to avoid issuance of certificates of occupancy until sites are stabilized;
- Maintaining clean lines of responsibility between Transportation and Public Works, Building Inspections, Community Protection Division, County's Attorney Office, and Municipal Court.

Develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive mass grading ordinance, applicable to all zoning categories, to:

- Minimize allowable cut and fill by requiring that the natural contours of the site be maintained and by establishing a maximum slope that can be developed;
- Require minimization of site disturbance
- Require phasing of developments;
- Require stabilization of each phase before next phase can begin.
- Require compliance with such provisions as turbidity limits and soil stabilization.

Implement measure to improve on-site stormwater detention and treatment:

- Make the following changes to the stormwater ordinance;
 - Require the notification of neighbors if a developer applies for a variance;
 - Apply more stringent regulations on the total volume and flow profile, not just the peak-flow rate, of stormwater that may leave the site post development.
- Make changes to Zoning and Development Standards based upon the Center for Watershed Protection's "Better Site Design" standards to improve stormwater management.
- Educate the public on the importance of vegetative cover on their home sites, and the effect that trees and shrubs can have in diminishing stormwater run-off. Provide educational materials and funds for

volunteer organizations that will take on this work for the county.

- Discourage improper use of storm drains. Enhance programs that encourage appropriate disposal of waste to keep it out of storm drains.

Implement measures to improve wastewater treatment systems

- Educate the public on the proper use and maintenance of onsite wastewater management (i.e. septic) systems.
- Explore the feasibility of a maintenance and monitoring ordinance for onsite wastewater management systems.
- Adopt a grease trap ordinance to ensure the proper maintenance of grease traps and proper disposal of grease trap contents.
- Stiffen penalties for industrial/commercial leakage of contaminants.

Implement policies to increase water conservation

- Explore tax incentives for homeowners and developers to pursue development that is more water wise/conservation minded.
- Adopt a conservation rate pricing structure for water.
- Encourage xeriscaping.

3. Natural Areas

Issue: Natural areas such as forests, open spaces, river and lake buffers and wildlife habitats are being reduced or eliminated by residential and commercial construction, transportation corridors and other human impacts.

Opportunities: Develop effective mechanisms for the intentional acquisition and/or preservation of environmentally sensitive or important natural areas (greenspace) to attain Athens Clarke County's goal of 20% protected space. Take proactive steps to limit development in designated natural areas, develop mechanisms for the stronger enforcement of zoning and stream buffer limitations, regulate outdoor lighting so as to minimize negative impact on flora, fauna, and visual observation of celestial bodies, address invasive species issues, develop incentives for the reuse or re-adaptation of vacant residential and commercial properties and brownfields.

Policies:

Develop mechanisms for improving greenspace acquisition and/or preservation:

- ♦ Develop an overlay zone, similar to the existing Historic Zoning Overlay, for all corridors identified on the Greenway Network Plan that would establish design standards for any adjacent developments so that the viewshed and natural resources of the corridor are preserved.

- ♦ Build/integrate road crossings for corridors for wildlife and pedestrian corridors
- ♦ Add pedestrian easements on utility corridors to new development
- ♦ Develop and adopt a Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program
- ♦ Protect working agricultural lands through zoning, tax policies, easements, acquisition, and promotion of small-scale sustainable local farming.
- ♦ Provide resources to Planning Dept. to research methods for encouraging private landowners to conserve greenspace. Suggested methods:
 - Easements
 - Fee Simple
 - Tax incentives
 - Set asides

Provide resources and directives to Planning Staff to allow them to create tools for good planning, and provide education for developers and the community.

- ♦ ARC/GIS projections showing effect of parcel development on macro system
- ♦ Extend design standards that require identification and protection of ALL sensitive environmental areas (e.g. streams; ponds; lakes; wetlands; riparian buffers; 100-year flood plains; groundwater recharge areas; steep slopes; healthy native woodlands, forests, or fields in early stage of succession of at least ½ acre; individual healthy trees with caliper of 15 inches or more dbh; populations of rare, endangered, or threatened animal and plant species, or habitat for such species; wildlife corridors and habitat; archaeological sites; cemeteries; burial grounds; ridgelines; geological formations such as rock outcrops and cliffs) and scenic viewsheds, to all zones. Include incentives for developers to protect to higher standards and stronger penalties for non-compliance.
- ♦ Direct Environmental Coordinator to participate in Plan Review Process

Implement a GIS assessment program that is of an appropriate scale and is updated/maintained on a regular basis. The following areas should be assessed:

- ♦ wildlife habitat
- ♦ natural areas

- ♦ wetlands
- ♦ trees
- ♦ scenic viewsheds

Require full-cutoff lighting fixtures which direct nighttime lighting downward, and which minimize lighting levels to those no greater than recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America.

Develop an invasive plant species removal program on public lands. Encourage removal of invasive plant species on private property. Encourage the use of native plant species.

Amend existing ordinance regarding buffer requirements to insure waterway buffers are able to function effectively in keeping sediment, pesticides, fertilizers and other pollutants out of wetlands, ponds, streams, and rivers to include:

- ♦ vegetation removal and replacement standards
- ♦ definition of allowable structures
- ♦ creation of an education program

Regional planning

- ♦ Work with surrounding counties towards sharing/accessing/protecting recreational, water air, and other natural resources

Research the use of development impact fees. (Free research assistance may be available from the UGA River Basin Center through an EPD water quality grant).

4. Solid Waste

Issue: Population growth, increased consumerism, apathy and disinterest are resulting in larger amounts of solid waste from residential and commercial sources that are more rapidly filling the landfill and shortening its life.

Opportunities: Ban or limit certain items from the landfill, raise tipping fees, promote recycling and reuse, transfer waste management responsibility to producers

Policies:

- Mandatory recycling for all government offices
- Implementation of a community composting system for downtown Athens, and possibly other areas.

- Mandatory recycling ordinance for multifamily subdivisions. Requirement for cement pads large enough to accommodate recycling bins at all dumpsters.
- Establishment of a permanent (year-round) household hazardous waste recycling center, perhaps on a regional scale.
- Education of reduction and reuse. Establishment of swapshops at landfill.
- Require mandatory recycling of cardboard, fluorescent bulbs, and electronics.
- Establish program holding producers responsible for product and packaging recycling
- Restrict availability of plastic bags at points of sale

5. (Community) Environmental Education

Issue: Need more public understanding and appreciation of our natural resources and systems, and the ordinances and regulations regarding their protection, and those measures, such as recycling, that are not regulations but should be promoted.

Opportunities: Create a comprehensive community education program that reaches all residents, including area schools and adults, and creates an understanding of basic natural science as well as an understanding of major environmental issues facing the community.

Policies:

- Develop outreach programs that engage citizens - Mayor and Commission should commit to attendance.
- Continue to enhance the basic and natural science education with the intent of creating an environmental ethic.
- Increase the support of the existing environmental educational programs such as those through Sandy Creek Nature Center.
- Create a citizen volunteer watchdog program that enables citizens to help A-CC staff enforce existing ordinances.

- Create and publicize a single point of contact for citizens to call and pose questions.
- Implement an education program to let citizens know about ordinance regulations, such as the E&S, stormwater, and environmental areas ordinances. Employ tools such as newspaper columns, radio, flyers in water bills, creation of a citizen's academy to teach residents how local government works, how to become involved, and what they can do to improve environmental quality.
- Encourage greater government support of NPDES programs to educate the public on ways to reduce water pollution.

Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources Subcommittee

Vision Statement:

Athens Clarke County will be a county rich in cultural resources that not only enhance and maintain its unique character, but also increase its economic vitality.

In pursuit of this goal, Athens Clarke County will protect, support, improve & generate cultural resources in Athens-Clarke County that contribute to the character & quality of life that define & make Athens-Clarke County unique.

Proposed Issues and Opportunities:

Cultural Resources, in general:

- ❖ The majority of ACC Citizens are unaware of cultural resources and their importance.
- ❖ Create opportunities for visitors and residents to learn more about Clarke County's history & other cultural resources through development of educational materials & programs.

Historic Preservation:

- ❖ ACC needs a comprehensive inventory of county-wide historic properties and to prioritize that list for preservation efforts.
- ❖ ACC needs to promote historic preservation as a tool for economic development.
- ❖ Underutilized property owned by ACC Government needs protection prior to offering for sale to private parties.
- ❖ Industrial historic sites need protection.
- ❖ Historic school buildings need protection- both those under the Board of Education or other governmental control and those under private ownership.

- ❖ Landlocked urban churches pressured for space often move to the suburbs leaving institutional buildings that are difficult to adapt.
- ❖ Preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures offers benefits both financial and in conservation of materials. Historic structures offer heritage tourism benefits, as well. ACC needs to encourage the reuse and rehabilitation of historic structures.
- ❖ Discourage the demolition of unprotected buildings.
- ❖ Discourage construction or development that threatens archeological sites.
- ❖ Historic public documents are threatened and not easily accessible to the general public.
- ❖ There are abandoned or contaminated properties, many of which are historic, in our community that are threatened by demolition by neglect.
- ❖ Local protection of historic and cultural resources needs improvement.
- ❖ ACC needs to further encourage & support the efforts of the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, the Athens Historical Society, and any other organization whose mission is to promote & protect our historic & cultural heritage.
- ❖ Encourage property owners to take advantage of Federal & State investment tax credits for rehabilitation of historic property.
- ❖ Landscaping surrounding historic properties is not currently reviewed by the Historic Preservation Committee.
- ❖ Protection of architectural materials or “urban archeology” (granite curbing, cobbles, bricks, etc.) is needed when construction or street work is done.
- ❖ Additional ACC Planning Department staff is needed.
- ❖ Existing design guidelines for ACC properties are outdated & are not specific to individual districts.

Character & Gateways:

- ❖ Inappropriate infill development threatens the character of both urban and rural areas of ACC both in scale of the construction and through the creation of inappropriate parcels.
- ❖ Gateways into ACC are threatened with diminishing character and some have already lost all character-defining features.
- ❖ Visible utility lines mar ACC’s scenic qualities.
- ❖ There are many missed opportunities to create pockets of green space and character when new roadwork is done without incorporating planted medians, etc. as buffers.

- ❖ Encourage the city to create a comprehensive walking tour complete with maps & markers or even a distinguishable path/s.
- ❖ “Champion” or significant trees are being lost during construction and/or redevelopment of certain areas.

Public Art, Events & Amenities:

- ❖ Encourage the increase of public art throughout the city.
- ❖ Continue to encourage public amenities such as bike racks, benches, bus stop shelters, fountains, playground equipment etc. to be functional public works of art.
- ❖ A large portion of Athens-Clarke County’s population is unaware of services offered by the Leisure Services program.
- ❖ Continue to support Leisure Services to enhance and encourage growth.
- ❖ Cultural programs in public schools are often the first programs eliminated or reduced in scope when budgets are cut.
- ❖ Support & promote the growth of the “Arts Industry” in Athens-Clarke County.
- ❖ Additional support is needed for local artists & musicians that give so much to our community.
- ❖ Leisure Services is too “all-encompassing”. The “Arts” should be separated into their own department. Arts programs & recreation programs, while both are “cultural resources”, are too different to be managed directly by the same organization.

Proposed Policies/ Work Program Projects:

Cultural Resources, in general:

- ❖ A comprehensive survey of all cultural, natural, and historic resources (urban & rural) needs to be undertaken and updated on a 5 year cycle.
Timeframe: every five years
Responsible Party:
Estimated Cost:
Funding Source:
- ❖ Integrate planning for the protection of cultural resources with other protective measures such as environmental, open space, recreation, and

infill character areas through more comprehensive reviews of proposed development / construction.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

Historic Preservation:

- ❖ Inventory historic school buildings for listing as a non-contiguous district or other protective measure to be in place prior to development plans.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ The Board of Education commits to urban educational settings and re-use of sound historic structures.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Designate historic properties owned by the ACC Government to have protection in place prior to any sales and private development plans.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Create a revolving fund from profits of sales of underutilized ACC Government properties to allow stabilization of additional ACC properties to be sold or grants/loans to be granted to aid long-term property owners with maintenance costs of historic properties or rehabilitation.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ The ACC Government should create a committee of urban church representatives and officials in charge of public buildings and parking to create innovative ways to share space for uses that operate on different days/hours.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Sensitive areas, both urban and rural, need to be identified and protected from inappropriate infill development through the use of historic districts, conservation districts, or other measures.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Additional Preservation Planning staff is needed to increase efforts at surveying, designation, and community education.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party: ACC
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Encourage adaptive reuse and preservation of sound, existing non-residential structures through tax incentives or other means.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ A Demolition Ordinance is needed to address “demolition by neglect” and prevent demolition of sound structures without plans for new use.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Identify and protect archeological resources through zoning overlays, community education, and staff knowledgeable and capable of enforcement
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop an Athens History Museum or other archival program to protect documents, photos, etc. while cataloging them and offering some level of public viewing, research, etc.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a “toolbox” complete with resource directory, funding options, etc. for property owners of historic, undesignated properties in an effort to facilitate and encourage adaptive reuse and historic designation of privately-owned properties.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a public education and awareness program in order to further promote the value of historic preservation.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop an ordinance to protect historic architectural materials or “urban archeology”.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Recognize & promote the importance of historic ethnic neighborhoods and sites.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Recognize that many historic rural areas are lost to new development due to lack of awareness. Promote & protect those areas through education and designation.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Become proactive in recognizing both old and new buildings and structures that could reach significance in the future; and promote the preservation of such resources.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop programs and events to coincide with “Georgia Historic Preservation Month” (May) that celebrates ACC’s historic heritage.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop policy that protects against the removal of potentially historic plant materials & structures surrounding historic properties.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

Character & Gateways:

- ❖ Zoning regulations need to be developed/ revised to prevent subdivision of lots that are out of character with the neighborhood in which they are located.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Scenic areas that were identified through the Landscape Assessment, and their viewsheds, need to be protected from development. Overlay zoning tools such as conservation districts or other measures need to insure this protection.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Study open (green) space existing within ACC and track its use and development to insure a target per capita acreage is maintained as the ACC population grows and that these open spaces remain comprised of agricultural, recreational, and scenic areas.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Gateways into ACC need to reflect the unique character and values of ACC rather than the suburban sprawl that could be any community. Develop conservation overlay districts with design and development criteria to maintain and restore distinctive character to these areas.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Require all new utility lines to be underground and encourage/require that existing lines are converted to underground lines during road construction or other major construction.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Encourage the support of identifying & protecting “champion” or significant trees.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ In the development of mixed-use neighborhoods, discourage building of all residential units first.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Continue to encourage the development of the Greenway, especially focusing on ways to connect and overlap it with other cultural resources throughout the city.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

- ❖ Continue to encourage and develop the connectivity of neighborhoods through paths, sidewalks, and bike lanes.
 Timeframe:
 Responsible Party:
 Estimated Cost:
 Funding Source:

Public Art, Events & Amenities:

- ❖ Develop a Leisure Services “open house” day where the community can “tour” the many facilities and learn more what this program has to offer.
Timeframe:
Responsible Party:
Estimated Cost:
Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a Public Art Advisory Council in order to develop design guidelines for public art, review plans for proposed public art commissions as well as to encourage developers to incorporate public art in new construction.
Timeframe:
Responsible Party:
Estimated Cost:
Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a spring or summer “Theater in the Park” series.
Timeframe:
Responsible Party:
Estimated Cost:
Funding Source:

- ❖ Encourage alternative transportation modes that also increase the uniqueness of Athens. (ex. express “trolley” service that makes a quick loop from Normaltown through Boulevard, to Downtown and the Multimodal Center in order to add character, honor Athens’ heritage, as well as offer an alternative to driving individual vehicles to those areas.)
Timeframe:
Responsible Party:
Estimated Cost:
Funding Source:

- ❖ Encourage the creation of a large farmer’s market by offering local farmers incentives for consolidating at one market in order to facilitate the

shopping process for consumers who wish to shop locally, but are often discouraged by the inconveniences involved.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop events to celebrate Clarke County's archeological resources during "Georgia Archaeology Month".

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a once-a-month event wherein local business coordinate with one another in order to get the community out to meet one another and celebrate all the wonderful local businesses that Athens has to offer and to promote "local flavor". (ex. Macon, GA's "First Fridays")

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop a Summer "Rooftop Movie" series on top of one of the parking decks or other tall building to celebrate the season & offer a unique experience to the community.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Initiate and support opportunities that promote self sustainability for members of the local Arts and Music community.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

- ❖ Develop an ACC Arts Program that operates separate from the Leisure Services Program or is a separate division of that program. This program would include all of the arts divisions that currently operate under the Leisure Services Program as well as any that are developed in the future.

Timeframe:

Responsible Party:

Estimated Cost:

Funding Source:

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.

Housing Subcommittee

Vision

Athens-Clarke County, a unique, livable, and diverse community, will foster neighborhoods and housing opportunities that will:

- Support and preserve diversity while providing an adequate supply of quality housing that addresses the continuum of housing needs;
- Respect the rich history and character of our community in both new development and revitalization;
- Promote healthy, safe, affordable, and sustainable housing that accommodates a growing population while enhancing our quality of life and preserving the environment;

We will accomplish this vision with a cooperative spirit and through the collective efforts of public, private, and non-profit sectors.

Issues & Opportunities

ACC Strategic Planning

1. Clarke County will encourage periodic analyses and assessments of housing.

- a. Annual renter/home ownership survey—rents, new home prices, resale values, condos vs. real property, etc.
 - b. Coordinate with Athens Board of Realtors, University of Georgia, Athens Housing Authority, Georgia Power on survey data
 - c. ACC departmental coordination among Planning, HED, Building Inspections, Public Utilities on survey information
2. Clarke County would benefit from a strategy to address student housing within the community.
 - a. Partner with UGA, Piedmont, Athens Tech, etc. – all area schools to educate students about local codes
 - b. Foster partnerships with housing providers
 - c. Conduct regular assessments of and communication regarding university housing policies/future plans and student housing demands on local housing stock
 3. Public schools and housing should be planned and maintained near one another.
 - a. Partner with Board of Education

ACC Zoning

1. Our community will use land effectively to avoid the costs and problems associated with unplanned residential development.
 - b. Zoning should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan vision and the Future Development Map.
2. Our neighborhoods will be interactive communities where people have easy access to schools, parks, residences and businesses through walkways, bike lanes and paths, roads and public transportation.
 - c. Coordinate with Leisure Services so that park facilities, etc. are well integrated into community
 - d. Coordinate with and adequately fund Athens Transit facilities to serve neighborhoods adequately and efficiently
3. We will preserve our diverse population by encouraging a harmonious mixture of housing types and uses.

4. We will support urban and suburban development where it can be adequately served by public facilities as designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
5. Athens-Clarke County should allow accessory dwelling units with owner occupied housing in RS zones where appropriate.
6. We will encourage historic designation for eligible sites and neighborhoods.

ACC Resources \$\$

1. A higher level of urban services (sewer, water, fire, police, recreation, etc.) will be provided to areas of our community that we want to develop at urban-level densities.
2. Our growth strategies will continue to provide resources that support revitalization of existing neighborhoods.
3. Resources will be efficiently dedicated to the adequate enforcement of existing development, zoning, and quality-of-life codes.

Incentives

1. We will encourage developments that provide a mix of shopping, housing and jobs where appropriate.
2. Mixed-income housing needs to be incentivized.
3. Athens-Clarke County should provide/explore incentives for all housing goals including affordability, visitability/accessibility, quality construction materials and practices.
4. Athens-Clarke County should explore/provide incentives to encourage energy efficiency as well as the use of sustainable /renewable building materials in new construction and renovation.

Homeownership / Taxes

1. We will support opportunities for residential in-fill development that positively impacts the character of existing neighborhoods. (Item #3)
2. We will adopt measures to increase the percentage of owner-occupied housing. (Item #11)
3. We will preserve our diverse population by protecting long-term residents from the adverse effects of gentrification. (Item #13)
4. Athens-Clarke County should provide citizens with the mechanisms for “aging-in-place” such as tax freezes and deferral options. (Item #24)
5. Athens-Clarke County should encourage property tax assessments that accurately reflect the true market value of residential properties. (Item #25)

Design Standards

1. "Classic and traditional" neighborhood development ideals will be encouraged where appropriate to implement the Comprehensive Plan. (Item #14)
2. Green space and/or trees will be a major component within our neighborhoods, along our streets, parking lots and within commercial and industrial developments. (Item #15)
3. We will encourage mixed-use development and design standards that are more human-oriented and less auto-oriented. (Item #16)
4. We will encourage design standards that reduce the adverse visual impact of the automobile in both commercial and residential areas of our community. (Item #17)
5. We will encourage the adoption of design, zoning and development standards that respect and contribute to a neighborhood’s history and/or unique character. (Item #18)

Land Use Subcommittee

ACC LAND USE VISION STATEMENT

ACC land use policies will encourage and enable a balance and diversity in the projected land uses while respecting the importance of a clean and healthy environment.

ACC Land Use: POLICIES

- A. Our community will use land effectively to avoid the costs and problems associated with suburban and urban sprawl.
- B. We will preserve the rural character and the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of our community.
- C. We will develop a recognizable transition from the urban to the rural areas of our community.
- D. We will support urban and suburban development where it can be adequately served by public facilities as designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- E. A higher level of urban services (sewer, water, fire, police, recreation, greenspace, etc.) will be provided to areas of our community that we want to develop at urban-level densities.
- F. We will be committed to creating, redeveloping, and enhancing existing commercial and industrial areas located within our community.
- G. We will champion developments that provide a mix of shopping, housing, greenspace and jobs.
- H. We will support opportunities for residential and non-residential in-fill development that positively impacts the character of existing neighborhoods.
- I. Recreation and greenspace will become an integral facet of our community's land use and infrastructure.
- J. We will encourage redevelopment and in-fill over development of new property on the periphery of the urban area or in the agricultural zone.
- K. We will promote the proactive involvement of neighborhoods in planning their neighborhoods.

- L. We are committed to creating walkable, safe, and attractive neighborhoods throughout the community--in new and existing developments--where people have easy access to schools, parks, and necessary services (grocery store, drug store) without having to travel by car.

We will support higher densities in urban areas.

We will provide for integration of natural environmental features into the planning, development regulation and review processes.

- M. We will provide for a balanced focus on form and appearance in development regulation and review.
- N. We will encourage a friendly, customer service oriented, and transparent development process.
- O. We will provide for development regulations that produce the development we want—development that fulfills the Community Vision as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- P. We will promote roads designed and re-designed for their purpose (context sensitive design).
- Q. We will ensure that incompatible uses are not adjacent to each other and/or provide for ample buffering.
- R. We will preserve industrial areas in the county.
- S. We will champion traditional development patterns, including connectivity and integration of uses.
- T. We will proactively preserve, protect, and enhance scenic views, corridors and gateways to create a “sense of place” for our community.
- U. We will provide for a mix of housing types and affordability.
- V. We will promote and facilitate better coordination within ACC government regarding land use and development issues.
- W. We will be proactive in coordinating with other agencies, services, and institutions in land use planning and development.

- X. We will make a strong commitment to implementing the Community Vision as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Y. We will identify the necessary financial resources to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- Z. We will ensure that proposed zoning and development decisions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- AA. We will encourage appropriately designed and integrated signage within all development.
- BB. We will encourage configuration of large commercial centers into "blocks" that promotes walkability and additional development or allows for redevelopment of the site for new tenants, uses, or ownership patterns.
- CC. We will make as a priority the development of mixed uses, redevelopment and revitalization of existing under-utilized commercial and industrial areas over development of new land for commercial purposes.
- DD. We will encourage downtown parking structures to incorporate retail opportunities.
- EE. We will encourage development of additional retail shopping and restaurants in the downtown area.
- FF. We will encourage alternative transportation options and walkability in all areas of the community.
- GG. We will encourage citizen participation in all aspects of the planning and development process.
- HH. We will encourage connectivity and rational block/grid design of roads that replicate and connect to existing neighborhoods in greenfield development and discourage cul-de-sac developments.

Issues and Opportunities

Regulations/Policies:

1. Athens-Clarke County zoning and development regulations encourage mixed-use, neo-traditional development patterns; however, new

- construction and redevelopment projects often fail to fully meet these standards for a variety of reasons. Conventional commercial and residential markets still pursue single-use land uses. Other local codes and regulations affecting new development also present challenges or obstacles to the attainment of mixed-use, neo-traditional developments.
2. Land uses and development regulations are often inconsistent or incompatible with natural environmental features like topography, mature forests, etc. These should be better integrated in both land use planning and review of new development.
 3. Our development codes that determine the final product emphasize use over appearance (need for Form Based Code to address)
 4. Zoning regulations are restrictive
 5. Zoning processes are restrictive.
 6. We do not have inclusionary zoning, i.e. regulations to require housing affordable for the workforce.
 7. Agricultural Zone/buffers take value from properties affected.
 8. Lack of education opportunities for land use issues.
 9. Land use policies push development into surrounding counties.
 10. Perceptions of school system push development into surrounding counties.

Development Patterns / Design:

1. New developments need to be more walkable.
2. Some infill development—both residential and non-residential--adversely impacts the character of existing neighborhoods.
3. The automobile has an adverse visual impact on both commercial and residential areas of our community.
4. Street design needs to be context-sensitive.
5. Sidewalks are needed at most levels of development within the old city limits and in commercial areas.
6. Development needs to be sustainable, and overall development should achieve a balance that satisfies the community's housing, commercial, and industrial needs.
7. Often there are not appropriate buffers between industrial and other uses.
8. Infill development can drive up property taxes/values and gentrify a neighborhood.
9. Sprawl is unsustainable; sprawl development patterns have destroyed our traditional development patterns.

10. Design of new development often detracts from our community's character and sense of security. (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
11. Can't foster good design for small buildings.
12. Connectivity and rational block/grid design of roads can replicate existing neighborhoods in greenfield development. Once infrastructure is in place, it is too late. Cul-de-sac and isolated developments should be discouraged.
13. We need to rethink our lot sizes—need smaller in more urban areas.

Rural/Environment:

1. No areas want to be a TDR receiving zone.
2. Rural areas of our community need to be maintained for environmental, economic and aesthetic reasons.
3. Urban sprawl causes increased local government costs and other problems such as air and water pollution.
4. Agricultural and forestry economic activities are threatened as vital parts of our community.
5. Recreation and greenspace are often not considered as vital facets of our community's land use.
6. Open greenspace should be considered part of the infrastructure.

Areas /Uses:

1. Too much zoned RM and too much re-zoned to RM.
2. Industrial areas being rezoned create inappropriate neighbors and reduce critical mass of land needed for industrial uses.
3. Declining commercial/industrial areas are not being redeveloped.
4. Corridors need to be Master Planned rather than rezoned one parcel at a time.
5. Our gateways and corridors do not lend a "sense of place" to our community.
6. Eligible historic sites and neighborhoods do not all have the protection of local historic designation.
7. Areas of urban-level densities often do not have an urban level of services.
8. We are not getting a housing mix.

Process / Coordination:

1. Neighborhoods are not able to plan proactively for themselves.
2. Lack of coordination of land use between ACC departments and other services (ie. GDOT, HED, etc.).

3. School board, hospitals, and other institutional decisions have major land use impacts and need better coordination.

Transportation Subcommittee

Vision:

Integrate environmental stewardship into transportation system design and maintenance.

Issues and Opportunities:

- A. Improve and promote responsible street and road design standards to minimize negative impacts on water quality.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Promote alternative stormwater management systems for roads to address water quality as well as volume issues. See the Center for Watershed Protection's Better Site Design guidelines on Residential Streets and Parking Lots (Habitat for Cars) below:
 1. Design residential streets for the minimum required pavement width needed to support travel lanes; on-street parking; and emergency, maintenance, and service vehicle access. These widths should be based on traffic volume.
 2. Reduce the total length of residential streets by examining alternative street layouts to determine the best option for increasing the number of homes per unit length.
 3. Wherever possible, residential street right-of-way widths should reflect the minimum required to accommodate the travel-way, the sidewalk, and vegetated open channels. Utilities and storm drains should be located within the pavement section of the right-of-way wherever feasible.
 4. Minimize the number of residential street cul-de-sacs and incorporate landscaped areas to reduce their impervious cover. The radius of cul-de-sacs should be the minimum required to accommodate emergency and maintenance vehicles. Alternative turnarounds should be considered.

5. Where density, topography, soils, and slope permit, vegetated open channels should be used in the street right-of-way to convey and treat stormwater runoff.
 6. The required parking ratio governing a particular land use or activity should be enforced as both a maximum and a minimum in order to curb excess parking space construction. Existing parking ratios should be reviewed for conformance taking into account local and national experience to see if lower ratios are warranted and feasible.
 7. Parking codes should be revised to lower parking requirements where mass transit is available or enforceable shared parking arrangements are made.
 8. Reduce the overall imperviousness associated with parking lots by providing compact car spaces, minimizing stall dimensions, incorporating efficient parking lanes, and using pervious materials in spillover parking areas where possible.
 9. Provide meaningful incentives to encourage structured and shared parking to make it more economically viable.
 10. Wherever possible, provide stormwater treatment for parking lot runoff using bioretention areas, filter strips, and/or other practices that can be integrated into required landscaping areas and traffic islands.
- a. Short Term Work Plan: Require rain infiltration/volume planning in parking areas rather than runoff rate and retention planning.
- B. Reduce carbon emissions and protect air quality by encouraging the use of alternative fuels such as natural gas and electricity, and by creating and maintaining an efficient transportation system.
- a. Short Term Work Plan: Support an efficient transportation network by creating internal circulation networks and interconnections within commercial and industrial development to avoid overdependence upon Athens-Clarke County's arterial street network. Encourage retrofit of existing commercial and industrial development.

- b. Short Term Work Plan: Require continued efforts at reducing energy consumption within county vehicles.

Vision

To support transportation policies that encourage viable alternatives to the automobile in order to support public health, promote public safety, protect the environment, encourage efficient land use, maintain a sense of community and sustain our economic vitality.

Issues and Opportunities

- A. Land use Policies shall encourage corridors that support multiple modes of transportation and enhance the aesthetics of our community.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Require the provision of bike racks downtown and at businesses that are accessible by bicycle (i.e. on routes that are identified on the Bicycle Master Plan) and encourage them at all commercial establishments.
 - b. Attend to safety details such as orienting sewer grates perpendicular to traffic flow, repainting bike lane stripes as needed, and regularly sweeping bike lanes free of debris
 - c. Short Term Work Plan: Encourage increasing the cost of time on the downtown parking meters; direct that money towards mass transit.
 - d. Short Term Work Plan: Update and Expand the Bike Master Plan.
 - e. Short Term Work Plan: Create bike lanes from the Milledge/Loop intersection to the Prince/Loop intersection, as needed to promote public safety.
 - f. Short Term Work Plan: Acquire all state routes within Loop 10 (incrementally within 20 years)
 - g. Short Term Work Plan: Promote usage of utilities' corridors into Rights-of-Way and easements, and ultimately into ped/bike pathways, with sensitivity to utility maintenance.
 - h. Short Term Work Plan: Where appropriate, encourage shared trenches to allow for trees as close as possible to the street. Also, where appropriate, allow for boulevarding (central tree corridor).
 - i. Short Term Work Plan: Require the design of parking and circulation routes within commercial centers as distinct streets

with landscaped sidewalks that contain shade trees, small courtyards, street parking, and traditional block sizes with multiple access points to all shopping/parking areas. Encourage the reduction of impervious surfaces and the retrofitting of existing, large, unbroken parking areas by providing incentives.

- j. Short Term Work Plan: Change zoning to encourage shared parking among businesses and institutions.
- B. Support Traffic Calming Options and Pedestrian and Bicycle pathway designs that are safe, environmentally sensitive, aesthetically pleasing, and respond to the unique needs of the area they are proposed to serve (context sensitive).
- a. Short Term Work Plan: Commit to the increased usage of speed humps, bumpouts, traffic circles, and other traffic calming options.
 - b. Short Term Work Plan: Explore alternatives to thermo-plastic striping paint. Commit to repainting crosswalks and other lines with this safer and more solid alternative material, to increase the safety of cyclists and motorists.
 - c. Short Term Work Plan: Promote bike lanes to 5 feet, regardless of an urban or rural cross-section.
 - d. Short Term Work Plan: Commit to building safer pedestrian crossings at busy intersections (using islands, etc.)
 - e. Short Term Work Plan: Allow off peak parking on four lane streets in outer lanes, where applicable.
 - f. Short Term Work Plan: Encourage sharper corners and smaller turning radii for streets with mountable curbs.
 - g. Short Term Work Plan: Perform a study to ascertain what character areas are most appropriate for 1) bike lanes separated by on-street parking, versus 2) bike lanes within the line of traffic. Amend the appropriate areas of the design ordinance to reflect the results of the study.
 - h. Short Term Work Plan: Convert 4-lane roads to 3 lanes (2 travel lanes, median center turn lane, and bike lanes) where feasible.
 - i. Short Term Work Plan: Perform a study to determine the need for a reduction in speed limits.
 - j. Short term Work Plan: Encourage parallel parking on both sides of the street along residential corridors.

- C. Encourage linkages between existing pedestrian systems (i.e. sidewalks), expansion of the sidewalk and pedestrian systems and maintenance of our current pedestrian system.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Commit to connecting new and old sidewalk systems.
 - b. Short Term Work Plan: Commit to connecting dead ends/cul-de-sacs to existing roads/sidewalks where possible.
 - c. Short Term Work Plan: Eliminate cul-de-sacs in new developments that do not conform to the block system.
 - d. Short Term Work Plan: Require schools to be fully accessible to the pedestrian child. Perform a study to determine the feasibility of neighborhood schools to ensure transportation choices for children.
 - e. Short Term Work Plan: Identify existing street segments that would contribute to a connected system of pedestrian corridors, and explore the feasibility of closing such street segments to vehicular non-emergency traffic.

- D. Transportation and alternative transportation corridors (such as greenway corridors and Rails To Trail system) will be supported by and held to the community standards of aesthetics, urban design environmental stewardship, and safety.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Implement the principles laid out in the Appendix titled “Context Sensitive Street Design”, written by the Urban Design Collaborative for the Atlanta Regional Commission.

 - b. Short Term Work Plan: Encourage city council to appoint an advisory group or committee of citizens to develop design standards for alternative transportation corridors.

- E. The greenway corridor and other alternative transportation Corridors such as the Rails-To-Trails system will be expanded and connected.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Identify all railroad rights-of-way within the county that are considered “abandoned”, and determine the suitability and funding capabilities of each for inclusion in a connected system of bicycle/pedestrian trails.

- F. Pursue reductions in maximums of parking based on availability and repetition of mass transit.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Perform a study that investigates what the appropriate parking space cap would be.

- G. Pursue strategies to relieve general congestion.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Encourage roundabouts, signal timing, limits to curb cuts, and increased connectivity of roadways. First, perform a study to ascertain which areas are most appropriate for these congestion relievers.

 - b. Short Term Work Plan: In new neighborhoods provide for vehicular circulation routes that distribute traffic evenly, avoid excessive traffic and speed on any one street, have on-street parking, and have street block lengths that discourage speeding. Encourage retrofitting existing neighborhoods to accomplish the same.

Vision

Athens-Clarke County's Transportation System will accommodate the needs of our diverse population.

Issues and Opportunities

- A. The Transportation System will be inclusionary, and accommodate our diverse population, such as those with disabilities and as the average age of our population increases, the Transportation system should respond to our changing needs.
 - a. Short Term Work Plan: Designs of new and retrofit pedestrian access should consider the needs of our aging population, children, persons with special needs and other pedestrians to include features such as 'islands' in the center of the crossing, crossing guards, longer walk lights, reduced crossing distances, pedestrian bridges, timed lights, and improved street design standards conducive to pedestrian mixed use. Outdoor access routes should meet the most current federal design standards.

 - b. Short Term Work Plan: Street repair and maintenance will be done in a manner as to assure that access for pedestrians, wheelchair,

baby strollers, and the like is maintained by protecting the existing 'curb cuts' access ramps and aprons, particularly during street repaving.

- c. Short Term Work Plan: Study the policy requirements necessary for adequate road design and licensing for light road motorized vehicles (gold carts, etc.)

B. Our Transit System is vital to meeting the transportation needs of our community and it will be supported by our community and our government.

- a. Short Term Work Plan: Increase and support ridership and user friendliness of the Transit System. Initiate and support an active marketing program for the Transit System aimed at the entire community, including UGA students.
- b. Short Term Work Plan: Identify and encourage the broadening of the funding sources (such as SPLOST) and the increase in funding levels for the Transit System
- c. Short Term Work Plan: Commit to providing accurate, current information regarding the Transit system through various media such as through maps, printed material, video or the internet)
- d. Short Term Work Plan: Expand the service area of "The Lift" so that it reaches beyond the current limits of a mile off existing Transit routes.
- e. Short Term Work Plan: Expand existing routes utilizing the Link or other similar shuttle services.
- f. Short Term Work Plan: Foster a Regional (MPO) approach to the Transit system emphasizing access to critical services outside Clarke County such as health care, education, employment, recreation, and retail
- g. Short Term Work Plan: Encourage new ridership among growing segments of our population, such as the aging and Spanish-speaking, through educational campaigns designed to familiarize them with the Transit system and use.
- h. Short Term Work Plan: Consider increasing accessibility on new or existing routes to special destinations within Athens (by reducing the ridership criteria). Those special destinations are culturally significant, promote tourism, or are otherwise important to the general well-being of the Athens community (such as medical facilities, governmental facilities, airports, museums,

arboretums, historical sites, sports arenas, educational facilities, and parks and greenways).

- i. Short Term Work Plan: Perform a study to determine whether the transit system is currently accessing 85% of the county population living and working within 500 feet of a bus stop. If not, re-evaluate what systemic changes (frequency?) would be necessary to maintain this minimum transit accessibility rate.
- j. Short Term Work Plan: Explore the feasibility of providing amenities such as wireless internet access and A/C power outlets on buses, real-time bus location mapping and bus proximity notification to potential customers and extended service subscribers.
- k. Short Term Work Plan: Consider the feasibility of allowing corporate sponsorship to pay for the higher operating costs associated with increased frequency and breath of the ACC transit system.
- l. Short Term Work Plan: Educate banks about location efficient mortgages that require a lower income level for homes near public transit.

C. Athens-Clarke County will take measures to ensure that vehicular traffic will not harm the residential nature of our neighborhoods while encouraging interconnectivity for bike systems, pedestrian systems and road systems.

a. Short Term Work Plan: Identify existing residential streets roughly parallel to major arterials that can be designated as “bicycle arterials” intended primarily for bicycle use, with the exception of local residential automobile access.

Vision

Encourage Regional Coordination in transportation, land use, and character area planning at the respective county borders.

Issues and Opportunities

A. Activate the Northeast Georgia Regional Transportation Authority through MACORTS.

- a. Short Term Work Plan: Coordinate Park and Ride amongst all counties.
- b. Short Term Work Plan: Coordinate density requirements across borders.
- c. Short Term Work Plan: Coordinate land use and character area planning to maintain the integrity of arterials as well as collector roadways.

Notes

Notes to Land Use Subcommittee:

Please consider the following recommendations:

Synchronize zoning requirements and stormwater ordinance (such as the definitions of impervious surface and the infiltration techniques so that the stormwater fee system supports the requirements and standards found in the zoning ordinance.

Make appropriate play areas for children (many small park areas) to ensure their safety away from roads.

Encourage higher densities along transportation corridors.

Notes to Population Subcommittee:

Please consider the following recommendations:

Promote the use of public transit for the elderly population through increased publicity and expansion of services into those population centers.

Notes to Intergovernmental Subcommittee:

Please consider the following recommendations:

Ensure stronger enforcement and reduction (max. 30-35 mph) of speed limits, especially on collector roads. Stronger enforcement against vagrants within Greenway and future pedestrian routes through utility corridors.

Notes to Cultural Resources Committee:

Please consider the following recommendations:

Please share our following Issue in your document as well:

Consider increasing accessibility on new or existing routes to special destinations within Athens (by reducing the ridership criteria). Those special destinations are culturally significant, promote tourism, or are otherwise important to the general well-being of the Athens community (such as medical facilities, governmental facilities, airports, museums, arboretums, historical sites, sports arenas, educational facilities, and parks and greenways).