Community Goals

Vision Statement

While Athens has an established music and arts scene and close ties with the state's flagship university, in recent decades the city has evolved into the economic driver for Northeast Georgia. Health care, manufacturing, tourism and small businesses are now tightly woven into the fabric of Athens, giving the Classic City a diverse population and economy.

Despite the challenges associated with growth and change, Athens-Clarke County remains steadfast in its commitment to improve the health, equity and prosperity for all residents and to preserve our natural and cultural resources. We also recognize that our community expects a responsive government that follows a collaborative and open process of public decision-making.

The Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year vision for our future. This Plan guides decisions on land use, transportation, and county investments in parks and open space, transit, utilities, and other public infrastructure and services. The Plan reflects our commitment to proactively manage and embrace growth while maintaining our core values of race and social equity, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and security, and community connectedness.

Community Goals / Needs and Opportunities

List of Community Goals, Strategies, Policies, Needs (Ideas) and Opportunities (Obstacles)

Athens-Clarke County has identified the following list of Community Goals / Needs and Opportunities to meet over the course of the next 20 years. This list is not in order of importance as all items are necessary for the continued success of the community. Needs and Opportunities, as well as corresponding Goals, Strategies, and Policies have been highlighted for each of the (15) topics, and grouped with the associated category as identified within the Community Assessment of the Envision Athens study. The five common categories are "People, Prosperity, Place, Vitality, and Foundation".

The "People" category revolves around demographics, future projections, and the diversity of the citizenry. This in turn has a direct impact on services provided to improve health, safety, and general welfare. "Prosperity" examines common themes like economics, but also the quality of education. "Place" refers to the built and natural environment, including how land and structures are used. "Vitality" highlights the liveliness of the community, or how aspects can invigorate the daily outlook of citizens and visitors through culture and civic engagement. Finally, "Foundation" touches upon the often overlooked basis from which a community is physically built. This may include infrastructure and transportation, but also the system of government.

Each of the five categories includes a list of associated topics. These topics are broad in nature, but give indication as to the specific needs, opportunities, goals, strategies, and policies directly affecting the subject. Deliberate thought was given to how each topic's information is arranged, beginning with a brief description of the topic and a list of relevant needs and opportunities. A goal was then decided upon, followed by strategies for achieving it. Finally, policies were formulated that will ensure the goal is met. Each particular aspect of this section is further described as follows.

Athens-Clarke County has used the (15) topics for dividing the needs and opportunities of the community. During the public engagement process, clarity was warranted with regard to the definition of what exactly a "need" or "opportunity" is, and so staff took the initiative to rename and clarify the procedure as "ideas and obstacles".

Each specific list of needs and opportunities is meant to assist in achieving desired goals by providing examples of issues that could benefit from proposed policy or be corrected from it. Needs and Opportunities differ from Goals, Strategies, and Policies by purposely providing specific scenarios or examples within the community. Whereas Goals, Strategies, and Policies can often be broad in an effort to be far-reaching across the spectrum of the county, Needs and Opportunities provide the many detailed possibilities for improvement. Over the course of an intensive two month public input process, coupled with months of effort from Envision Athens, staff was able to compile opinions from various sources including public discussion, surveys (paper/online), and group debate. Through SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, which was enacted by gauging citizen ideas for each related policy over the course of online forms and public gatherings with large comment boards, the community was able to develop current and future scenarios that can be specifically discussed and addressed over the next 20 years.

All ideas and obstacles identified during this process were given proper attention, but those needs and opportunities of high priority, typically ones that demand attention within the next five years, have been highlighted through associated projects for implementation within the corresponding Community Work Program. Therefore, the following topics detail a complete list of needs and opportunities without consideration of rank.

The Goals are broad statements arranged by topic. Those identified are aspirational in nature, setting a course for the Unified Government to in turn implement actions as they relate to guiding the community's future. Each of the Goal statements are followed by a series of Strategies that identify concepts intended to address the desired Goal. The organization and content of these Goals and related Strategies are inspired by the Envision Athens process, have been vetted through the Comprehensive Plan process, and have their aspirational roots in the legacy of the Guiding Principles previously adopted as part of the community's last two Comprehensive Plans.

Finally, the Policies signal a commitment to achieving the Goals put forth by the community. The list of community policies for each topic were developed in association with the Goals and Strategies outlined to help address identified Needs and Opportunities. Policies stated herein were written to directly aid in completion of the Goals.

"People"

Strengthening the lives of citizens and visitors through Health, Safety, and Social Services.

Health

A healthy community is one that is educated about the mind and body, and has the opportunity to pursue lifestyle changes should citizens choose to do so. By partnering with our local and regional health providers, Athens-Clarke County can continue to provide not only basic health needs, but advanced initiatives aimed at securing a holistic approach coupled with state-of-the-art services and technology.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

   a. Support affordable healthcare for all ages that provides regional access for patients through an adequate number of providers and associated services, equally distributed by location as based on the population served, including specialists. Zoning should be examined to account for this need.

   b. Promote awareness for associated issues involving behavioral health, development disabilities, addiction, and HIV/AIDS, among others, by eliminating stigmas and marketing available programs.

   c. Athens-Clarke County is considered the regional provider for healthcare in Northeast Georgia, where it has become one of the dominant industries outside of public education. As such, focus should be maintained and/or increased on this sector to capitalize on the full potential of its offerings.

   d. Due to its larger population, the county can reach a greater number of people to promote not only healthcare, but a healthy lifestyle. This may include offering incentives to spur behavioral changes, including those non-traditional, health-based offering like financial literacy and homelessness. It should also mean increasing greenspace, promoting walkability and safe cycling, and access to clean air.

A goal has been identified...

   • **_Goal:_** A culture of healthy lifestyles and inclusive access to affordable, holistic and state of-the-art services and facilities for physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing.

With the following implementation strategies...

1. *Strategy:* Identify mental health issues in youth and put preventive measures, services, and interventions in place.

2. *Strategy:* Create more opportunities and coordinate services for people moving back to the community from incarceration.

3. *Strategy:* Expand substance abuse and addictive disease treatment.

4. *Strategy:* Create a regional hub for health care to centralize health care facilities and providers.

5. *Strategy:* Coordinate communication on health care issues to increase the public's understanding of service providers.

6. *Strategy:* Create education programs to help citizens make healthy lifestyle choices.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Coordinate communication on health care issues to increase the public's understanding of service providers, translation services, and program requirements for clients.

B. *Policy:* Continue to support healthy living.

C. *Policy:* Create education programs to help citizens make healthy lifestyle choices.

D. *Policy:* Identify mental health issues in youth and put in place preventive measures, services, and interventions.

E. *Policy:* Create more opportunities and coordination of services for people moving back to the community from incarceration – transition programs and resources from short-term and long-term incarceration.

F. *Policy:* Develop an effective mental health crisis response team.

Safety

Public safety ensures the protection of citizens from physical and financial harm, but also through the promotion of constitutional rights. Our laws and efforts to uphold them will be based in part on community values and expectations. Safety will be provided through a number of methods and techniques in an effort to be fair, transparent, and successful.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

   a. Development of a street-light master plan and policies for pedestrian safety, including the strategic placement of lights on the same side of the street as sidewalks in an effort to promote walkability.

   b. Increase in funding to advance public safety recruitment, retention, education, and higher pay.

   c. Work to promote responsible consumption of alcohol Downtown.

   d. Enhance a more equitable neighborhood traffic-calming program that promotes safe walkability to various destinations.

   e. Increase coordination amongst Athens-Clarke County Emergency Services for citizens and visitors.

   f. Continuation of crime reduction through non-traditional means like community policing, volunteerism, mentorships, restorative justice, and Community Protection through Environmental Design.

   g. Expand safety programs to reverse the role that violence is having on the community. Specifically, those initiatives aimed at reducing the sexual, financial, emotional and physical abuse upon women and children.

   h. Expansion of the existing Citizen Police Academy program into local schools will work to improve public understanding and perception while tailoring discussion toward youth members on topics like pedestrian and bicycle safety.

   i. Continue to collaborate with the UGA Police Departments on ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in operations while avoiding duplication of services.

A goal has been identified...

- **_Goal:_** Residents and visitors feel safe and secure in the community, whether in residential areas, public places or on transportation routes.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Provide and identify sufficient funding to implement the Athens-Clarke County Police Department Strategic Vision Plan.

2. *Strategy:* Develop a comprehensive Community Supervision Plan in order to support successful reintegration from incarceration to achieve productive outcomes for the individual and society.

3. *Strategy:* Further expand youth development programs for public safety using data from the Youth Development Task Force.

4. *Strategy:* Improve cyclist and pedestrian safety through educational campaign, facility improvements, and law enforcement.

5. *Strategy:* Identify and evaluate ways to leverage existing and future technology to better coordinate efforts between residents and local law enforcement.

6. *Strategy:* Evaluate and update policies that aim to reduce traffic fatalities.

7. *Strategy:* Develop a Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan to enhance and grow re service delivery in areas of significant medical emergency.

8. *Strategy:* Review and enhance safety programs for at-risk populations to reduce sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Provide and identify sufficient funding to implement ACC Police Department Strategic Vision Plan.

B. *Policy:* Develop and fund retention incentives for public safety officers.

C. *Policy:* Develop Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan.

D. *Policy:* Review and enhance safety programs for at-risk populations to reduce sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.

Social Services

Institutions throughout the county support and sustain services and facilities that respond to the needs of our population, especially social welfare. Services provided assist in the daily quality of life for our residents and visitors, contributing to the community's vibrant live/work mentality.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. Promote and formalize a time-bank system for trading skilled services.

b. Reduction in the high levels of poverty throughout the community, especially for school-age children and the elderly. This issue threatens not only human life but also the character of the community.

c. Full, life-cycle coverage for individuals in need, from childhood to adulthood to the elderly, would ensure programs and services are available to ease hunger and poverty and support family welfare.

d. Stronger focus should be placed on equity so that the most vulnerable get necessary services. There should also be an equalization of services and their distribution between the east and west sides of the county. Investigate those uses and facilities that appear to be lacking from one side of the county or the other.

e. Allow homeless individuals an opportunity to work on projects throughout the county like beautification efforts.

f. Harness the knowledge and experience of the senior population with respect to volunteerism and community services.

g. Regional collaboration and contributions are key in supporting the social safety net and to avoid duplication of services. A network manager could help coordinate programs, organizations, and services. "Service fairs" could be held at targeted locations throughout the county.

h. Additional services and programs for the homeless will assist in decreasing the number of those people found in such a situation. An increased number of facilities that go beyond just sheltering at night are needed.

A goal has been identified…

- ***Goal:*** Effective and accessible social service delivery that enables people to reach their full potential. The community is open to, aware and supportive of social services, and the non-profit community is connected and communicative, with ever-increasing collaboration.

With the following implementation strategies...

1. *Strategy:* The community is open to, aware and supportive of social services, and the non-profit community is connected and communicative, with ever-increasing collaboration.

2. *Strategy:* Address poverty by targeting unemployment and underemployment by training and preparing individuals for vocational success.

3. *Strategy:* Create a community that is supportive of, and provides opportunities for, individuals with limited opportunity.

4. *Strategy:* Develop and expand accessible youth development programming.

5. *Strategy:* Develop a clearinghouse to make programs and social services more easily accessible.

6. *Strategy:* Encourage non-profits to collaborate, convene productively, and effectively communicate their services.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Nonprofits collaborate, convene productively, and effectively communicate services.

B. *Policy:* Develop and expand accessible youth development programming such as before and after school learning and leisure options. Provide adequate and affordable child care as a similar option for those citizens with younger children seeking assistance.

C. *Policy:* Address poverty by targeting unemployment and under-employment, as well as our limited ability to attract employers to Athens-Clarke County through training and preparing individuals for vocational success.

D. *Policy:* Create a community that is effectively supportive of and provides accessible and productive opportunities for individuals with limited access to opportunity and who are underrepresented in quality of life indicators such as income, food security, stable housing, community inclusion, etc.

E. *Policy:* Develop a clearinghouse to more easily access programs and social services.

"Prosperity"

Create, sustain, and advance the livelihood of citizens through Education and Economic Development.

Education

As a community, Athens-Clarke County provides educational opportunities at all levels of learning, from early childhood through high school, to advanced doctoral research. Both public and private institutions provide a foundation for life-long learning, and the following list identifies areas to support and encourage our educational system.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. A higher retention of quality teachers must be achieved if educational initiatives are to succeed. The local government can assist by exploring incentives like affordable housing in neighborhoods with associated schools. Additionally, teachers could be entitled to reduced rates for Athens-Clarke County facility and program usage.

b. Additional early childhood care, learning, and transitioning, especially for infants and toddlers, is of vital importance for establishing a sound foundation for educational success. Programs offered by the Leisure Services Department should be examined to enhanced opportunities outside of the typical school day, particularly geared toward younger children.

c. Increase the number of options for affordable childcare, and integrate healthcare services into said facilities, like schools, to ensure that all youth have access to necessary treatment.

d. Additional afterschool organizations and activities, especially those that take place at schools, can make these facilities neighborhood focal points that function as community centers afterhours. This may also create opportunities for more active and engaged parents. Athens-Clarke County can assist with providing a number of varied offerings through departments like Leisure Services.

e. The local government can help promote a more positive marketing of the school system since its perception impacts the county's ability to be a regional economic leader. Issues impacting the community are directly related to both the school system and local government from an economic development standpoint, and stronger collaboration is needed.

f. Education is essential and should be provided throughout a person's lifetime, including those individuals in need like the homeless and those willing to learn like the incarcerated. The local government must continue to offer opportunities in areas outside of the local school board's typical realm.

g. Through increased collaboration with all local colleges and universities, Athens-Clarke County can help promote a well-educated community and workforce while highlighting the various options for additional learning for our youth upon graduation.

h. An increased number of internships could be offered by Athens-Clarke County departments for both high-school and college students, similar to that of the Great Promise Partnership program. Also, an organizational development certificate could be awarded to students that learn about local government functions while the local government gets an opportunity to promote its facilities through participant tours. Focus could be on the varying positions within local government that do not necessarily require advanced education, emphasizing life skills.

A goal has been identified…

- **_Goal:_** Effective and respected early childhood through high school education that prepares students for life, including career learning and education opportunities, traditional college, or the workforce. In general, life-long learning is highly valued, resources are widely available, equity in opportunity is improved, and success is communicated.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Provide educational programming to enhance job skills, improve understanding of our natural environment and importance of built infrastructure, increase our cultural enjoyment and personal enrichment.

2. *Strategy:* The long-term prosperity of our community will be supported by the educational function of our parks and recreational services, public libraries, museums and other cultural amenities.

3. *Strategy:* Establish and maintain an effective working relationship between the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government and the Clarke County School District to select mutually beneficial locations for schools and support appropriate land uses adjacent to and/or near school properties.

4. *Strategy:* Encourage constructive relationships between schools and their neighbors.

That supports the adoption of these policies:

A. *Policy:* Educate, train and develop young people in Athens-Clarke County so that they will graduate from high school prepared to enter the local workforce, and to be successful in the world of work and in their lives.

B. *Policy:* Enhance the learning environment to provide student support for the variety of needs within our community.

C. *Policy:* Support teachers through a variety of methods in order to retain quality teachers who feel appreciated and valued by the larger community, and are afforded with opportunities for professional growth.

Economic Development

Athens-Clarke County strives to be one of the best places to not only live or retire, but also work. Through a resilient and diverse economic base, the community should provide a broad range of jobs, and entrepreneurial endeavors that provide an opportunity for everyone to be successful. Already an economic hub for the region, Athens-Clarke County will use its strengths and unique qualities to support existing and new enterprises, while continuing to foster a strong and capable workforce.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. Athens-Clarke County has low unemployment but high poverty which may contribute to the need for higher paying, living-wage jobs, but should not be viewed as the sole reasoning for this condition.

b. Existing zoning, geographic location, and a "no growth" attitude have seemingly affected development throughout the county by contributing to the debate over how each side and/or corridor of the county is favored.

c. Better wayfinding is needed throughout Downtown in assisting businesses with customer attraction.

d. "Incubator" space in general has become a possible solution for various businesses, but in particular can benefit artists and musicians by providing free studio space.

e. Athens-Clarke County appears to be in direct competition for retail with Oconee County, leaving too many empty retail spaces. Explore and implement various incentives to help counter this trend.

f. There is a need for workforce development that connects qualified talent with employers' expectations. Attracting and retaining middle income jobs should lead to a more sustainable economy.

g. A business-friendly perception has become challenging, including processes for government approval needed in development. A "one-stop shop" for development services may help assist with this reputation and actual review process.

h. Retain local residents, particularly of the younger generation, who receive an education here, and could contribute significantly to the workforce in areas like government, business, and non-profit.

i. There is a need to assist local businesses and industries with a targeted action plan for engaging the community. This in turn can also provide coordination that leverages the resources available for entrepreneurial and small-business support, encouraging an increasing trend of start-up businesses.

j. Promote the creation and success of the food industry in Athens.

k. Follow-up with Home Occupation applicants to offer advice and guidance from the Economic Development Department.

l. Adjust and plan for changes in technology that alter the way we shop or even travel (transportation modes).

m. Increase in the amount of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP's) involving local government facilities. Start by examining the list of government-owned land for the purpose of increasing the tax base.

n. There is an opportunity to expand upon the strong economic base anchored by our regional healthcare activity and higher education institutions.

o. The number of utility patents produced within Athens-Clarke County presents an opportunity for continued success, but may require the need for a dedicated research park.

p. Athens-Clarke County has dozens of private properties totaling more than half a million square feet of available commercial and industrial building space that need to be marketed and taken into consideration when rezoning for such uses.

q. Over 40,000 workers are estimated to commute into the community each day. Increasing the number of jobs will allow Athens-Clarke County to function as the career hub for the region, with workers living both in and outside of the county.

A goal has been identified…

- **<u>Goal:</u>** Greater prosperity for the entire community – individuals, businesses and local government – with diverse, quality jobs and a ready workforce. This also means that entrepreneurship and small businesses flourish in a collaborative environment, that unemployment and underemployment are reduced, and that full time workers are able to meet daily needs and live in assured self-sufficiency (affording housing, food and life necessities).

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Continue the improvement of coordination and cooperation of Athens entities concerned with economic growth and the attraction and creation of jobs.

2. *Strategy:* Utilize best practices for attraction and retention of business and industry.

3. *Strategy:* We will encourage the development of Downtown as a vibrant and diverse center for living, visiting and doing business.

4. *Strategy:* We will actively participate in and support regional planning for growth in the twelve counties of Northeast Georgia.

5. *Strategy:* We will promote and support the growth of the industries that make Athens unique, including music, art, food, film and other creative endeavors.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Continued improvement of coordination and cooperation of Athens entities concerned with economic growth and the attraction and creation of jobs that offer wages supporting a normal standard of living for Athens-Clarke County workers.

B. *Policy:* Implement ordinances, policies, and infrastructure to address impediments to locating or expanding business and industry.

C. *Policy:* Provide the facilities, services, and incentives necessary to attract, incubate, and grow businesses across a variety of sectors.

D. *Policy:* Leverage Athens' most distinctive products - like the music scene - to further position it as a destination and brand.

E. *Policy:* Create a marketing plan that will better position Athens to successfully compete for in-state and regional leisure and conventions travel.

F. *Policy:* Continue building a comprehensive, complementary entrepreneur development program to the existing retention and attraction initiatives.

G. *Policy:* Improve the accessibility of Downtown as everyone's neighborhood.

"Place"

Making a great place for people to live, work, or simply enjoy through Housing, Land Use, Neighborhoods, Agriculture, and the Environment.

Housing

Support for and preservation of diversity should be continued as it contributes to our rich history and the overall character of the community. As the population continues to grow, sustainable housing will be key for both new development and revitalization to protect environmental quality and manage costs. Athens-Clarke County will foster neighborhoods and housing opportunities that address the following list.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Pursue a reduction in the minimum floor area requirement for dwellings.

b. Obtain and direct additional rehabilitation funds for abandoned single-family homes.

c. Allowance of in-law suites or studios for owner-occupied parcels. Examine the current definition of family and whether it is too restrictive.

d. Infill housing should be promoted and concentrated in areas near commercial nodes, providing easy access to everyday services.

e. Creation of a Renter's Bill of Rights as the community seeks to embrace the rental trend in housing over that of ownership. Focus on education as it pertain to rentals, specifically, providing students with information brochures that outline rental rights and responsibilities.

f. Affordable or subsidized public housing options are too few with long waiting lists. Everyone should have a quality place to live.

g. A regulated encampment for those in poverty that provides a safe, clean place to establish temporary housing.

h. Plans developed in advance for the renovation and repurposing of older buildings (not necessarily designated historic).

i. Identification of ways in which to address student housing development concerns. This includes everything from aesthetics to function to the concentrated population.

j. The average income of households does not match-up with the average sales price and market rate rental for homes in terms of affordability. This strengthens the call for workforce housing, as well as affordable senior housing.

k. Housing options that reflect the diversity and meet the needs of the community, including housing for families and a diverse workforce. These are quality options with a variety of types, prices, and locations.

l. Examine options for affordable housing with regard to public servants.

m. Explore various property tax relief options for those most financially vulnerable populations.

A goal has been identified…

- **_Goal:_** Housing options that reflect the diversity and meet the needs of the community, including housing for families and a diverse workforce. These are quality options with a variety of types, prices, and locations.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Target challenged multi-family developments for major redevelopment, especially mixed-income.

2. *Strategy:* Increase amount of and provide access to affordable housing.

3. *Strategy:* Acknowledge and develop strategies to address issues related to gentrification.

4. *Strategy:* Explore new options for providing additional safe housing for the homeless populations.

5. *Strategy:* Create quality housing for older adults using innovative techniques like accessory dwelling units.

6. *Strategy:* Support and expand the Housing Rehabilitation Initiative to help preserve and update existing single-family housing stock within the urban core.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Increase amount of and provide access to affordable housing.

B. *Policy:* Acknowledge and develop strategies to address issues related to gentrification.

C. *Policy:* Support and expand the Housing Rehabilitation Initiative.

D. *Policy:* Provide more options for homeless.

E. *Policy:* Create quality housing for seniors, including the possible increased use of accessory dwelling units.

F. *Policy:* Target troubled multi-family developments for major redevelopment, especially mixed-income.

Land Use

The Future Land Use category focuses on the physical or built environment. Ideas pertaining to how each parcel of land in Athens-Clarke County should be developed and used tend to get the most attention. It is important to keep in mind that land use is influenced by a number of factors, including overall land mass, topography, economics, socials aspects, architecture, functionality, accessibility, and density to name a few. Through a balance of new and redeveloped sites, the community aims to keep Athens-Clarke County attractive and inviting.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. Implementation of inclusionary zoning techniques, like density bonuses and a relaxed mix of uses, if utilized in new development or redevelopment.

b. Proactive planning for the anticipated population and demographics expected while coupled with various community facilities we have or want. This must take into consideration multiple generations of citizens that encompass Athens.

c.   A vibrant downtown with less vehicles, but more open space, that is clean, walkable, and park-like.

d.   Examine parking standards to align with current trends and proven business needs that may result in a lower minimum ratio.

e.   Ensure that mixed-use development truly provides multiple uses amongst varying architecture and structure size. First-floor commercial should only be mandated in areas found to be appropriate; however, such areas then should strictly adhere to this requirement.

f.   Establishment of gateway corridors that leave an impression upon visitors and provide access to necessary destinations for citizens.

g.   Examine the Highway 78/316 Industrial Park or an eastside location for a Bio/Office park.

h.   Consider the use of impact fees related to development that can help offset the costs of providing associated services.

i.   Complete the Firefly Trail to the county line at Winterville and continue to develop the Oconee Rivers Greenway trail system. For both trail programs, develop a zoning overlay to encourage compatible adjoining land use and development.

j.   Establish a credit system with respect to development that can be used for tree or plaza space requirements that in turn offset difficulties in current or future projects.

k.   Consider contingency plans for the mall, including what it could eventually be used for: movie studio, senior living, or revitalized neighborhood.

l.   Reexamine density allowances in all zoning districts. A transitional commercial/low density "RM" zone may be warranted to buffer existing neighborhoods from heavier commercial.

m.   Ensure zoning for a grocery store downtown and in other areas identified as food deserts that are of an appropriate neighborhood scale. This type of use would include specific percentages of fresh food, pharmacy, and minimal sign advertisement.

n.   Establish incentives for new development to incorporate environmentally sustainable standards including, but not limited to, material re-use, responsible management of construction waste, etc.

o. Reexamine the zoning ordinance with a focus on building height; appropriate locations for urban design versus areas with suburban design; mandatory mixed-use retail space; and smaller dwellings.

p. Develop incentives to reuse existing development before new development in greenfields, including TDR's, CID's, TAD's, and BID's. Given the county's small geographic area, redevelopment should be prioritized over greenfield development as plenty of opportunity exists to improve blight along corridors and gateways, strip malls, industrial sites, and aging apartments.

q. Attempt to reconfigure large, existing or proposed commercial centers into "blocks" that promote walkability. There are many available lots along corridors that could be purchased directly by Athens-Clarke County in order to achieve this and in turn be marketed for development.

r. The Greenbelt has a tendency to focus development inward, which can contribute to infill housing and higher land value. As such, affordable, undeveloped land is becoming scarce, meaning the market will continue to turn to redevelopment of parcels and general infill practices. Mobility is better in these areas and sprawl is prevented, which signals a need to prepare for such actions in the future.

s. Development has an opportunity to locate outside of Athens-Clarke County, just over the county line in an effort to avoid county regulations and land value, but still claim proximity to the county and its population. Practices to prevent this type of occurrence are needed.

t. Develop the riverfront compatibly with the North Oconee River Greenway to possibly include stores, concert venue, and additional nature walks. This in turn would help spur the creation of a downtown parks program.

u. Consider the redevelopment of Atlanta Highway as a technology corridor.

v. Install district-specific design and use themes across the county. There exists an Athens look and feel that new development should adapt to, not vice versa.

w. Tie land development to designated drinking watershed areas while considering water recharge.

x. The area has been identified as having various "food deserts", where there is a lack of healthy, fresh food within reasonable distance to residences. This should be remedied.

A goal has been identified…

- **<u>Goal:</u>** A vibrant and physically attractive community with a variety of places and equitable access to parks, open space, and other community gathering places. Development and redevelopment – with redevelopment as a priority – are well considered, appropriately placed, and have a positive and thoughtful economic, social, and environmental impact.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* As the fundamental framework for growth and development, refocus our Future Development Map and zoning policies to reflect the community's shared vision and next generation of growth.

2. *Strategy:* Create a menu of appropriate incentive options that encourage responsible redevelopment of existing land uses and that guide new development to follow a shared community vision of equity and sustainability.

3. *Strategy:* In keeping with the 1992 Oconee Rivers Greenway Ordinance, recognize the opportunities that rivers provide to enhance the community and encourage responsible, environmentally-friendly development along our river frontages.

4. *Strategy:* Identify a network of development nodes throughout the community that relate to transportation and other infrastructure, employment and housing. These nodes also ensure equitable access to community gathering spaces and other community services.

5. *Strategy:* Create appealing community gateways and corridors by recognizing their challenges and opportunities. This includes plans for redevelopment and revitalization that consider potential uses while balancing real estate value with aesthetics, allowing movement with safety, and creating appealing community gateways from the outside of the County into Downtown.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Re-examine Future Development Map.

B. *Policy:* Establish Corridor Redevelopment incentives or zoning policies for gateway and other important corridors.

C. *Policy:* Create nodal development tied to transportation, healthcare, schools, jobs, workforce, and housing.

D. *Policy:* Develop zoning standards and incentives to include greenspace and other public amenities.

E. *Policy:* Establish incentives for new development to incorporate environmentally sustainable standards including, but not limited to, material re-use, responsible management of construction waste, etc.

F. *Policy:* Incentivize and incorporate the arts and greenspace into all new commercial developments and redevelopment.

G. *Policy:* Re-examine density allowances in all zoning districts.

H. *Policy:* Develop incentives to reuse existing development before new developments in Greenfields.

I. *Policy:* Encourage the use of incentive options such as TDRs, CIDs, TADs, and BIDs for development.

J. *Policy:* Create an inventory of local public-owned land that could be developed.

K. *Policy:* Develop zoning standards and incentives to develop and/or redevelop quality multi-family options for a diverse group.

L. *Policy:* Create a River District Plan and development strategy.

Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are often identified by a sense of place, but in reality, are more than just a defined geographical boundary. The people who call them home experience a sense of belonging, and a location that allows them to live freely, often alongside others who share the same sense of comfort. Neighborhoods can cultivate a shared sense of opinion, one that provides direction for the future and voices concern over perceived or real threats to their quality of life. The following list relates directly to what our neighborhoods face in the future and the goal of keeping them primarily residential.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. Create inviting city entrances that embrace community character and promote a sense of pride through beautification efforts.

b. Establish formal associations in minority neighborhoods that build upon the pursuit of a diverse and inclusive community, while sponsoring a program for neighborhood leaders.

c. Examine the use of Neighborhood Planning Units and identify potential areas for installation.

d. Promote "cluster" residential development that reduce the overall impact on land while promoting neighborhood values.

e. Transitional zoning is needed with respect to residential neighborhoods that abut commercial zoning to lessen the adverse impact the two opposite classifications can have on one another.

f. Promote intra and inter-connectivity within and between neighborhoods while discouraging cul-de-sac development. This applies to both vehicular and pedestrian pathways and may not always require formal, paved improvements when associated with walkability.

g. Basic infrastructure (roads, utilities, sidewalks, etc.) should be the standard for all neighborhoods, and a lack thereof threatens prosperity.

h. Additional gathering and recreation facilities north of Downtown are needed.

i. Identify areas that could potentially be developed for unique neighborhoods with smaller houses and a cohesive theme.

j. Create a public database for educating residents on neighborhood issues and zoning items.

k. Part of this stems from socioeconomically segregated neighborhoods that prevents interconnectivity opportunities among cultures.

l. Creation and recognition of a Downtown Neighborhood that is inclusive of students and provides an opportunity for civic engagement.

m. The history of action by faith-based organizations are a strength in promoting neighborhood engagement and representation.

n. University of Georgia collaboration can always be strengthened through communication or perhaps more formal agreements as decisions can have an impact on neighborhoods and should be discussed and mitigated accordingly.

o. Public gathering and meetings spaces that are free and open to all can be used as center for civic engagement, like that of public schools. Open street events also provide an opportunity for neighborhood interaction and promote vitality.

A goal has been identified...

- **<u>Goal:</u>** Our neighborhoods will be vibrant, safe, and stable places where residents interact with each other and have access to a range of diverse housing types, public spaces, and services.

With the following implementation strategies...

1. *Strategy:* Utilize neighborhood schools as hubs for diverse school and neighborhood engagement. Schools are a natural, central location for effective community interaction and service delivery.

2. *Strategy:* Ensure equitable access to basic infrastructure, including sidewalks, lighting, street trees, etc. to enhance neighborhood safety and identity.

3. *Strategy:* Investigate tools (i.e. neighborhood planning units, neighborhood councils, and neighborhood leaders programs) that broaden community leadership, represent neighborhood-level issues at the county level, and promote more effective and responsive policy.

4. *Strategy:* Create incentives to encourage revitalization in neighborhoods and commercial developments.

5. *Strategy:* Continued landlord and tenant education regarding their respective rights and responsibilities.

6. *Strategy:* Evaluate current process for identification, adjudication, education, and funding clearance of nuisance properties.

7. *Strategy:* Increase and promote communication within neighborhoods.

8. *Strategy:* Encourage parks, schools and community facilities to be located as focal points in neighborhoods.

9. *Strategy:* Apply urban design and aesthetic standards to neighborhoods and other developments as they are developed or redeveloped. These standards can reflect historic character, support walkability and active living, and incorporate open space and ecological landscaping.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Educate tenants about their rights and responsibilities.

B. *Policy:* Expand sidewalk network in neighborhoods and other infrastructure such as lights, trees, neighborhood businesses, and basic infrastructure for neighborhoods.

C. *Policy:* Incentivize neighborhood grocery stores, farmer's markets, co-ops, etc.

D. *Policy:* Increase and promote communication among neighborhoods via listservs and other communication.

E. *Policy:* Create neighborhood planning units, neighborhood councils, and promote neighborhood leaders program.

F. *Policy:* Create incentives to encourage progressive revitalization in neighborhoods and commercial developments.

G. *Policy:* Utilize neighborhood schools as hubs for diverse school and neighborhood engagement.

H. *Policy:* Evaluate current process for addressing identification, adjudication, education, and funding clearance of nuisance properties.

Agriculture

Though the smallest geographical land mass in the State of Georgia, Athens-Clarke County boasts an urban population. Still, past efforts have been made and proven successful at preserving agricultural practices. The Greenbelt has fulfilled its purpose of allowing the county to still claim a share of the agricultural economy and highlight sound sustainability initiatives like food production. Increased stewardship will negate harmful impacts, and farming practices will be encouraged, especially those embracing modern trends that result in responsible production.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Audit the viability and practicality of the AR zone.

b. Examine a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.

c. Create a Food Policy Council to recommend actions regarding local agricultural and nutrition practices.

d. Define and permit farmer's markets as a zoning use and identify existing parks to locate them.

e.   Promote school farming that can in turn contribute to nutritional options on-site.

f.   Support both traditional and urban agriculture. This includes programs tied to farming and stewardship, both for the young and older generations.

g.   Increase opportunities for food trucks to provide affordable meals and fresh food options to underserved, low-income areas of the community. This should include box truck locations for mobile vending.

h.   Partner with surrounding counties to help preserve the Greenbelt by decreasing development pressure.

i.   Amend the existing conservation subdivision ordinance to effectively promote its use by developers. This will in turn offer development opportunity within the "AR" zoning district that is carefully staged while keeping the desire for a "Greenbelt" that remains mostly preserved.

j.   Continue to work with farmers to promote sustainable techniques and reduce chemical runoff into nearby environmental areas.

k.   Build a reputation for pioneering innovative techniques (vertical farms, etc.). Government buildings and sites can be a location for these initiatives.

A goal has been identified...

- **_Goal:_** Agriculture remains a viable and productive component of the local economy by encouraging innovative community agricultural programs and leveraging use of land for agricultural production, alternative agricultural enterprises, and ecotourism.

With the following implementation strategies...

1.   _Strategy:_ Actively encourage and identify ways to advance local agriculture and food initiatives, including Eastside Farmer's Market, innovative community gardens, and efforts to increase access to food and eliminate food deserts.

2.   _Strategy:_ Identify and evaluate tax incentives on Agricultural (AR) zoned property to incentivize maintaining agricultural land.

3.   _Strategy:_ Further develop connections with the University of Georgia agricultural programs and initiatives, Clarke County School District, Cooperative Extension Services, and Young Urban Farmers Program.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

    A. *Policy:* Support the initiatives of the Cooperative Extension Service programs.

    B. *Policy:* Identify and evaluate tax incentives on AR zoned property to incentivize maintaining AR land.

    C. *Policy:* Enhance and further develop connections with the UGA Agriculture program, CCSD, and Young Urban Farmers Program.

    D. *Policy:* Establish an eastside Farmers Market.

    E. *Policy:* Further develop the idea of "local flavor".

    F. *Policy:* Evaluate, establish, and expand community gardens to include "vertical farming," farming in small places.

    G. *Policy:* Mobilize fresh food.

    H. *Policy:* Create an Ag Council to be made up of landscape companies, nurseries, bee owners, and animal farmers.

Environment

The environment is a topic that citizens hold dear and have highlighted as an important part to of the community's future. The list compiled directly aims to address how Athens-Clarke County will be an environmentally healthy, sustainable, and aesthetically pleasing place. Through protection efforts, air, water, soil, plants and wildlife will be enhanced.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

    a. Examine alternative methods for stream protection besides natural buffers. Continue restoration of urban streams.

    b. Development of an air-quality warning system.

    c. Increase efforts related to greenspace management, including acquisition, which can also promote beautification.

    d. Sustain a culture of conservation that maximizes waste reduction, increases the life of our landfill, and ensures waste is properly handled.

e. Focus efforts on incorporating the concept of energy efficiency into all sustainability initiatives as it can often be overlooked in comparison to more popular "green" strategies.

f. Install composting bins/educational material around town in strategic areas.

g. Create a tree credit program for ensuring adequate trees in specific areas as applied during development.

h. Provide incentives for construction of energy-efficient buildings that make it feasible and affordable to do.

i. Consider the number of private garbage haulers and whether to eliminate or alter general service district operations for pick-up.

j. Mandatory recycling and composting to extend the life of the landfill. Recycling facility should be updated. Capitalize on the existing landfill's bio-gas and use closed areas for solar energy. Landfill tours may be an incentive for a reduced bill.

k. Protect potentially historic plant materials and landscape structures surrounding historic properties by considering these elements when reviewing historic site plans.

l. Encourage xeriscaping as a means of water conservation.

m. Permit and promote the use of specific graywater systems.

n. Make greenspaces more accessible by incorporating roadway design, bringing visibility and awareness.

o. A Greenbelt that accommodates changes but preserves most areas.

p. Encourage existing local industries to install effective pollution abatement technology.

q. Support the latest Greenway Network Plan through land use and transportation initiatives.

A goal has been identified…

- **_Goal:_** A forward-thinking community that protects and improves the quality and function of our land, air, and water resources, recognizing their relationship to human health and the region's ecological functioning. Stewardship of the natural environment includes exploring ways for our actions and decisions to have a positive impact on the environment and to reduce negative impacts.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Provide additional safe and affordable transportation options including walking, biking, and clean transit.

2. *Strategy:* Increase energy efficiency, sources, and use of renewables.

3. *Strategy:* Improve the health and quality of rivers and streams to meet local standards for public use and enjoyment.

4. *Strategy:* Reduce landfill disposal of solid waste by diverting 75% through management, education, collection, and enforcement.

5. *Strategy:* Identify and protect rare, threatened, and unique natural resources.

6. *Strategy:* Decrease single-occupancy car rides by incentivizing alternative transportation.

7. *Strategy:* Decrease water consumption per capita.

8. *Strategy:* Create policies that promote building practices that utilize sustainable principles, such as adaptive reuse of buildings, energy efficiency, sustainably-sourced materials, low-impact development, ecological landscaping and responsible management of construction waste.

9. *Strategy:* Ensure adequate supplies of quality water through the protection of ground and surface water sources, including our rivers and streams.

10. *Strategy:* We will protect environmentally-sensitive corridors and utilize appropriate spaces to create a community-wide system of greenways, watersheds, and green spaces.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Decrease water consumption per capita.

B. *Policy:* Improve the health and quality of rivers and streams to meet local standards for public use and enjoyment.

C. *Policy:* Reduce landfill disposal of solid waste by diverting 75% through management, education, collection, and enforcement.

D. *Policy:* Provide safer, affordable transportation options including walking, biking, and clean transit.

E. *Policy:* Decrease single-occupancy car rides by incentivizing alternative transportation.

F. *Policy:* Increase energy efficiency, sources, and use of renewables.

G. *Policy:* Identify and protect rare, threatened, and unique natural resources.

H. *Policy:* Achieve goal of 20% of county as protected greenspace.

"Vitality"

Invigorating the community spirit through Arts and Culture as well as Civic Engagement.

Arts and Culture

Athens-Clarke County has always been rich in cultural resources that contribute to its unique character and increase its reputation in the world. Cultural resources include art, music, film, and historic preservation, but are not be limited to those interests. In an effort to protect, support, improve, and generate the resources of our unique culture, Athens-Clarke County has identified the following list of needs and opportunities related to this aspect of quality of life.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Incentivize and incorporate the arts and greenspace into all new developments.

b. Attract and develop "creative" jobs.

c. Attraction of more large festivals and entertainment, including sports tournaments.

d. Development of an outdoor amphitheater that can help increase tourism related to arts and music.

e. The preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures offers benefits both financially and environmentally. Historic structures also contribute to heritage tourism.

f. Downtown has seemingly become unaffordable for musicians and accompanying venues though it is clearly the hub for associated events and concerts. Affordable housing and commercial space is needed to maintain the music scene.

g. Music needs to be recognized and embraced for its contribution to the community. Too often generational differences can be a challenge in understanding the various cultural resources available, like music, which signals a lack of effective communication and promotion. One solution could be increased collaboration between local college programs and local schools.

h. Athens has much to offer in the form of existing facilities, like the art museum, theaters, and botanical garden, but more could be done. A large, comprehensive destination arts complex; free studio space; education centers for business aspects; or even integrated arts and cultural assets into the surrounding environment (Greenway) are strong possibilities. Arts exhibits could be incorporated into every Athens-Clarke County building lobby.

i. Embrace and preserve the Athens identity of uniqueness and keep it local. There exists a "special vibe", or energy within the creative scene. The culture, history, and environment of the community continue to promote Athens as an arts and cultural destination. Commitment must entail defining core values and principles and developing outcomes from there.

A goal has been identified…

- **_Goal:_** All aspects of culture and the arts – including music, theater, visual arts, heritage resources and other cultural initiatives – are the authentic expression of the people and place, representing an ever-present community good that contributes to nurturing and attracting diverse talent.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. _Strategy:_ Measure economic impacts of arts, culture, and heritage tourism.

2. _Strategy:_ Develop, foster, implement, and fund a Historic Resources Master Plan.

3. _Strategy:_ Promote, fund, and implement the Public Art Master Plan.

4. *Strategy:* Explore public/private partnerships to ensure a net growth in number of artistic venues over time.

5. *Strategy:* Identify the root challenges to accessing the arts for specific segments of the population and develop strategies to overcome barriers and measure progress.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Develop, foster, implement and fund a historic and heritage resources master plan.

B. *Policy:* Identify barriers to inclusion and engagement in the arts through an assessment tool.

C. *Policy:* Measure economic impacts of arts, culture, and heritage tourism; evaluate the current health of the local arts economy; and set 5, 10, and 20 year growth goals accordingly.

D. *Policy:* Promote, fund, and implement the public art master plan.

E. *Policy:* Develop an inclusive approach to the arts.

F. *Policy:* Create a public space and venue for the arts.

Civic Engagement

Each and every citizen of Athens-Clarke County is entitled to experience a strong sense of vitality through civic participation. By protecting and practicing those aspects of life held closely by individuals, families, friends, neighborhoods, etc., society as a whole is lifted to an advanced level of invigorating engagement.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Expand the Neighborhood Notification Initiative (NNI) to include information beyond planning and zoning alerts.

b. Improve the local government websites. Create an app for Athens-Clarke County.

c. Continue to evaluate and encourage diversity on government associated boards/committees, including actively engaging in efforts to market vacancies and seek out those populations that may otherwise not be aware of such opportunities and the qualifications they may possess.

d. Both indoor and outdoor accessible gathering spaces that will provide civic engagement opportunities. Close College Avenue to develop a city square.

e. Improvements to government openness and responsiveness, especially with regard to policies that directly impact neighborhoods and will assist in additional advocacy opportunities.

f. Coordinate the multiple marketing techniques for Athens by the University of Georgia, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, and Athens Downtown Development Authority.

A goal has been identified…

- **<u>Goal:</u>** Residents feel a strong connection to each other and are engaged in the community's overall well-being.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Create gathering opportunities in spaces that are available and accessible to all to encourage community interaction and civic engagement.

2. *Strategy:* Create mechanism by which UGA and Athens-Clarke County can communicate regularly and work together to address mutual needs.

3. *Strategy:* Encourage a more easily navigable government system.

4. *Strategy:* Encourage activities that strengthen individual neighborhood identity and establish connections between neighborhood groups and the broader community.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Create a collective identity that reflects our unique diversity.

B. *Policy:* Continue to identify common goals among UGA and Athens.

C. *Policy:* Create gathering spaces that are available and accessible to all.

D. *Policy:* Encourage a more easily navigable government system.

E. *Policy:* Identify the relationships and connections between neighborhood groups and the broader community.
F. *Policy:* Expand and coordinate local leadership academies.

"Foundation"

Building and maintaining a solid foundation from which services are rendered to the public through Transportation, Infrastructure, and Government Operations.

Transportation

The community seeks a balanced approach to transportation initiatives that are influenced by a number of factors. Multiple modes of transportation are encouraged for the pedestrian, bicyclist, transit rider, and automotive driver. Incorporating street infrastructure that accommodates all users will not only relieve traffic congestion, but accomplish the movement of goods and services. Through context sensitive street design, health and safety are promoted, and the desired sense of community is maintained.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Implement the various philosophies of "Complete Streets" in conjunction with both existing standards and any previous related studies.

b. Improve upon the efficiency of bus stop times by examining frequency and locations. Multiple payment options should be integrated onto buses.

c. Provide better transportation accommodations for the disabled.

d. Study two-way traffic flow on streets currently designated as one-way.

e. Recognize existing in-town alleys and the need to keep them.

f. There is a demand for passenger rail service to Atlanta.

g. Support a shuttle service that connects passengers in Athens with MARTA several times per day.

h. Embed the Greenway Network Plan into transportation decisions.

i. Create a pedestrian/bicycle network separate from roadways. Support a bicycle rental program.

j.   The airport should provide travel to distance places and multiple hubs. Industrial usage of the airport is often overlooked.

k.   Resolve vehicular congestion throughout the county. The Loop 10 interchanges need modification and are often backed-up.

l.   Develop an innovative transportation infrastructure that supports transportation diversity, equitable access, and environmental stewardship.

m.   Repair streets and sidewalks that will dualy increase safety while beautifying streets. A sidewalk bank should be used to help with costs.

n.   Offer incentives for use of park-and-ride lots, like allowing flexible work schedules to help with traffic congestion or a successful and sustainable carpool program.

o.   Align future transportation initiatives with already existing or proposed services.

p.   The airport should be viewed as its own mode of transportation, not in addition to other traditional modes.

q.   Provide high quality transportation nodes, or transit-oriented developments in association with previously completed studies. This may also spur the use of underutilized transit routes.

r.   No person should have to have a vehicle to get from place to place within the county. Retail establishments should be accessible by all modes of transportation.

A goal has been identified...

- **_Goal:_** Increased range of transportation options – including walking, biking, transit, and driving – that provide efficient, safe, affordable and equitable access throughout the community and connect to the region and the world (through rail and air service).

With the following implementation strategies...

1.   *Strategy:* Support Greenway corridor efforts as informed by both government-sponsored and community-driven analysis.

2.   *Strategy:* Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure as informed by government and community-driven analysis.

3. *Strategy:* Maintain high levels of transit service through the community and develop a sustainable model for funding and equitable access.

4. *Strategy:* Participate in regional cooperative efforts to enhance commuting options to Atlanta.

5. *Strategy:* Recognize the role of emerging technology, such as autonomous vehicles, smart grids, etc. in transportation planning.

6. *Strategy:* Grow and advance commercial air service into Athens-Clarke County.

7. *Strategy:* Develop an over-arching transportation plan that incorporates all modes of transportation and their related facilities and recognizes linkages between mobility and quality of life.

8. *Strategy:* Explore traffic calming features that slow the speed of automobile traffic and enhance safety and aesthetics without creating congestion.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure through respective master plans.

B. *Policy:* Grow and advance commercial air service in Athens-Clarke County.

C. *Policy:* Pursue sustainable coverage of transit within community.

D. *Policy:* Develop an over-arching transportation plan that brings together all existing studies, reports, and strategies into a single-source for reference and resource review.

E. *Policy:* Pursue comprehensive transportation safety program.

F. *Policy:* Explore commuting options to Atlanta.

G. *Policy:* Continue to buildout fiber, tech etc.

Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure, including all utilities, should be an essential part of our growing, diverse population. Keeping environmental sustainability in mind, emerging utilities should be available to all areas of the county. Emphasis should be placed on technologically advanced initiatives and incorporating those utilities into proposed construction to ensure Athens-Clarke County remains ready to provide the services needed for the future.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)…

a. There is a need for better and smarter utilities including internet and improved mobile access, benefitting the next generation of business.

b. Attain cleaner air throughout the county, which can also mean reducing unpleasant smells, beginning with Downtown.

c. Coordinate sewer easements with greenways to improve connectivity.

d. Promote the placement of utilities underground as services are repaired or installed to move away from overhead facilities.

e. Address deficiencies in water/sewer distribution while also exploring sale of any excess capacity.

f. Consider methods for securing and screening garbage in various part of the county. Such facilities could potentially use green roofs and/or solar panels.

g. Address needed restroom facilities downtown.

h. Small lot sizes make storm water compliance challenging. Maintenance within neighborhoods with regard to existing facilities is also difficult to keep up with and must be addressed.

i. Create a Technology Infrastructure Commission that can look into issues regarding contracts and number of utilities offered in Athens, as well as provide openness to the public.

j. Significantly increase sustainable energy practices.

k. Examine the quarry for possible reuse as a reservoir and leisure amenity.

l. Consider simple dirt paths to expand walking and biking connectivity.

m. Practice land use that is directly linked to watersheds.

n. Provide clearer explanation of how stormwater fees are calculated and why a per lot impervious surface rate is not utilized. Make a stormwater easement GIS layer available to the public.

A goal has been identified…

- **<u>Goal:</u>** Well-maintained infrastructure is strategically expanded and upgraded in full consideration of environmental sustainability to unlock economic potential and help meet the needs of individuals.

With the following implementation strategies…

1. *Strategy:* Improve community understanding of the importance of sustained reinvestment in public infrastructure assets.

2. *Strategy:* Ensure adequate water supply to meet current and future demand through conservation (demand management), water recycling/reuse and additional water storage.

3. *Strategy:* Increase communications and information connectivity for all residents.

4. *Strategy:* Reduce the risk of flooding events and improve the quality of streams and rivers through a proactive and innovative stormwater program.

5. *Strategy:* Coordinate sanitary sewer expansion with the future land use framework.

That supports the adoption of these policies…

A. *Policy:* Ensure adequate water supply to meet current and future demand.

B. *Policy:* Repair and replace infrastructure assets commensurate with physical depreciation.

C. *Policy:* Reduce the risk of flooding events and improve the quality of streams and rivers through a proactive and innovative stormwater program.

D. *Policy:* Increase communications and information connectivity.

E. *Policy:* Improve downtown streetscape and infrastructure and downtown physical and IT infrastructure.

F. *Policy:* Coordinate sanitary sewer expansion with land use framework.

Government Operations

The local government plays a crucial and necessary role in setting the foundation for community success and sustainability. Although many initiatives pertaining to the comprehensive plan are the responsibility of the local government, operations within this institution are not immune from examination and improvement. By consistently challenging the traditional norm in public administration, the community will achieve sustainability and a greater future.

Based upon the following Needs and Opportunities (Ideas and Obstacles)...

a. Create or establish an inventory of local government-owned land that could be developed.

b. Acceptance of online payments government-wide.

c. Understand that Athens-Clarke County no longer functions as a "small town" anymore and cannot keep operating as such.

d. More career ladder opportunities for employees along with greater retirement plan match.

e. Examine tiered water system payments for departmental functions.

f. Promote a neighborhood score card that allows for self-scoring of the services but then gives insight into the scoring conducted by the government and allows comparison of the two.

g. The local government needs to advocate for more community resources as distributed by the state and federal governments.

h. Intergovernmental collaboration is often seen as a weakness due to extenuated timelines, duplication of efforts, or conflicting goals.

i. Consolidation of government departments into more strategically located facilities that are modernized to meet growing space constraints and provide improved customer service.

j. Examine new public/private partnerships similar to the Washington Street Parking Deck.

k. Offer various incentive programs for employees including a program for which money saving ideas are rewarded. Additional conference attendance if presenting and marketing Athens-Clarke County. Perhaps flexible work schedules and free transit would help boost morale.

l. Explore opportunities to increase diversity within the government.

A goal has been identified...

- **_Goal:_** An open, inclusive, and responsive government that plans for the future and explores innovative ways to realize the community's vision. Government operations shall adapt to change and consistently challenge the traditional norms in public administration practices.

With the following implementation strategies...

1. *Strategy:* Actively encourage and facilitate citizen involvement in the planning and decision-making processes of our government.

2. *Strategy:* Proactively provide opportunities for bringing all residents into formal and informal service roles in order to reflect the diversity of the community.

3. *Strategy:* Create a process for promoting community awareness and involvement in land use issues affecting neighborhoods.

4. *Strategy:* Identify community planning districts to increase involvement in the planning and implementation of improvements at the neighborhood level.

5. *Strategy:* Involve public sector agencies in the community planning district process.

That supports the adoption of these policies...

A. *Policy:* Provide opportunities for citizens to learn about local government services, initiatives, and events.

B. *Policy:* Document and share our actions designed to cultivate a culture of innovation by piloting new ideas and adopting those with demonstrated benefits.

C. *Policy:* Improve internal efficiency and effectiveness.

D. *Policy:* Promote transparency through improved access to information.

E. *Policy:* Attract, retain, and reward talented and empowered employees.

F. *Policy:* Foster opportunities for citizens to engage with their local government.