

Mayor & Commission, and members of ACC MARC,

It is our opinion as the Mall Area TAD committee, to unanimously recommend to move forward with approval of this project.

First and foremost, the committee fully understands the size of this request is substantial. With that said, this project will take an aging, largely vacated facility, and will completely revitalize not only the immediate space, but also the surrounding West-Athens community and add to the tax register. The committee agrees that extensive measures were considered, and will be taken, to include Public Works recommendations to include the areas of infrastructure, housing opportunity, youth development and economic development. These, in more depth, are listed below.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE :**

- The current communities around the mall would benefit from the stormwater remediation. The retention pond built when the mall was built is broken, overgrown and no longer serving the need for the increased population. The proposed increased expansion would bring this to current codes. In addition, stormwater includes an excess capacity to include stormwater for adjacent properties.
- The intersection improvements with the three traffic circles will help to control the flow of cars at three intersections which currently experience near misses in these sometimes-congested entrances.
- Residents in the surrounding communities use the mall access roads to avoid getting onto Atlanta Highway. Currently, there are residents in the surrounding communities that use the mall area to walk and exercise. Having pedestrian crosswalks and elevated areas to cross over the roads will slow down the speed of the traffic.
- The transit station is needed and could help to further service areas which currently have no access to public transportation (i.e.: Stonehenge, Caterpillar area). It will be created by Athens Clarke County and the funds allocated on the request will be given to Transit to build their facility on the property.
- A bike and pedestrian path would benefit the community, as currently the mall is a destination for the surrounding community residents to walk. A designated path, separated from traffic lanes with trees and other barriers will make it safer for the pedestrians and bikers.
- The proposed increase of greenspace would improve the aesthetics of Atlanta Highway and bring current residents together to enjoy the amenities such as a playground and dog park.
- The intersection improvements appear to be addressed in two areas. The traffic circles, cross walks and street grid/intersection with a proposed \$15,283,667 and paving and curb/gutter for new street grid and layout for \$12,813,876.
- The development provides a holistic and multi-faceted brand experience, and each component plays an integrated role in the delivery of that experience, providing a forum for community-building neighborhood and family gathering.

- The infrastructure provides a competitive point of difference to retail expansion in Oconee County that is channeling retail dollars out of Athens-Clarke County.

## **HOUSING OPPORTUNITY**

- This development has agreed to provide 10% of its units for affordable housing, half of the target 20%. However, they are accommodating our request further by offering 10% of its units for 40 years instead of 20.
- This area's most recent AMI is \$82,000; much higher than surrounding areas.
- Housing will be tailored for families, without the standard bed/bath parity that is typically associated with student housing. They will also not exceed three-bedroom units, where student housing standards are usually four bedroom.
- Athens-Clarke County and the MSA are currently experiencing a housing shortage and the development provides critical housing options critical to address the expansion of trade and service jobs expanding in the area.
- The senior housing component addresses a critical shortage of options for aging Baby Boomers who are also growing in the Athens-Clarke County Region (10% of this senior housing is included in their affordable housing allotment.)

## **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

- A 6,100 square foot, customized space has been provided for the Boys and Girls Club of Athens, which provides a forum for youth development. If this is approved, they will be able to rent for a nominal fee (\$100 annually) for 30 years, or the length of term of this TAD agreement.
- The housing in this development is estimated to bring an additional 221 children to CCSD. One concern is the length of time of the proposed TAD Agreement and removing the education tax from this area. However, these students will be zoned to Cleveland Rd Elementary, which has historically been underutilized.
- The expanded retail, grounds and operations provide job options for older teens in the area.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- By providing a competitive shopping center inside of ACC, it should retain some lost sales tax and LOST/eSPLOST/TSPLOST/ SPLOST tax inside the community.
- There is no doubt that a development of this quality will bring additional value to the surrounding properties and therefore increasing the tax digest.
- Developers are local and have brought in local engineers. This will allow decisions and jobs to remain local and locally focused.
- The development brings jobs during both the construction-development phase and then expand with long-term operations and retail jobs.
- This provides an opportunity for residents to work and live in the same development.

- The proposed cost of the housing does not appear to be conducive for someone to rent an apartment and work as a server.
- The standard renter of a 3 bedroom will be paying \$2,600 in rent- requiring an approximate household income of \$62,400.
- The economic betterment creates the opportunity for new property and sales taxes.
- The development provides a catalyst for further TAD allocation district improvement and growth.
- Planned dynamics related to women-owned and minority-owned businesses support opportunity and future-wave economic development.
- Planned co-working space addresses a post pandemic operational model impacting metro Atlanta and satellite areas like ACC.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Zwirn, Acting Chair

Mark Kooyman, Secretary

Vincent Jolly, Sr.

Denise Ricks