

# Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission

# Strategic Plan 2022-2027



Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

## **Athens-Clarke County Charter Sec.8-5-1. Regarding Historic Preservation**

In support and furtherance of its findings and determination that the historical, cultural, and aesthetic heritage of Athens-Clarke County is among its most valued and important assets and that the preservation of this heritage is essential to the promotion of the health, prosperity, and general welfare of the people; in order to stimulate revitalization of the business districts and historic neighborhoods and to protect and enhance local historical and aesthetic attractions to tourists and thereby promote and stimulate business; to encourage the development of financial and other incentives at all levels of government and the private sector that will serve to promote the preservation of historic resources; in order to enhance the opportunities for federal tax relief of property owners under relevant provisions of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 allowing tax investment credits for rehabilitation of certified historic structures (26 U.S.C.A. section 191), the mayor and commission of Athens-Clarke County hereby declare it to be the purpose and intent of this chapter to establish a uniform procedure for use in providing for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, and works of art having a special historical, cultural, or aesthetic interest or value, in accordance with the provisions of the chapter.

# Overview

## Rationale

In August 2021, The Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission embarked on creating a 5-year strategic plan. The impetus was a desire by the current commission members to map an explicit path between the present and a vision of the future. We wanted to produce a document and an action plan that would shape and guide what the HPC is, what it does, and why it does it. We felt that the HPC could have a greater impact on our community, build wider coalitions with other organizations, and promote involvement among citizens through education, outreach, and advocacy.

The strategic plan that we developed is a practical action-oriented guide, based on an examination of internal and external factors, which directed goal-setting and resource allocation to achieve meaningful results over time.

## Strategic Planning Process

A notebook, entitled "Historic Preservation Commission Strategic Planning" was created by an HPC Commissioner and distributed to all HPC members. A copy of this notebook is available at the Planning Department Office. The notebook included the following:

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## Outline and Initial Timeline

1. Overview of Strategic Planning Process, Purpose, and Goals; July 2021
2. Organizational History; August 2021
3. Writing Mission and Vision Statements; September 2021
4. SWOT Analysis: Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats; October 2021
5. Defining Goals: **WHAT** Are Our Short and Long Term Goals?; November 2021
6. Defining Objectives: **WHY** Are These Goals Important?; December 2021
7. Reviewing and Refining Goals and Objectives; January 2022
8. Defining Strategies: **HOW** Do We Achieve Our Goals?; February 2022
9. Assigning Responsibilities: **WHO** is in Charge of Each Goal?; March 2022
10. Creating a Timeline: **WHEN** do we want to achieve each of our goals?; March 2022
11. Communication Strategies
12. Approval from the Mayor & Commission
13. Reviewing our Process and Creating Next Steps
14. Creating a Way to Evaluate the Plan

## Summaries of Meetings Held

### August 30, 2021

- Purpose and Intent of HPC Strategic Planning
- Review and discussion of the Ordinance
- Need for cultural overlays
- Need for greater African-American community and neighborhood involvement

### September 30, 2021

- Discuss HPC's Mission and Purpose
- Discuss what the HPC actually does
- Discuss who we serve and how - what would Athens look like if there were no HPC?
- What do we want to accomplish over the next 5 years?

## **October 26, 2021**

- Continue discussion of mission and vision statements

## **November 30, 2021**

- Mission and Vision statements are formalized
- Vote will happen after the new year on final wording

## **March 30, 2022**

- Reviewed and Approved Mission and Vision Statements
- Conducted SWOT analysis
- Discussed partners to Include for writing goals and an action plan

## **April 28, 2022**

- Reviewed HPC SWOT analysis summary
- Goals Brainstorming – HPC and Partners
- Who else should we invite to collaborate?

## **May 26, 2022**

- Complete goal consideration checklist
- Add goals from participants not on list
- Discuss objectives (rationale) for each goal
- Assign goals to HPC and other collaborators

Subsequent to the May meeting, it was decided to postpone further discussions until the fall of 2022. Walker wrote up the bones of an action plan based on HPC member and partner input and distributed it via Google Drive. By October 2022, input had been received from several members and it was discussed at a regular HPC meeting to receive any final input by members for tentative approval at the November 2022 meeting. Walker completed the draft of the Action Plan, distributed it, along with this narrative, to the HPC, partners and Planning Staff for a final vote to approve the documents to be held at the December 2022 regular HPC meeting. It will then be shared with the Mayor and Commission.

It was suggested that rather than forming a separate committee to oversee the implementation of the plan, a separate agenda item would be included at each regular monthly meeting of the HPC to discuss where we are and what needs to be done during the upcoming month or months. In this way, we can complete and/or modify items as needed.

All of the minutes of the meetings are available for review upon request and will be maintained digitally in the Planning Department.

## **Who Was Involved**

At the time of the inception of this process, these were the seven members of the HPC:

- Jeff Bishop, *Chairperson*
- Heather Fletcher, *Vice-Chairperson*
- Joanna Beckman
- Bobbie Epting
- Worth VanLinden
- Ellen Walker
- Thomas White

Representatives from the ACC Planning Department:

- Amber Eskew
- Bruce Lonnee

We also included representatives of Historic Athens:

- Tommy Valentine, *Executive Director*
- Hope Igelhart, *Director of Engagement and African American Heritage*

Also participating were:

- Missy Brandt-Wilson; *former HPC member*
- Scott Nesbit, *Associate Professor of Digital Humanities in the College of Environment and Design*

While we invited other community members and groups, the above individuals were the primary participants. We continued to reach out to a wider group of citizens, and will be happy to receive input and participation by any and all community members who are interested in historic preservation, perhaps including any of the following:

- First AME
- Neighborhood leaders
- Historic District residents
- Athens Historical Society
- ACC Commission Member
- School Board Member

# The Process

## Components of a Strategic Plan

There are several key components that are usually included in a plan; mission statement, vision statement, internal/external assessment, goals, objectives, and action plans. Additionally, there are specific steps to be taken to (a) develop and implement the plan, and (b) track and monitor progress.

Strategic planning is an essential tool and should be adaptable. Strategic planning takes a long-range approach, but can use regular reviews and updates.

### How We Developed the Plan

We did not take a lot of time to look to the past, but recognize that it is important to learn from what has come before, what has worked, what has been achieved and what has not been achieved and why.

- We read the ordinance and bylaws and indicated where we have deviated from them or have not fully taken advantage of them. We made note of where we might want to make some changes.
- We reviewed past reports, minutes, summaries, and actions to gain a better understanding of how the HPC has functioned over the years and what goals, if any, were set.

### Historic Preservation Ordinance

Created on Nov 4, 1986.

Implemented Jan 1, 1987.

Amended:

12-8-1992

8-3-1993

7-2-1996

7-6-1999

3-2-2004

6-6-2006

2-6-2007

6-3-2008

4-7-2009

4-6-2010

12-6-2011

2-4-2014

## Writing a Mission and Vision Statement

We spent quite a few meetings crafting a mission and vision statement for the HPC.

A mission statement is a concise description of why an organization exists, what its overall goal is, the service it provides, its primary customers or market, and its geographical region of operation. It should communicate the organization's reason for being and its direction.

A mission statement should drive the organization. It should motivate a team to consistently advance toward a common goal. Every decision that is made, should be tied to this statement.

### Questions we considered when drafting the HPC's mission statement:

- What is the HPC's purpose?
- Why does the HPC exist?
- What do we do?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- Whom do we serve?
- How do we serve them?
- What would Athens look like without the HPC?

### Vision Statement

A vision statement describes the future and creates a mental image of the ideal state that the organization wishes to achieve. It is inspirational and aspirational. It is meant to be a clear, definitive statement of what an organization wants to accomplish, and what the world will look like once they have accomplished their goals. Vision statements are often written in the present tense, but still serve the future of the organization.

### Questions that guided the creation of the HPC's vision statements included:

- What are we aspiring to achieve?
- What problem are we solving for the greater good?
- Who and what are we inspiring to change?
- What does success look like?
- If we achieved all strategic goals, what would we look like 5-10 years from now?

## Our Mission

The mission of the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission is to serve as a steward to protect and preserve the tangible history of Athens. The HPC is charged with safeguarding the rich cultural and architectural contributions of our community.

## Our Vision

The vision of the ACC HPC is to engage with our community to promote an appreciation of historic preservation. We will achieve this by:

- guiding future development that is sensitive to our collective and individual histories
- identifying new areas that would benefit from local historic designation
- providing education on the economic and community benefits of historic preservation

**The mission and vision statements were approved March 30, 2022 by the HPC.**

## SWOT Analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Before developing a plan of action, we conducted a thorough inventory of the HPC's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The path we chart to our strategic goals must reflect organizational capabilities and should avoid areas where the organization is less well prepared. Through this inventory we identified problem spots in the HPC where improvement may be necessary before a strategic plan can be successful.

### Strengths - Internal

Strengths refer to what we do well. What do we want to build on?

### Weaknesses - Internal

Weaknesses refer to any limitations an organization faces in developing or implementing a strategy.

### Opportunities - External

Opportunities are situations that exist but must be acted on if the HPC is to benefit from them. What do we want to capitalize on?

### Threats - External

Threats refer to external conditions or barriers that may prevent the HPC from reaching its objectives.

Once we completed the strengths and weaknesses chart, we made a list of the top strengths and weaknesses of the HPC and we used them to create the strategic plan. The results of our SWOT analysis can be seen on the next page.

# ACC HPC SWOT Analysis 2022

<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In depth knowledge of neighborhood narratives. (1)</li><li>• All volunteer; willing volunteers. (2)</li><li>• Athens; a sensitive, educated populace; desirable history. (3)</li><li>• Good county staff; supportive, knowledgeable, staff drives the agenda (4)</li><li>• Buy in from County Commission. (1)</li><li>• HPC Members are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sensitive to the Guidelines. (1)</li><li>• Vote their conscience. (1)</li><li>• Care about our community (2)</li><li>• Are thoughtful, open-minded, enthusiastic and have a passion for the work. (3)</li><li>• Respect each other (1)</li><li>• Work well together with a broad spectrum of perspectives and expertise (1)</li><li>• Knowledgeable about Athens individually (1)</li><li>• Workable commission size (n=7) (1)</li><li>• Satisfactory “work” load (1)</li><li>• Good term lengths and overlap (1)</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited power of enforcement. (1)</li><li>• Limited oversight of projects after COA approval. Staff stretched too thin. (1)</li><li>• All volunteer. (1)</li><li>• Lack of partnerships. (2)</li><li>• We don't have enough time together to talk about item not on agenda. (1)</li><li>• Limited training. (4)</li><li>• No budget. (2)</li><li>• Lack of diversity, both in terms of citizens from different backgrounds and in terms of expertise (7)</li><li>• Need more interaction with developers.</li><li>• History keep moving forward</li><li>• Decisions can be overturned by the County Commission.</li><li>• Time and money issues for staff and applicant (2)</li><li>• Potential for group think (1)</li><li>• Not much public outreach or education.</li><li>• Uninformed applicants can cause friction, unpleasant results for property owners.</li><li>• Quorum - need back up plan (1)</li><li>• Some guidelines are vague and difficult to interpret. (2)</li></ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need to add conservation/environmental overlays. (1)</li><li>• Tons of community organizations to engage with (1)</li><li>• Bringing together the 2 “sides” of Athens (1)</li><li>• Engage with the missing voices. (1)</li><li>• Outreach - recruiting members based on networking (1)</li><li>• Create a question list for HPC interviews (1)</li><li>• Adjust downtown guidelines to accommodate more modern uses (1)</li><li>• Collaborate with other dedicated community members on other boards. (1)</li><li>• Need more partnerships: (6)</li><li>• Better coordination and communication between and among historic districts. (1)</li><li>• Education of members: attend conferences, tours, UGA archives, etc. (1)</li><li>• Smart development (1)</li><li>• Zoning and Code Enforcement. (2)</li><li>• Enhance community pride. (1)</li></ul>	<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decisions can be overturned. (1)</li><li>• Population growth: UGA, student, non-student (3)</li><li>• Mayor and commission interview process (1)</li><li>• Building inspections of COA properties (2)</li><li>• NIMBYism (Not in my back yard). (1)</li><li>• Developers and development: (6)</li><li>• Lack of community buy-in. (3)</li><li>• Lack of education for students about HP (1)</li><li>• Game-Day houses (2)</li><li>• Town-Gown divide. (1)</li><li>• Conflict of interest between municipal code and the HPC and neighborhood residents. (1)</li><li>• Overstep our boundaries. (1)</li><li>• Property values and the housing market. (2)</li><li>• Misunderstanding that historic properties are not energy efficient or have green features. (1)</li><li>• Cost of Historic Preservation (1)</li><li>• Silo communities (1)</li><li>• Historic Athens is too weak. (1)</li><li>• Designation could lead to stagnation. (1)</li><li>• Time availability of members (1)</li><li>• There will always be people who don't read, follow or understand the guidelines (1)</li></ul>

## Goals and Objectives

After we completed the SWOT analysis, the next step in our strategic planning was to determine specific changes and new developments for the HPC. We invited other individuals, representing other organizations, to join us in beginning the process of writing up goals and objectives. We considered both short and long range needs. We considered what were our immediate concerns, what were our current plans that we could begin implementing today, and what are our visions for the future of the HPC.

At the April 2022 meeting we came up with the following list of ideas of the greatest needs for historic preservation in Athens. This was an all-encompassing list and was not intended to all be included in our final first 5-year plan, but may be helpful for future HPC strategic plan reviews or updates to the current plan.

- **Cultural conservation overlay districts (3)**
  - Culture is implied but not specified
- **Education/Outreach (13)**
  - Citizen advocacy group
  - Design a program to educate Athens citizens on HP; Deeper understanding of importance of HP, what the HPC does, etc.
  - Educate Property owners and residents within existing historic districts—guidelines, benefits of designation, opportunity to serve on HPC.
  - Increased resources for government and NGO's regarding HP
  - Engage citizens through education and programming (reduce stress/anxiety about the process of designation or COA's)
  - Increased incentives for HP for both public and private owners
  - Owner occupants vs developers—engage and connect
  - Greater educated electorate and elected officials about HP
- **Protect threatened neighborhoods (African-American, East Athens, etc.) (2)**
- **Facilitate sensitive infill (1)**
- **Stronger codes and better enforcement (1)**
- **Suburban district (1)**
- **Address "Yimbyism" (1)**
- **Big new project that successfully combines**

## HP values and community needs (e.g., Classic center retaining the Fire Station) (1)

- **Realtor/Developer Education (4)**
  - On guidelines
  - Meet with developers and realtors
  - Better awareness of when in an Historic District
  - Design a Welcome Packet
- **Update all guidelines (3)**
  - Clarify
  - Greater specifics
  - Better access and awareness of contents
- **County-wide historic resource analysis (40+ years) (1)**
- **Demolition by neglect ordinance with enforcement (1)**
- **HPC training and certification (2)**
- **Greater collaboration of HPC with UGA, HA and other historic organizations (Historic Athens now meets with staff the Monday before every Wednesday meeting) (2)**
- **Steady and reliable flow of interns for the Planning Department dedicated to the HPC (1)**

## Identify Long-Term and Short-Term Priorities

Our long-term and short-term strategic priorities contain the following:

- Congruence with mission
- Measurable results
- Fills a need not provided by another entity
- Provides an educational value for citizens
- Demonstrated need (documented current demands or predicted future demands for service)
- Increases HPC's visibility
- Shares resources; (complements) existing programs
- Supports collaborative efforts with other organizations
- Benefits outweigh or at the very least equal costs
- Provides a community service

## Prioritizing Goals

The following table shows the work we did to focus, prioritize, and adopt our goals for this first strategic plan. It was further refined when the action plan was created. It is our hope that this broad and comprehensive list will be useful for future HPC's.

## GOALS CONSIDERATION LIST Final Tally 6/6/2022

	1-yr	5-yr	Partners	Back Burner	N/A
<b>EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY</b>					
Put together community forums on local preservation efforts			X		
Write regular articles on historic and cultural resources for local publications					X
Develop an educational curriculum about Athens cultural and historic resources deliverable in short segments in the community to enhance community pride					X
Plan community-wide events to celebrate historic and cultural resources					X
Design ways to engage the general public in the preservation process	X				
Educate Property owners and residents within existing historic districts; guidelines, benefits of designation, the COA process, opportunity to serve on HPC.	X				
Community wide appreciation for the past built and natural environments and resources with an eye for fresh design and use. Find ways to help residents appreciate what is here before it's being threatened.	X				
Distribute Annual Report more widely	X				
<b>HISTORIC DISTRICT AWARENESS BY NEW OWNERS &amp; PUBLIC</b>					
Design and distribute a Welcome Packet	X				
Realtor/Developer education program on guidelines	X				
Increase incentives for HP for both public and private owners					X
Better awareness of when in an Historic District. TSPLOST project: Sign toppers			X		
Ideas for getting info to homeowners/potential buyers about historic districts in Athens and mechanism for acknowledgment					X
Link between utility connection and notification that the property purchased is in an historic district. You get a welcome packet from the HPC.				X	
Deed flags – add to deed so when a realtor pulls it, it is obvious and must be acknowledged by the buyer.		X			
Create information and database that is a triggering detail for historic district sales.					X
<b>DEVELOPMENT, ZONING, CODE, and LAND USE ISSUES</b>					
Identify properties and trends for use by citizens, developers, commissioners					X
Help develop a larger cohesive zoning to respect the character of the Athens area					X
Engage more with county code enforcement				X	
Identify those neighborhoods that are threatened by real estate speculation and gentrification	X				
Address district erosion due to real estate speculators and development pressure				X	
Address effects of many absentee landlords in our community				X	
Address infill requirements and restrictions				X	
Integrate historic preservation values into land use and planning		X			
Address the complexity of heir's property and its impact on resources					X
Support smart development				X	
Strengthen Zoning and Code Enforcement as regards to HP districts and properties	X				
Future potential designations included on land use maps	X				
Owner occupants vs developers—engage and connect	—				X

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS and NETWORKS

Build more collaborative relationships with other community and government boards	X			
Include leaders from all the historic districts or the landmarks when guidelines might need to be tweaked, or when issues come up with these kinds of things like game day houses or apartments in the houses that are supposed to be single family or whatever it is that doesn't come under zoning.	X			
Hold annual meeting with other HPCs in state	X			
Spearhead the national-to-local historic district efforts by collaborating with the Georgia Historical Society and other orgs.				X
Greater collaboration of HPC with HA and other historic organizations	X			
Work on a positive "town-gown" relationship, more buy-in from UGA				X
Communicate/collaborate with other college towns that have historic preservation goals & districts		X		
Create a "customer service" survey for property owners who have come before the HPC		X		

## RELATIONSHIP WITH ACC COMMISSION

Engage more with the county commission; create a better feedback loop	X			
Hold periodic big picture discussions between the HPC and Commission that include zoning issues and to discuss current and potential future plans for Athens.	X			
Assess city/county commitment to and vision for historic preservation	X			
Encourage more participation by ACC commission in the work of the HPC				X
Encourage ACC commissioners to attend trainings that new HPC commissioners are attending				X

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE, CHARTER, and GUIDELINES

Ordinance needs teeth; address need for consequences for non-compliance				X
Update guidelines to include more details; clarify, greater specifics	X			
Redesign guidelines to simplify, update, make more user friendly	X			
Better access to, distribution of guidelines; make easier to find online	X			
Better understanding of how to make changes to the ordinance (e.g., Ordinance specifies HPC include a downtown business owner)		X		
Better define mechanism by which the HPC would perform some duties allowed in the ordinance				X
Reexamine the Ordinance's "Big Net"				X
"Abuse of discretion" better defined				X
Demolition by neglect ordinance with enforcement				X
Create mechanism for stronger codes and better enforcement when COAs are issued		X		
Mandate that designation eligible sites or structures be renewed every 10 to 15 years				X
Further define "Objects and Works of Art" in ordinance		X		

<b>NEW DISTRICTS and PROPERTIES</b>					
Identify, assess, interpret, protect, and conserve historic and cultural resources, especially in minority areas and among the most vulnerable	X		X		
Be more proactive in identifying assets; areas that would benefit from becoming designated local historic districts or cultural conservation districts				X	
Prepare an historical record of the culturally significant neighborhoods and the people who lived there			X		
County-wide historic resource analysis (40+ years)			X		
Expand or add new districts. E.g., Normaltown, Cars Hill, Newtown, Whitehall, (go outside the loop)				X	
Inventory of mid-century properties			X		
Research potential for a new suburban district					X
Work on a big new project that successfully combines HP values and community needs (e.g., Classic center retaining the Fire Station)					X
<b>STRENGTHING THE HPC</b>					
All HPC members should attend at least 1 training module through the National Trust, the state, or UGA's HP program; get "certification."		X			
Come up with a list of questions, qualifications, suggestions for the CC to use in the interview process, including recruitment ideas for each commissioners' district.					X
Develop a recruitment plan; Need greater diversity and variety on the HPC; ways to reach out to residents of the historic districts and other places where interested citizens might be, to apply to/join the HPC.					X
Address vote ties, quorum, failure to act laws					X
Develop a strategic plan	X				
HPC members should attend conferences, tours, UGA archives, etc. as new members					X
Encourage donations for HPC projects					X
Create a budget for the HPC		X			
Identify chairs of committees; specify standing committees					X
Consider implementing consent agendas procedures					X
Outreach - Share the good news: the HPC tends to approve 90%+ of COA's.					X
<b>STRENGTHENING CURRENT DISTRICTS &amp; LANDMARKS</b>					
Mechanisms for restoring properties, including property owned by ACC					X
Document founding members of historic preservation in Athens					X
Adjust downtown guidelines to accomodate more modern uses		X			
Address the issue that culture is implied but not specified in the guidelines					X
Better coordination and communication between and among historic districts		X			
Create a citizen advocacy group for HP designations					X
Facilitate sensitive infill				X	
Contribute to sustainability and economic development through historic preservation					X
Address use of vacated properties, Taylor Grady House, Milledge Ave house, etc.					X

<b>ADDRESS LACK OF DIVERSITY and NEED FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION</b>					
Need to add conservation/environmental/cultural overlay districts	X				
Bringing together the 2 “sides” of Athens; engage with the missing voices, include underrepresented groups in HP					X
African-American community engagement			X		
Protect threatened neighborhoods					X
Address “Yimbyism” and possible effects (gentrification)					X
Identify and promote cultural resources					X
<b>SUPPORTING PLANNING STAFF</b>					
Recruit volunteers					X
Research and apply for grants					X
Take on some of staff duties and responsibilities					X
Steady and reliable flow of interns for the Planning Department dedicated to the HPC		X			
Greater education about the process of working with staff on projects.	X				
Support addition of more HPC staff	X				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL and NON-HP SPECIFIC CONCERNS</b>					
New guidelines for the inclusion of Public Art (Murals, Art Walk, etc.)	X				
Include trees in preservation		X			
Greening of historic preservation, built and natural resources; include conservation.					X
Affordable housing					X

### Agreed on a Small Number of Broad Goals

Our goals are focused on outcomes and address the most critical issues facing the HPC and citizens of Athens. The HPC prioritized its goals and selected the top three to five goals for the plan, for both the short-term and the long-term.

Our goals clearly state what, when, how, and who, and they are specifically measurable. They address what we need to do to achieve our strategic objectives.

### Develop Measurable Objectives

For each goal, the HPC has measurable objectives that will be used to determine if the goal is being met. Objectives are not another goal or strategy statement but a quantifiable measure or indicator. The HPC will track measurable objectives to help demonstrate performance improvements.

- Measurable objectives are typically stated as “X as of Date to Y by Date,” where “X” is the baseline performance and “Y” is the target performance.
- Measurable objectives show how the HPC will be better off and strive to be “SMART” (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Our goals specify “what” we want to do and our objectives state “why” we are doing it.

### Formulating Strategies to Reach Goals

The HPC looked at the short and long term goals we identified and determined the specific steps we need to take towards these goals. The issues identified in our SWOT analysis guided our strategy formulation.

We listed the key tasks (strategies) that we will have to undertake in order to accomplish each goal. These tasks are specific, tangible actions to guide our work and track progress. This is the action plan part of the strategic plan.

## Identify, Develop and Refine Strategies

For each strategy, we considered the resources required and impacts on the HPC and the Planning Department.

Questions included:

- Is there a cost to implement?
- What are the benefits of implementation? ...to citizens? ...to ACC? ...to the State?
- How will this strategy be funded (e.g., county, state, federal, grant funds, other)?
- Do we have the human resources to achieve our goal?
- What are the technology implications and what IT projects (current, planned and proposed) support the strategy?
- Are there impacts on space and facilities?

For each applicable strategy, we considered the relevant information from the following categories that are necessary to be successful:

- Budgetary
- Staffing Implications
- Facilities
- Information Technology
- Partners
- Timeline

## The Action Plan

An action plan is a detailed description of the key strategies used to implement each objective. Our first 5-year action plan can be found at the end of this document.

## Responsibilities and Timeline

Once goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and outlined, we assigned responsibilities to individuals, committees or entities along with a reasonable timeline to accomplish those goals.

It may be necessary to create new committees or to assign projects to individuals from other organizations to maximize our ability to complete tasks.

## Communicating the Plan

Successful implementation of the strategic plan depends on effective communication.

Internally, the strategic plan will be communicated to all organizational levels. HPC members and Planning Department staff need to have a clear understanding of the plan and their roles in it. A “perfect” plan has little value if it is not widely understood and accepted. It must form the basis for daily action throughout the entities involved. Some ideas for improving internal communications about the plan include:

- Talk about the plan at staff meetings.
- Write articles about the plan for internal newsletters.
- Distribute copies of the full plan to staff and partners.
- Prepare a condensed brochure version of the plan to share with all stakeholders.
- Display the mission statement in a prominent location online and in publications.
- Recognize progress on achieving the plan’s goals and objectives at meetings, in newsletters, and at other department events. Celebrate accomplishments.

Externally, the strategic plan should be communicated to individuals and organizations that have an interest in, or an effect on, the HPC’s programs (e.g., the M&C, local government, interest groups and the public). Various marketing approaches will be used to communicate information about the plan to those outside the department to help build awareness of and support for the plan. We hope to utilize support from the Public Information Office who might help develop marketing strategies. However, we can accomplish the same purposes by utilizing some of the following ideas:

- Put the mission statement on letterhead and meeting minutes.
- Include articles about the plan in annual reports and newsletters.
- Explain the plan at community public meetings.
- Issue press releases with highlights concerning the plan.
- Prepare a condensed version of the plan in an attractive brochure and distribute it to interested persons and organizations.

- Reference the plan in speeches to the local government, private sector and community groups.
- Provide media interviews.
- Give presentations at state preservation conferences.
- Produce a video or special newsletter on the strategic plan.

## Monitoring the Plan

A strategic plan needs to be adaptive to survive changing or unanticipated conditions. Over the life of our strategic plan, we may discover that some of the underlying assumptions of our strategy are flawed or incomplete. Often the organization's mission and vision may remain the same while objectives and goals will need to be revised or updated. When this happens, we will need to either adapt our strategy or begin the process over again. Some organizations can maintain a strategic plan for a year or longer, while others have to respond to internal or external changes more frequently. We are prepared to switch strategies as necessary by doing the following:

- Review the strategic plan, noting accomplishments and disappointments.
- Assess any changes in the environment since the last strategic planning meeting.
- If necessary, make changes in core strategies and long-term and short-term priorities.

## Bi-Annual Checklist

Never lose sight of the fact that strategic plans are guidelines, not rules. Every six months or so, we will evaluate our strategy execution and plan implementation by asking these key questions:

- Will our goals be achieved within the time frame of the plan? If not, why?
- Should the deadlines be modified? (Before we modify deadlines, figure out why we're behind schedule.)
- Are our goals and action items still realistic?
- Should the HPC's focus be changed to put more emphasis on achieving our goals?
- Should our goals be changed? (Be careful about making these changes – know why efforts aren't achieving the goals before changing the goals.)
- What can be gathered from an adaptation to improve future planning activities?

## Why Track Our Goals?

- Ownership: Having a stake and responsibility in the plan makes you feel part of it and leads you to drive your goals forward.
- Culture: Successful plans tie tracking and updating goals into organizational culture.
- Implementation: If you don't review and update your goals, they are just good intentions.
- Accountability: Accountability and high visibility help drive change. This means that each measure, objective, data source and initiative must have an owner.
- Empowerment: Changing goals from "In Progress" to "Complete" just feels good!

## Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Commission Strategic Plan 2022-25

GOAL (What)	OBJECTIVE (Why)	STRATEGY (How)	RESPONSIBILITY (Who)	TIMELINE (When)
1. Design ways to engage the general public in the preservation process.	Citizens who are aware of what HP is, will appreciate why it is important to our community.	Work with HA to design ways to reach previously unengaged citizens. Tabling at events and festivals, articles in local publications.	HPC & Historic Athens (HA)-need point person from the HPC to initiate discussions.	Begin Spring 2023 and ongoing
2. Educate Property Owners and residents within historic districts; guidelines, benefits of designation, the COA process, opportunity to serve on the HPC.	Citizens who currently live in historic districts are not always aware of the guidelines and procedures of the HPC.	Drop off flyers w/ a QR code and bit.ly link to the documents we wish to share. Include in welcome packet moving forward.	Education Committee to design. All HPC members to contribute. Document to be created as soon as the website is better organized.	Summer 2023
3. Foster community-wide appreciation for HP. Develop ways to help residents appreciate what is here before it's threatened.	Garnering more support and greater appreciation for Athens' history and resources, will strengthen our community as a whole.	Distribute more widely the map of all landmarks and districts. Post at Planning Office and at HA. Make the new publication "Local Historic Districts and Landmark Properties" more widely available. Partner with HA to participate in more local outreach.	HPC will design the new publication. Historic Athens will provide input for wider distribution. See if HA will add it to their website as a pdf link. Planning Department staff will review, edit and pay for printing of up to 50 physical copies to be placed in various locations around Athens.	Begin Jan 2023 and ongoing
4. Distribute Annual Report more widely.	Informing the public of the work of the HPC is an important part of our mission.	Send out on NN1 listserves. Place physical copies at Welcome Center, HA office, Hargrett Library, Athens Historical Society, ACC Planning Department, ACC Public Library, etc.	Education Committee creates the annual report and all HPC members agree to take copies to at least one designated location. Planning Department will pay for printing.	January each year

<b>Historic District Awareness by New Owners and the Public</b>			
1. Design and distribute Welcome Packet	Helping owners understand and appreciate living in an historic district will make the process of COAs go more smoothly	Education Committee will decide on what will go into the packet. Need printing budget, a place to store and send out packets from. Drop off to realtors who request it. Identify realtors who will help us track sales of homes in historic districts.	Education Committee - Joana will design. Heather will be liaison with realtors. All HPC members will distribute to designated locations. Planning Department will pay for printing.
2. Realtor/Developer Education program on guidelines and districts	Realtors and Developers need to understand the role that HP plays in Athens and how to communicate that to prospective buyers.	Recruit local agents to act as a liaison/point of contact for Athens Association of REALTORS & builders. Provide all area realtors with the welcome packet.	Education Committee (Heather as lead) &/OR Historic Athens Former HPC member Jeff Bishop is willing to help with this, too. Heather to contact him about the process.
<b>Development, Zoning, Code, and Land Use Issues</b>			
1. Identify those neighborhoods that are threatened by real estate speculation and gentrification.	Working with zoning and land use maps to identify threatened neighborhoods will help inform and get ahead of any changes made to those areas.	Communicate with Historic Athens, Neighborhood Leaders, local RE agents regarding neighborhood trends. Create a committee of reps from each of these groups to meet at least biannually.	Historic Athens, Education Committee, Neighborhood Leaders. Need point person to begin coordination of committee.
2. Strengthen zoning and code enforcement as regards historic districts and properties	Making sure that properties in historic districts fully comply with existing codes will help keep those properties intact. It will also help the HPC be better advocates for any zoning changes or updates.	HPC members should be more aware of and involved in the zoning process by attending Hearings Board and Planning Commission meetings and having a seat at the table when zoning changes are proposed and made.	Identify one HPC member who would be willing to be a liaison to the ACC Hearings and Planning Boards. Attend meetings specifically addressing zoning issues and changes.
3. Future potential designations included on land use maps	Advocating for preserving neighborhoods or structures in future land use will help us keep ahead of development pressures.	An HPC member should attend meetings and have a seat at the table when land use changes are proposed and made.	Find out when the next land use plan is to be updated.

Building Relationships/Networks			
1. Build more collaborative relationships with other community and government boards	More communication and cooperation among the various ACC boards will foster greater cohesiveness.	Each HPC member should reach out to a “sister” commission or government board that have some overlap with the mission or purpose of the HPC and attend meetings or establish a dialogue for cooperation.	Each HPC member selects from one of the following boards or authorities: Zoning, Planning, Hearings, Cultural Affairs, Downtown Development, Tree Council to act as a liaison. Report back to the full HPC commission.
2. Include leaders from historic districts and landmarks to update guidelines or when issues arise within those districts.	Creating a network of citizens within historic districts will strengthen those neighborhoods, both in terms of appreciation for where they live and build community.	One member of the HPC and one representative from HA determine who the NNL or neighborhood leaders are for each of the historic districts, contact them via email, invite them to join a sub-committee dedicated to coordinating between and among districts and providing feedback to the HPC on guidelines and address issues related to being an historic district.	One representative from the HPC with one representative from Historic Athens - coordinate with the planning department on logistics.
3. Initiate regular conversations with other HPCs in the state.	The ACC HPC can learn a lot from other HPCs. Sharing issues, successes and goals always broadens perspectives.	Host &/or participate in state/ regional events. Compile a list of all the state HPCs, generate a list-serv, initiate conversations, inform other HPCs of ACC's issues and events.	A member of the HPC will take the lead on being the moderator.
4. Greater collaboration of HPC with Historic Athens and other historic organizations	Reaching out to community groups who have an interest in historic or cultural preservation and appreciation will create a stronger community of citizens who value Athens' history and culture.	Set quarterly or biannual meetings with HA and other local Athens area groups interested in historic preservation. Build wider coalitions with neighborhood leaders.	After compiling the list (by Fall 2023), initiate biannual communication.
		HPC & Historic Athens alternate hosting wider community events for groups and citizens.	Establish a schedule of regular meetings by Spring 2023

Relationship with ACC Commission			
1. Engage more with the county commission; create a better feedback loop.	While commissioners have a lot on their plates, the HPC needs to be better advocates for our work.	HPC Chair or Vice Chair attend 1 M&C meeting per year to give update on the work of the HPC and to discuss issues or provide suggestions regarding the ordinance, the HPC application and review processes, and programs.	Chair or vice chair of the HPC will ask the Mayor to include them on a work session or other non-voting meeting at least once/year.
2. Hold periodic big picture discussions between the HPC, the historic preservation community, and Commission that include zoning issues and to discuss current and potential future plans for Athens. Assess city/county commitment to and vision for historic preservation	More communication is always valuable when part of a large government. Establishing regular connections will foster greater appreciation of ACC for the work of the HPC.	HPC and Historic Athens holds a forum and invites ACC Commission members, NNI leaders, citizens. Create an annual conference to bring all interested parties to the table to discuss future designations, individual landmarks, etc.	Historic Athens to facilitate and HPC and planning Department to support.
Historic Preservation Ordinance, Charter, Guidelines			
1. Redesign Guidelines to simplify, update, make more user friendly	The Guidelines are at the core of what we do and how we make decisions. Making them easier to understand is critical to our work.	Education Committee to edit for simplification and clarity. Planning Department will add to the ACC website.	Education Committee - Ellen will design the new layout and get them printed for HPC members. Additional copies will be made available in the same places as the annual report. Planning Department will pay for printing.
2. Update all guidelines to include more details; clarify, add greater specifics (This should include downtown and public art)	All documents such as our guidelines need to be revised and updated periodically to keep pace with changing times.	HPC drafts update, presents to staff for comments, then gives to the M&C for approval.	HPC & Planning Department Staff
3. Better access to, distribution of guidelines, make easier to find online.	We need to do a better job of getting the guidelines into the hands of those who most need to understand what is there and why.	Link guidelines to HPC landing page. Need better organization of HPC maps, guidelines, forms, processes, etc.	Planning staff to work with ACC technology, PIO, with specific requests from the HPC
			Initiate Spring 2023

<b>New Districts and Properties</b>			
1. Identify, assess, interpret, protect, and conserve historic and cultural resources, especially in minority areas and among the most vulnerable populations	Work with HA, the Historical Society, and the Athens Land Trust to begin a more comprehensive documentation of culturally and historically significant resources, especially in the African-American community.	Collaboration with Historic Athens, Athens Historical Society, Athens Land Trust	Initiate Fall 2023 and ongoing
1. Develop a strategic plan	Best practices dictate that all organizations have a road map for moving forward, meeting goals, having the greatest impact on the community.	<b>Strengthen the HPC</b>  Beginning in the summer of 2021 hold regular meetings to write mission and vision statements, define goals, write an action plan.	Whole HPC, HA and other community members. Planning Department staff to provide input.  Vote Dec 2022; implement 2023
1. Need to add conservation/environmental/cultural overlay districts; Specify what culture means in the context of historic preservation	We recognize that it is not possible, or desirable, to make Athens a museum to historic preservation. However, there are things we can do to protect cultural resources and foster greater conservation of our history with other tools.	<b>Address Lack of Diversity and Need for Cultural Preservation</b>  Research other communities in Georgia and outside of Georgia who have designed and implemented cultural overlay districts. Reach out to these communities to see how they went about creating them and implementing guidelines.	Designation Committee with HA and Planning Department Staff. Need point person to initiate information gathering and communication with other HPCs who have successfully created cultural overlays and/or districts.  Begin research and discussions by the end of 2023.

<b>Support Planning Staff</b>			
1. Support the addition of more Planning staff	The Planning Department is overworked and understaffed. To achieve everything they are asked to do, they need more support.	HPC Chair will write a letter to the Mayor and Commission.	HPC Chair Spring 2023
2. Greater education about the process of working with staff on projects	Our greatest "secret" is that working with staff and doing concept reviews are two of the best things owners can do before needing a hearing by the HPC. Getting the word out about these two things would benefit both citizens and the HPC.	Education Committee to write information to go in the welcome packet. Include note in each annual report about concept reviews and how to work with staff, what to expect when applying for a COA, etc.	Education Committee - need point person to volunteer. Early Spring 2023
<b>Environmental and non-HPC Specific Concerns</b>			
1. New guidelines for the inclusion of public art	As Athens expands its reputation as a "creative" city, more issues of public art in historic districts and on or around landmark buildings will come before the HPC. Writing some guidelines will benefit all parties involved.	First check w/ ATL, Savannah, Macon HPCs to see what they have done in this area. Summarize for the whole HPC and make recommendations. Meet with the ACAC regularly.	HPC, Athens Cultural Affairs Commission. Ellen will take the initiative on this and report back to the HPC. Summer 2023



**Athens-Clarke County  
Unified Government  
Athens, Georgia**

**Kelly Girtz**  
Mayor

**Blaine Williams**  
Manager

**Brad Griffin**  
Planning Director

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[accgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation](http://accgov.com/208/Historic-Preservation)

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