

Mayor Kelly Girtz and Athens-Clarke County Commission  
Athens-Clarke County Unified Government  
301 College Avenue  
Athens, GA 30601

Dear Mayor Girtz and Commissioners,

On behalf of the Mall Area TAD Committee, I am writing to provide recommendations on the allocation of TAD funding priorities and to highlight the importance of the already approved Mall Area Redevelopment project, which has successfully addressed critical community needs such as green space, public infrastructure, affordable housing, and youth development.

The redevelopment of the Athens Mall has made significant strides toward transforming the area into a thriving, community-centered hub. The inclusion of the Boys & Girls Club and the first-ever Extra Special People (ESP) facility directly serving Clarke County School District students represents groundbreaking investments in youth development. These facilities exemplify the project's commitment to fostering inclusive growth and providing critical resources for young people and their families.

As we refine TAD funding priorities, the Mall Area TAD Committee recommends the following percentages and initiatives for continued development:

## **1. Public Infrastructure Needs – 90%**

A robust public infrastructure framework is essential to ensure accessibility, safety, and long-term viability. Key priorities include:

- **Sidewalks:**
  - Connect existing sidewalks.
  - Build new sidewalks along Marilyn Farmer Road (across from Arbor Terrace), Cleveland Road (from Burton & Burton to the existing bus stop), and Huntington Road (to Atlanta Highway bus stop).
  - Establish sidewalks on both sides of Atlanta Highway to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility.
- **Streetlights:** Add streetlights along Marilyn Farmer Road for better visibility and safety.
- **Roundabouts:** Implement the three proposed roundabouts and consider adding one at Cleveland Road and Marilyn Farmer Road for improved traffic flow.
- **Transit Stops and Road Repaving:** Maintain and enhance existing transit stops and prioritize road repaving throughout the area.
- **Retention Pond:** A critical need to manage stormwater effectively and ensure environmental sustainability.

- **Barriers and Safety:** Develop structured or natural barriers to separate Mall property from Lake Meeler subdivision to address liability concerns associated with the lake and homeless encampments near the cinema.

## 2. Economic Development Partnership Opportunities – 10%

Economic revitalization is critical to supporting small businesses and fostering a vibrant local economy. Recommendations include:

- Establish a **small business incubator** in partnership with the SBDC to encourage entrepreneurship.
- Provide incentives for **minority-owned businesses** to foster inclusivity.
- Attract a **grocery store** or small market to offer walkable access to fresh, essential goods.
- Encourage **locally owned restaurants**, avoiding fast-food chains, to create unique dining options that reflect the community's character.

## 3. Housing Opportunities – 0%

This priority is already addressed within the approved Mall Area Redevelopment project. Affordable housing remains a cornerstone of the redevelopment effort and ensures that residents of all income levels benefit from the area's revitalization.

## 4. CCSD and Youth Development – 0%

With the inclusion of the Boys & Girls Club and ESP facilities, the redevelopment has made unprecedented investments in youth services. These facilities provide essential programming and support for children and families, setting a strong foundation for future growth.

We respectfully urge the Mayor and Commission to adopt these priorities, ensuring continued progress in the Mall Area TAD district. By emphasizing public infrastructure and economic development alongside the existing investments in affordable housing and youth programs, we can create a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant community for Athens-Clarke County residents.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to the Mall Area TAD project. We look forward to working together to achieve these shared goals.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Zwirn  
Committee Chair  
Mall Area TAD Committee