ACTION AGENDA

A COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

2017

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This report provides background information to assist with the development of the Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan.

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Envision Athens

A Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan for Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

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"We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us." — ***The Athenian Oath***

PART I
FOUNDATIONS

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- Vision and Goals 12

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Hundreds of people participated in the initial round of engagement for the Envision Athens process. Pictured here, more than 80 people are squeezed into the main space at the Lyndon House Arts Center. The crowd was so large it spilled out into the halls and courtyard.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2016, the Athens-Clarke community began a journey to develop a common vision and strategic action plan to guide the County forward. The plan is aspirational and represents the ideas of thousands of citizens and stakeholders. The vision, and the strategic Action Agenda it informs, are the product of hundreds of hours of intense discussion about the future of the County. These conversations served as a foundation for the Action Agenda, which is a prioritization of discrete projects, policies and programs selected through the process. In five topical chapters, it addresses pressing challenges and takes advantage of key opportunities. This document includes a summary of the foundations for the process (key conditions and trends), presents the community vision, and outlines the priority actions and implementation strategies that will help unite Athens-Clarke County and move the community toward a more prosperous future.

PARTICIPANTS

1,621

The thousands who participated in Envision Athens represent the diversity of the Athens community.

COMMENTS & IDEAS

8,613

Insights were gathered through in-person meetings, online forms and stakeholder / focus group discussions.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

103

Actions are organized into five chapters and represent discrete projects, policies or programs that will help achieve the vision.

Why now?

BACKGROUND ON THE ENVISION ATHENS PROCESS AND ITS GOALS

Communities, like people, change over time. They have assets, or attributes to accent, steward, or strengthen. They have challenges, or weaknesses to confront head-on. Athens is no different. The County is tremendously dynamic with a well-earned, positive reputation. It is also a place that struggles with challenges unique to a community of its size. Regardless of its current condition, action is necessary, as the future will be defined by the trends of today. The Envision Athens process has defined those trends through technical research, polled the community's intuition through engagement and outlined a bold, but achievable, Action Agenda to help strengthen the assets and bend the arc of negative trends.

BACKGROUND

Envision Athens was kicked off in the fall of 2016 as a process to develop a community and economic development strategic plan to lead Athens-Clarke County forward. Funded partially outside of the government through a consortium of organizations, the campaign was designed intentionally to be inclusive and community-driven. The vision and Action Agenda set a direction based on the priorities from the public and the insight gained through technical research. Over the course of ten months, dozens of conversations were convened across the County to uncover the most pressing issues and promising opportunities.

The process began with the initiation of a 38-member Steering Committee. This body was designed as a representative group choose through an open application process. Applicants were selected based on the complexity of the County's demographics along with its various interests.

ENGAGEMENT

The Envision Athens process has resulted in a visionary, yet achievable multi-dimensional strategy to guide community and economic development for the next 20 years. The Envision Athens process was open and inclusive, intuitive and informed, and carefully designed and facilitated. As a result, a shared sense of accountability and commitment to implementation has been achieved – this is not "just another plan." Envision Athens will maintain this commitment throughout implementation.

PHILOSOPHY

The Envision Athens initiative is led by a philosophy established by the Steering Committee during its initial meeting. These statements helped to inform the process over the ten-month engagement program and through the plan's formation.

1 Open and inclusive

Anyone who cares about the future of the community has a seat at the table and room for input.

2 Intuitive and informed

Strong data collection and analysis serves as the undergirding to recommendations.

3 Careful design and facilitation

The process is tailored to the unique audience that is Athens-Clarke, and moves beyond the "normal suspects."

4 Lead to implementation

The plan is bold and visionary, but also achievable, and includes a strong implementation focus.

What's an Action Agenda?

CONFRONTING CHALLENGES HEAD-ON

The Envision Athens Action Agenda is a community and economic development strategic plan to lead Athens-Clarke County forward. This plan sets a direction for the community based on the priorities from the public and the insight gained through technical research. Actions are discrete projects, policies or programs that – when taken together – help move the community toward its vision.

THE ACTION AGENDA WILL SERVE AS...

1 **Evidence of thoughtful and inclusive contributions.** Simply put, the Action Agenda is a collection of initiatives and potential investments offered through the collected contributions of the Athens-Clarke community. The agenda includes dozens of recommendations for projects, policies and programs to improve the physical and natural environment, and improve the quality of life for residents.

2 **A guide for decision makers.** In the hands of community leaders, the Action Agenda can be viewed as a clear path forward, illuminated with the ideas and direction from the community. These recommendations help direct future investment and funding for programs along a track identified by the public. Support for these initiatives will create a feedback loop for individuals who have been involved ,and incentivize continued participation and trust.

3 **An inspiration for continued action.** Participants involved in Envision Athens were inspired after seeing their recommendations and ideas reflected in the Action Agenda. From the Focus on the Future workshops to the Community Summit to the Open House, participants were encouraged to think creatively and continually offer their unique thoughts and ideas. The process was iterative and never pre-defined.

ORGANIZING THE ACTION AGENDA

The Envision Athens Action Agenda includes more than 100 projects, policies and programs across a wide range of subjects. To better organize the proposals, the Steering Committee adopted a topical scheme to categorize the thousands of comments, develop community goals, and, ultimately, assign priority actions. The plan topics, outlined to the right, are further organized into five chapters which are introdced later.

- *Agriculture*
- *Arts and Culture*
- *Civic Engagement*
- *Economic Development*
- *Education*
- *Environment*
- *Health*
- *Housing*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Land Use*
- *Neighborhoods*
- *Safety*
- *Social Services*
- *Transportation*

Building the Agenda

THE ENVISION ATHENS PROCESS

Preparation for the planning process started in October of 2016 and lasted just over a year. Through three rounds of engagement, and technical and strategic analysis, the Steering Committee synthesized the final Action Agenda. Below are some of the key inputs to the planning process:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A fundamental component of the Envision Athens Action Agenda is the intuition of the people who live, work and raise families in the community. More than 1,600 people were engaged throughout the process, sharing thousands of comments, ideas and opportunities. The full database of comments from all engagement activities has been included in the plan as a document appendix.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

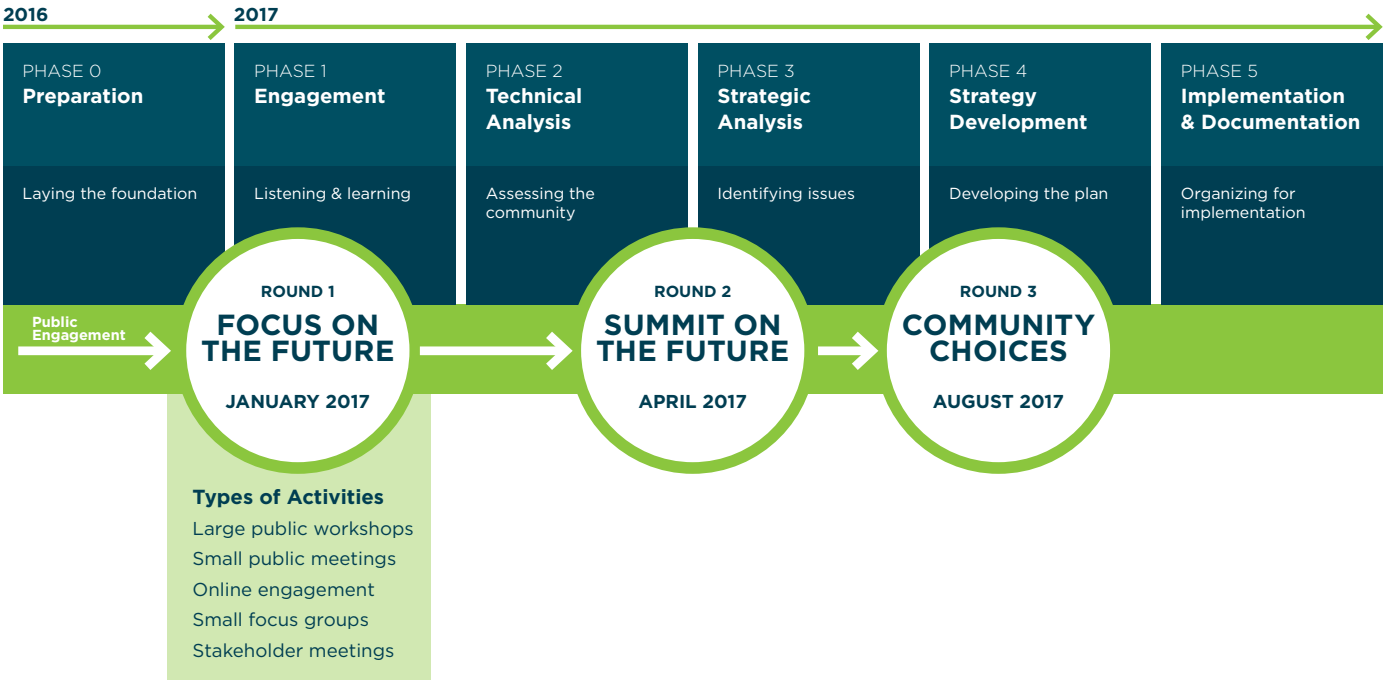
Like other college communities, Athens is made up of a complex network of organizations and interests. Each of these groups has a unique and important perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by the community today and in the future. This expertise was tapped in two ways throughout the process. First, through topical focus group interviews, and second, through stakeholder worksessions convened to generate ideas and evaluate actions.

TECHNICAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The Action Agenda is undergirded by strong technical research and analysis. This work began with the community assessment where key conditions and trends related to demographics, economics and place-based issues were revealed. A second, more targeted analysis, focused on the potential of the County, and its most pressing challenges and opportunities. The agenda was directly informed by the realities uncovered through the research.

ACTION DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The final Action Agenda combines the intuition of the community with the key findings from the technical research and analysis. Priority actions – projects, policies or programs – are organized into fourteen topic areas. Each discrete action proposal is linked to an implementation strategy that includes responsible and supporting entities and a recommended timeframe.



Leading the Charge

THE PARTIES WHO LED ENVISION ATHENS

A 38-member citizen Steering Committee was convened to guide the public process and develop the plan's recommendations. The group is representative of the County's diversity as related to demographics and interests. Over the ten-month process the Committee met ten times to design the outreach campaign, evaluate feedback, draft community goals, select initial recommendations, and review and adopt the Action Agenda. The group is made up of the following individuals:

Sharyn Dickerson, Co-Chair
Environmental Consultant, Sharyn Dickerson & Associates, LLC (Representing Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia)

Bob Googe , Co-Chair
Owner, Jittery Joe's Coffee

Caroline Angelo
Vice President for Academic Affairs, Athens Technical College

Erin Barger
Vice President of Programs, Action Ministries, North Georgia

Heather Benham
Executive Director, Athens Land Trust

Alejandra Calva
University of Georgia, Latin American & Carribean Studies Institute

Lenn Chandler
Electric Utility Vice President, Georgia Power Company, Athens

Dr. Andrea Daniel
President, Athens Technical College

Linda E. Davis
Adjunct Instructor, Athens Technical College

Susan Dodson
Director of External Relations, Food Bank of Northeast Georgia

Doc Eldridge
President/CEO, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

Dodd Ferrelle
Account Representative, Hagemeyer North America

Broderick Flanigan
Visual Artist, Flanigan's Portrait Studio

Houston Gaines
Student Body President, University of Georgia

Mike Hamby
Office cleaning business Representing Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

Diana Hartle
Librarian, University of Georgia

Ann Hunter
IT Specialist, USDA-ARS-AFM-EBSC-IT Branch

Marty Hutson
CFO, St. Mary's Healthcare System

Charia Johnson
Visual Merchandiser, Banana Republic

Richie Knight
HW Creative Marketing

Wilson Lattimore
Pastor, Chestnut Grove Baptist Church

Roswell Lawrence, Jr.
Assistant to the VP for Finance and Administration & Director of Client Relations, University of Georgia

Deborah Lonon
Attorney, Citizen

Dean Mannheimer
Banker, Athens First Bank and Trust

Alison Bracewell McCullick
Director of Community Relations, University of Georgia

Humberto Mendoza
Auto Mechanic

Catherine Neace
Co-owner, Barberitos Downtown Athens

Emily Nicholos
Director of Community Impact, United Way of Northeast Georgia

Caroline Paris Paczkowski
Director of Communications– School of Public and International Affairs, University of Georgia

Rick Parker
Executive Director/President, Athens Housing Authority

Nakia Payne
Homemaker

Michele Pearson
Financial Advisor, Edward Jones Investments

Dr. Charles Peck
President and CEO, Piedmont Athens Regional Health System

Whit Richardson
Owner, Tazikis Cafe

Danny Riddle
Maintenance Mechanic, Athens Housing Authority

Johnelle Simpson
Great Promise Partnership/Work-Based Learning Coordinator, Clarke County School District

Barbara Sims
Recruitment Coordinator, All God's Children Adoption Agency; Radio Personality, WXAG

Xernona Thomas
Elementary Principal, Clarke County School District

Guiding the Process
The Committee began their work well ahead of the public process by developing the name and identity, launching a publicity and outreach campaign, and creating an agenda for the first round of engagement activities.

Putting the Agenda to Work

HOW TO USE THE ACTION AGENDA

The Action Agenda represents a series of recommendations based on extensive conversations with the community. Some are new proposals others are adapted versions of existing initiatives. They have been organized into topics based on fourteen community goals, but many are cross-cutting and address multiple community issues and opportunities.

The Envision Athens Action Agenda includes 103 actions. These address a number of themes including economic development, social mobility, housing affordability and others.

WHAT IS AN ACTION?

An action is a project, policy or program. It is a strategic recommendation that, when successful, will help move the community closer to its vision.

WHO IMPLEMENTS?

Everyone has a role in the implementation of the Action Agenda. The Implementation Plan has assigned a responsible party or organization to each community action. Here is how various community actors can make the best use of the Action Agenda:

Finding the Starting Line

Some actions may take longer than others to implement based on their scale or complexity. It's important, however, that every proposal includes a champion who will fight hard to help realize the vision.

EVERYONE

No matter their position, everyone has a role in the implementation of the Action Agenda. There will be a number of opportunities to get involved in direct volunteering and/or advocacy activities. The diversity of the recommendations will require an equal variety of motivated leaders.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

With the power to shape policy, direct community resources, and represent the public, officials have an important role in implementation. The actions show clear evidence of a thoughtful and inclusive conversation with the community, one that representatives can stand behind with confidence.

ORGANIZATIONS

Local organizations have been tasked with a great deal of responsibility in the Action Agenda implementation plan. Through new partnerships and strategic investments of time and resources, these organizations can help implement actions and expand the reach of their network.

INSTITUTIONS

Through their leadership and resources, local and regional institutions can play a key role in implementation. Their support will help to intensify the impact of each action and forge new relationships with other existing leaders and organizations.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

The Action Agenda reveals a lot about the preferences of the County. The business community would do well in taking advantage of these preferences through strategic investments. Entrepreneurs may find niche opportunities within the recommendations.

Key Findings

FROM THE TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

The technical research and analysis examined data related to the County to reveal key conditions and trends. These were framed in four basic categories:

PEOPLE

Demographic conditions and trends related to population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

CHANGE IN POPULATION

+22.3%

Between 2000 and 2015, the County's population increased by 22,000, making it the 19th largest county in Georgia.

MEDIAN AGE

26.5

Half of the County's population is under the age of 26.

PROSPERITY

Facts and figures summarizing personal prosperity, economic vitality, education, and health.

PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS

48,000

There was a moderate increase of eight percent from 2005, and a major shift from manufacturing to health care.

POVERTY RATE

36.7%

The County has the 4th highest poverty rate in Georgia, adjusted for the student population the rate is ~28.4%.

PLACE

Place-based conditions and trends on topics like housing, development character, land use and mobility.

LAND AREA OF THE COUNTY

121 sq mi

Of Georgia's 159 counties, Athens-Clarke is the smallest by more than 10 square miles.

NEW WORKFORCE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, 2005-15

11%

Between 2005 and 2015, a small share of workforce housing was constructed, with the majority of growth in student and multifamily.

POTENTIAL

Targeted analysis of key opportunities and challenges as they relate to economics and other factors.

BUSINESS SIZE DISTRIBUTION

90%

Businesses between 1-10 employees represent nearly 90% of all firms but account for less than 25% of employees.

WORKERS IN TECH CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

11%

At least 1,000 people work in tech or creative industries (excluding UGA).

Listening and Learning

PRIORITIES FROM THE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The engagement process for Envision Athens produced thousands of comments through in-person and online engagement. These ideas form the foundation of the Action Agenda. The process produced the following results:

TOTAL MEETINGS

59

Focus groups, stakeholders, the Steering Committee, and the public were engaged in dozens of large and small meetings.

DISCUSSION TIME (HOURS)

170+

Hundreds of facilitated conversations led to the completion of the Action Agenda.

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

1,621

The thousands who participated in Envision Athens represent the diversity of the Athens community.

NO. OF COMMENTS / IDEAS

8,613

Insights were gathered through in-person meetings, online forms and stakeholder / focus group discussions.

THE VISION & GOALS

The following provides an outline of the Envision Athens community vision and goals. These statements were produced using the input received from the general public and stakeholders during the engagement process. They were affirmed during the Community Summit and later adopted formally by the Steering Committee. There are fourteen community goals. These are organized into five chapters and support the vision.

THE VISION...

We aspire to reach our full potential in unity, prosperity, equity, and compassion. The sense of togetherness motivates increased pride, unparalleled civic enterprise, and significant progress.

Place MAKING A GREAT PLACE

The County is home to a wide diversity of environments. From open agricultural fields to the bustling campus of UGA, Athens' unique places are a fundamental component of its character. The Place chapter collects actions seeking to improve the quality of place in the community and work toward the community vision.

LAND USE P. 54
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.

ENVIRONMENT P. 57
Stewardship of the natural environment, including improved water and air quality and conserved areas – woods, farms, streams and wetlands.

NEIGHBORHOODS P. 59
Vibrant, stable, and safe places—primarily residential—for where and how to live, including neighborhoods with a range of integrated housing types.

HOUSING P. 62
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.

AGRICULTURE P. 65
Agriculture remains a viable and productive component of the local economy by leveraging use of agricultural land for economic development, such as for eco-tourism, beautification projects, support of plant nurseries, etc.

Prosperity CREATING LIVELIHOODS

Whether it's a way up the economic ladder or access to a quality education, community prosperity is defined by opportunities, both for companies and individuals. The Prosperity chapter collects actions related to economic development and education.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT P. 70

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).

EDUCATION P. 73

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.

People STRENGTHENING LIVES

The People chapter addresses the health and safety of this population and those social services that ensure every resident has access to care and opportunity.

HEALTH P. 78

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.

SAFETY P. 80

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

SOCIAL SERVICES P. 82

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.

Vitality INVIGORATING THE COMMUNITY

To keep Athens...Athens, a set of actions has been developed. The Vitality chapter addresses two fundamental categories, Arts & Culture and Civic Engagement.

ARTS & CULTURE P. 86

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.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT P. 88

Residents feel a strong connection to each other and are engaged in the community's overall well-being.

Foundations BUILDING AND MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION

There are a lot of daily miracles that go unrecognized...until there's a problem. Transportation and infrastructure are certainly two. The Foundations chapter addresses these important elements.

TRANSPORTATION P. 92

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).

INFRASTRUCTURE P. 94

Well-maintained infrastructure is strategically expanded and upgraded to unlock economic potential and help meet the needs of individuals in full consideration of environmental practices.

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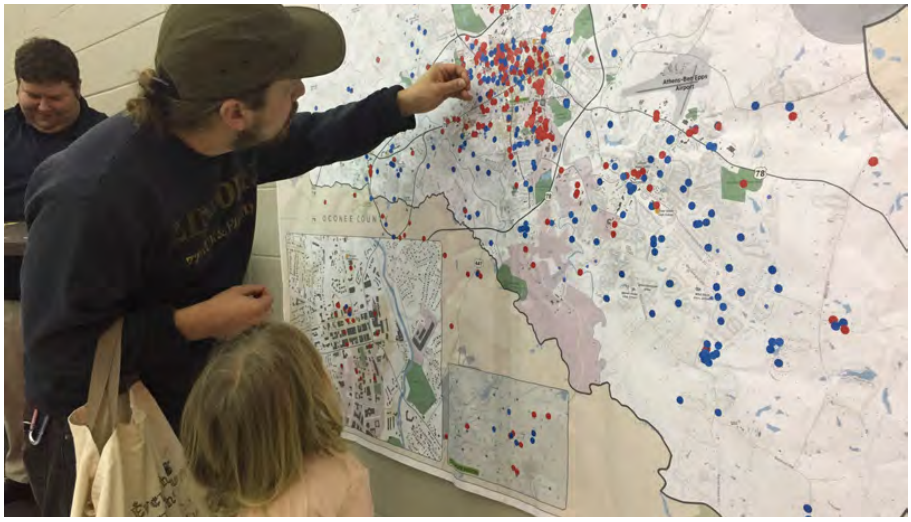


2. UNDERSTANDING

Two major inputs have informed the Envision Athens Action Agenda. The first was provided by the public and community stakeholders. By living, working or raising a family in the County, their intuition about challenges and opportunities provided solid insight and helped to prioritize strategies. The second input, technical research and analysis, was an examination of the key conditions and trends as they relate to Athens' demographic, economic, and place-based data. This chapter provides a background on the engagement process, key insights from the technical analysis and the focus opportunities that helped to guide the Envision Athens Action Agenda.

MAJOR INPUTS TO ENVISION ATHENS

Intuition

- *1,621 individuals contributed their thoughts and ideas*
- *More than 8,600 comments were collected*
- *Input themes informed goals, goals informed actions*

+

Analysis

- *Technical research and analysis on demographic, economic and place-based data*
- *Major findings presented in the Community Assessment*
- *Deeper analysis of "Potential"*

=

Focus

- *Opportunity statements based on the pressing challenges and existing assets*
- *Connection between actions and intuition and analysis*

Understanding the Opportunities and Challenges

KEY INPUTS TO THE ENVISION ATHENS PROCESS

The path to effective recommendations includes two essential activities: Strong technical research and analysis into critical conditions and trends, and a robust, community discussion that is open to anyone who cares about the future of the place. This is the foundation of the Action Agenda. Taken together, these activities reveal where the community can grow, improve, unite and align.

THE ENVISION ATHENS ACTION AGENDA HAS TWO MAJOR INPUTS...

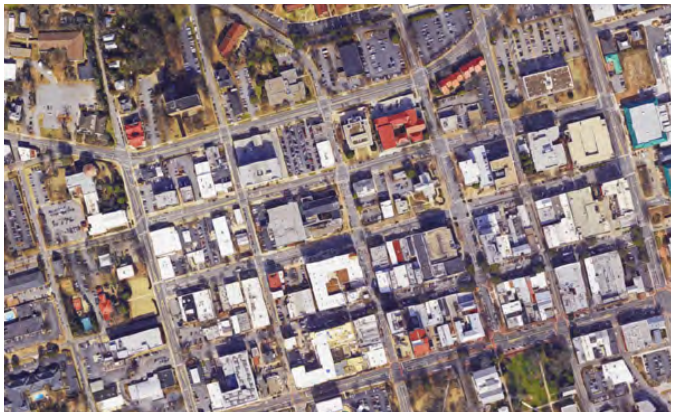
1 **Community intuition.** Data can only tell you so much. The individuals who live, work, or raise a family in Athens have a deep understanding about the community's challenges and opportunities. This collective voice serves as the foundation to the Action Agenda. The following activities helped gather this input from the public and stakeholders.

- Large-scale community meetings (Focus on the Future workshops, Community Summit Meeting, Community Open House)
- Online engagement through www.envisionathens.org and Facebook
- Small format meetings with hard-to-reach groups
- 23 Focus Group meetings with various interests
- Two-day workshop with 150 community stakeholders

2 **Technical analysis.** There are trends and phenomena within the demographics, economics and place-based data that must be fully examined to understand the underlying challenges and opportunities. Some of these findings are unique to the Athens community, some are regional, while others (like increasing diversity and shrinking households size) are reflected in national data trends. To better understand this data and develop a strong baseline for action, the Envision Athens process included the following:

- Review of community plans and reports
- Baseline Community Assessment studying major demographic, economic, and place-based trends
- Target analysis into key issues related to community and economic development potential

Reaching out, listening, learning, and affirming
The Envision Athens process included 59 meetings, large and small. Over a ten-month period more than 1,600 individuals participated, sharing thousands of comments and ideas.



Strong technical research and analysis
Demographic, economic and place-based data were collected and analyzed to reveal the most pressing challenges and unique opportunities for the community.

INTUITION

The Envision Athens process included a robust and multi-layered conversation with the community focusing on the key issues and opportunities for the next 20 years. In large and small meetings, stakeholder sessions, focus groups, and targeted follow-up, the Steering Committee offered dozens of opportunities for people to share their insights. Their vision and ideas serve as the foundation for the Action Agenda. Through the community's 8,000+ comments, the Committee developed key themes, connected innovative ideas, and prioritized the set of projects, policies and programs to address core issues. This section highlights the key outcomes from the engagement process. For more specific information on each round please refer to the document appendix in section IV.

TAPPING THE INTUITION OF PEOPLE

The Steering Committee's goal for engagement was to give everyone who cares about the future of the community the opportunity to share their ideas. Through in-person meetings, online forms and targeted follow-up with hard to reach groups, more than 1,600 individuals were able to share their insights and contribute to the final Action Agenda. Their intuition about the challenges and opportunities are reflected in many of the action recommendations.

MAJOR RESULTS

The following describes the major results from the community engagement program for Envision Athens. Full summary memos from each round along with the database of ideas can be found in the document appendix.

Taking it to the people
In the first round of engagement, the Focus on the Future workshops, the committee decided to host multiple meetings throughout the County. Close to 500 people attended at least one of these initial workshops, contributing thousands of ideas.

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

1,621

The thousands who participated in Envision Athens represent the diversity of the Athens community.

NO. OF COMMENTS / IDEAS

8,613

Insights were gathered through in-person meetings, online forms and stakeholder / focus group discussions.

LARGE & SMALL MEETINGS

59

Focus groups, stakeholders, the Steering Committee, and the public engaged in dozens of large and small meetings.

OVERALL MEETING SATISFACTION

99%

Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the engagement program, also pledging to stay involved.

ACTION WORK GROUPS

14

Work groups were convened following the Community Summit to develop draft action recommendations.

IN-PERSON DISCUSSION TIME (HOURS)

170+

Hundreds of facilitated conversations led to the completion of the Action Agenda.

Sharing Ideas, Affirming the Direction, Building a Coalition

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE ENVISION ATHENS PROCESS

The Envision Athens Steering Committee approached its engagement effort with the goal of making participation a choice for anyone in the community who cares about the future of the County. Through large and small in-person meetings, online forms, and targeted follow-up the committee engaged thousands in the engagement program. The insights from this input serve as the foundation of the Action Agenda.

STEERING COMMITTEE INITIATION

Focus on the Future Workshop

The initial phase of engagement, hosted in January of 2017, included conversations with public and stakeholders with the purpose of introducing the process and listening and learning to comments and ideas.

In-Person Workshops

- *473 participants*
- *3,700 comments & ideas*
- *Five in-person meetings held throughout the County*
- *Online engagement available for two weeks*

Special Interest Focus Groups

- *138 participants*
- *690 comments & ideas*
- *23 interest areas*

Stakeholder Session

- *150 stakeholders*
- *Vinson Institute*
- *Two-day work sessions*

OUTCOMES

- *861 participants, 5,500+ comments*
- *Major idea themes organized into 14 subtopics*
- *Priorities informed goal statements*

STEERING COMMITTEE WORK

OUTCOMES

- *Developed key messages*
- *Identified outreach priorities*
- *Confirmed publicity strategy*

GOAL DEVELOPMENT

Following the Focus on the Future engagement activities, major themes were distilled from the 5,000+ comments. These were used to draft goal statement based on the priorities in the input. The Steering Committee defined a goal as a "desired outcome expressed simply."

STEERING COMMITTEE WORK

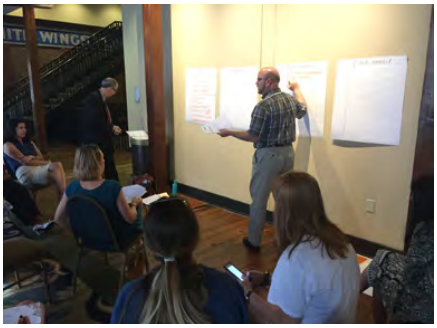
OUTCOMES

- *Review results from input*
- *Distill key themes*
- *Develop draft goals*

ROLE OF THE ACTION WORK GROUPS

The Action Development Work Groups were convened following the Community Summit to evaluate the full list of proposed actions (projects, policies or programs) and develop a draft set of recommendations to address their topic goal. Work groups consisted of Steering Committee members and community stakeholders. The topics were as follows:

- *Agriculture*
- *Arts & Culture*
- *Civic Engagement*
- *Economic Development*
- *Education*
- *Environment*
- *Health*
- *Housing*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Land Use*
- *Neighborhoods*
- *Safety*
- *Social Services*
- *Transportation*



COMMUNITY SUMMIT

The Summit, hosted on April 20, 2017, gathered hundreds in the Classic Center in downtown Athens to discuss the draft goals and consider the community's vision.

Agenda

- *Background on the process*
- *Testing the goals*
- *Discussing the direction*

OUTCOMES

- *246 participants, 1,200+ comments*
- *Smart phone polling on goals*
- *Affirmation of general direction*

STEERING COMMITTEE WORK

OUTCOMES

- *Review results from input*
- *Distill key themes*
- *Develop draft goals*

ACTION DEVELOPMENT

Following the Summit, the Committee and Stakeholders convened to form work groups around the 14 community topic areas. Each group would review hundreds of proposed actions and develop their list of priority recommendations.

STEERING COMMITTEE WORK SESSION

OUTCOMES

- *Review draft plan*
- *Assign priorities*
- *Consider implementation*

OPEN HOUSE

During the Open House the committee revealed the draft Action Agenda and asked participants to think about their priorities.

Agenda

- *Share the results of the process*
- *Review the actions and share priorities*

OUTCOMES

- *Direction and priorities*
- *Implementation pledge*

ACTION AGENDA

Leading the Process

STEERING COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN ENGAGEMENT

The Envision Athens process was led from start to finish by its 38-member citizen Steering Committee. The group met monthly throughout the ten-month process and developed key messages, analyzed the input received through each round of engagement, crafted the vision and goals and developed action recommendations for each of the 14 topics.

FORMING THE COMMITEE

The Steering Committee was formed intentionally to be representative of the many diverse views of Athens-Clarke County. An open application process was reviewed by a small nominating committee and members were then selected based on their expertise, background and community perspective.

LEADING THE WAY, LAUNCHING IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee would meet more than ten times throughout the program and help launch the implementation phase of Envision Athens.

Steering Committee hard at work!
The Envision Athens Steering Committee met more than ten times through the planning process to evaluate input from the public, establish goals, and develop priority actions. In the picture above, the committee is deliberating the wording of one of the fourteen subtopic goals based on the feedback from the public.

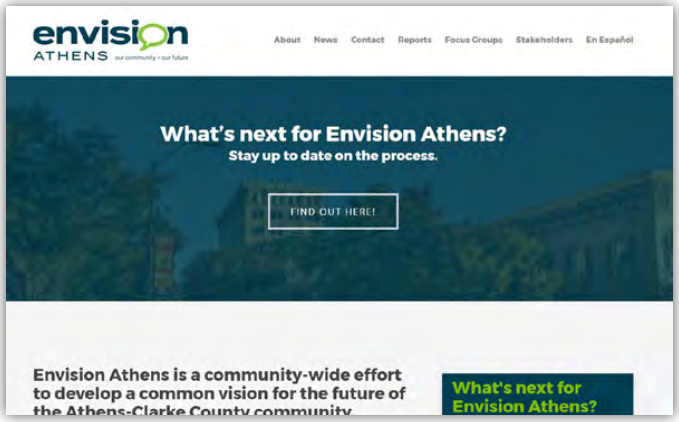
Online Engagement / Information

STEERING COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN ENGAGEMENT

A communication and engagement website was developed early on in the process to provide up-to-date information on the process and allow people to engage and share their input. A complementary Facebook page attracted more than 700 "likes" just three weeks after launching.

WWW.ENVISIONATHENS.ORG

The process website served a number of functions throughout the program. The site was used to communicate key information about the program including the make-up of the Steering Committee, answers to frequently asked questions, news about the program and upcoming events, and findings from reports like the Community Assessment. The site was also used after the Focus on the Future Workshops, the Community Summit, and the Choices Open House as a virtual meeting space. Online, users could offer up comments and ideas reponding to prompts identical to those from the in-person meetings. The site will remain active after the completion of the process and serve as an information portal for implementation.



Learn more about Envision Athens online
To find out more about the process, see upcoming community events, or share your thoughts on this document, head to **www.EnvisionAthens.org**.

Broadening the Base

TARGET ENGAGEMENT, FOCUS GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

Throughout the engagement program the committee sought out new and creative ways to reach a broader segment of the community. This included, but was not limited to, the following activities:

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Through the week of January 30th, 2016, 23 focus group interviews were conducted with 144 community stakeholders. Groups were formed to reflect the diverse set of backgrounds and interests within the Athens-Clarke County community. The discussions were facilitated by planning consultants from Planning NEXT. Each meeting included a brief background on the Envision process, but focused primarily on a discussion of the group's key opportunities and challenges, both today and in the future. The Steering Committee was interested in gathering the intuitive, experiential perspectives from each of these groups to help build a comprehensive set of input. Focus group topics included:

- Music
- Arts
- African-American
- Realtors / Homebuilders
- Large Private Employers
- Hispanic
- Developers
- Alternative Transportation
- ACCUG Planning Commission
- Activists
- Agriculture/ Environment
- Not for Profit
- K-12 Education
- Youth
- Post-Secondary Education
- Faith-Based Community
- Seniors
- Small Business / Entrepreneurs
- Persons with Disabilities
- Health
- Neighborhoods
- Safety

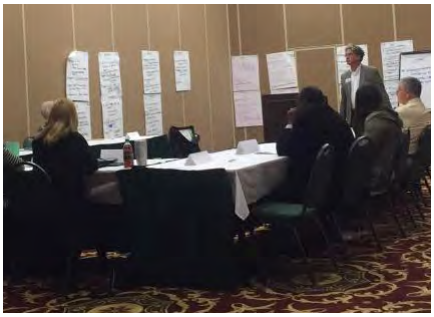
THE STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

On February 28th and March 1st, 150 stakeholders from the County's most impactful organizations and institutions were invited to participate in a multi-session workshop. As a primer to the conversation, stakeholders attended a presentation of the key findings from the Community Assessment research and analysis. Major themes from the Focus Group interviews and initial results from the public comments were also presented.

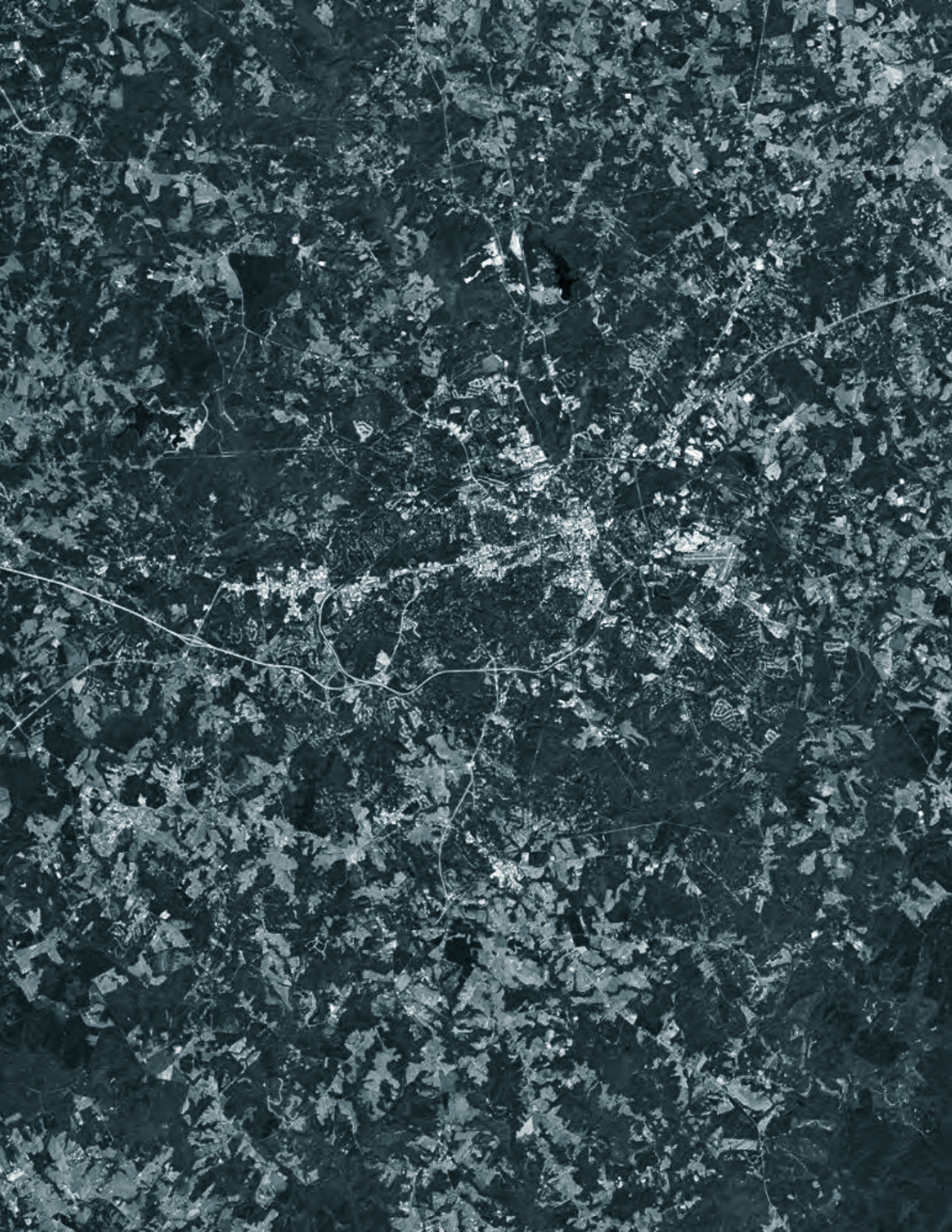
With this as a foundation, stakeholders were convened around ten topics. In the past, subject matter experts were invited to participate in a meeting about only one topic. The fact is, many of the systemic issues and opportunities for the community are interrelated. In this format, the first session that stakeholders attended was the one in which they were most conversant. Following this, stakeholders visited each of the topic sessions to not only hear what the "experts" thought, but to offer their input in those areas as well. As a result, hundreds of comments and ideas were generated around the ten topics. These experts were reconvened later in the process to consider key community actions.

SMALL GROUP FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS

After reviewing the initial findings from the exit questionnaire data, the Steering Committee noticed several gaps in representation. The three major deficits were from the Hispanic / Latinx, and African-American communities, as well as young people aged 18 to 24 years old. To address this, several committee members organized and facilitated small group sessions that mirrored the large workshops and posed the same questions. These meetings yielded additional participants and helped close the gap in representation. The Committee was committed to an open and inclusive process and strove throughout the process to expand its outreach and representation based on feedback and data from each meeting.



Stakeholders at work
Over their two-day work session, stakeholders from around the community traded hundreds of comments.



COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

Athens-Clarke County enjoys the economic stability afforded by being the home of a major state university and several large institutional employers. It is on the edge of one of the fastest growing metro regions in the US. The area through the University, is a major generator of the talent pool for the state of Georgia. It enjoys a vibrant, creative scene. A rising entrepreneurial culture that spans across a range of industries is beginning to penetrate the community. The growth in the science and engineering programs at the University of Georgia present the opportunity to add more tech driven innovation to this vibrant and creative entrepreneurial culture.

Yet, as a community it struggles with poverty rates that remain high. Its relative small geographic scale places pressure on finding the balance between conservation and development. Despite its location near the Atlanta region, the transportation network does not provide it with easy connectivity limiting its ability to fully capture the potential from proximity. While it generates a substantial amount of the future talent pool for the state, locally it lacks depth in some key areas of the 21st century economy. While it has a rising entrepreneurial and tech scene, it lacks some of the support mechanisms needed to fully capture those opportunities.

This is a community that is just big enough to have many of the amenities of a larger city but maintains its "hometown" feel. While it faces many challenges, the potential opportunities in front of the community are vast.

A Snapshot of Conditions and Trends

This report provides an overview of key conditions and trends for the Athens-Clarke County community. It is the first of a two-part approach to analysis for Envision Athens Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan. It is intended to create a foundation of understanding about the future and help to identify topics where more detailed analysis should be undertaken as part of the targeted analysis phase. The following describes the key findings from the conditions and trends research and analysis. These items and other findings will be expanded on throughout the report.

PEOPLE

Demographic conditions and trends related to population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

CHANGE IN POPULATION

+22.3%

Between 2000 and 2015, the County's population increased by 22,000, making it the 19th largest county in Georgia.

MEDIAN AGE

26.5

Half of the County's population is under the age of 26.

PROSPERITY

Facts and figures summarizing personal prosperity, economic vitality, education, and health.

PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS

48,000

There was a moderate increase of eight percent from 2005, and a major shift from manufacturing to health care.

POVERTY RATE

36.7%

The County has the 4th highest poverty rate in Georgia, adjusted for the student population the rate is ~28.4%.

PLACE

Place-based conditions and trends on topics like housing, development character, land use and mobility.

LAND AREA OF THE COUNTY

121 sq mi

Of Georgia's 159 counties, Athens-Clarke is the smallest by more than 10 square miles.

NEW WORKFORCE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, 2005-15

11%

Between 2005 and 2015, a small share of workforce housing was constructed, with the majority of growth in student and multifamily.

POTENTIAL

Targeted analysis of key opportunities and challenges as they relate to economics and other factors.

BUSINESS SIZE DISTRIBUTION

90%

Businesses between 1-10 employees represent nearly 90% of all firms but account for less than 25% of employees.

LAND ZONED FOR BUSINESS

28,000

14% of the County is zoned for commercial, industrial or employment uses but much of the land faces development constraints.

PEOPLE

Athens-Clarke County is a growing community with a diverse and young population. More than 20,000 new residents were added since 2000. Household make-up and ethnic/racial diversity are changing as well. The University of Georgia's presence means a much larger share of young people, and as the institution grows so will their impact. The chapter provides a snapshot of key conditions and trends as they pertain to the demographics of the County.

Key Findings

The following are key points from the demographics research of the County.

POPULATION TREND

+22.3%

Between 2000 and 2015, the population increased by more than 20,000, Georgia grew by 25%

RESIDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 26

50%

With more than 40,000 college students, the community has an extremely low median age at 26.5, Georgia is 33.4

CHANGE IN THE HISPANIC/LATINX POP.

98.4%

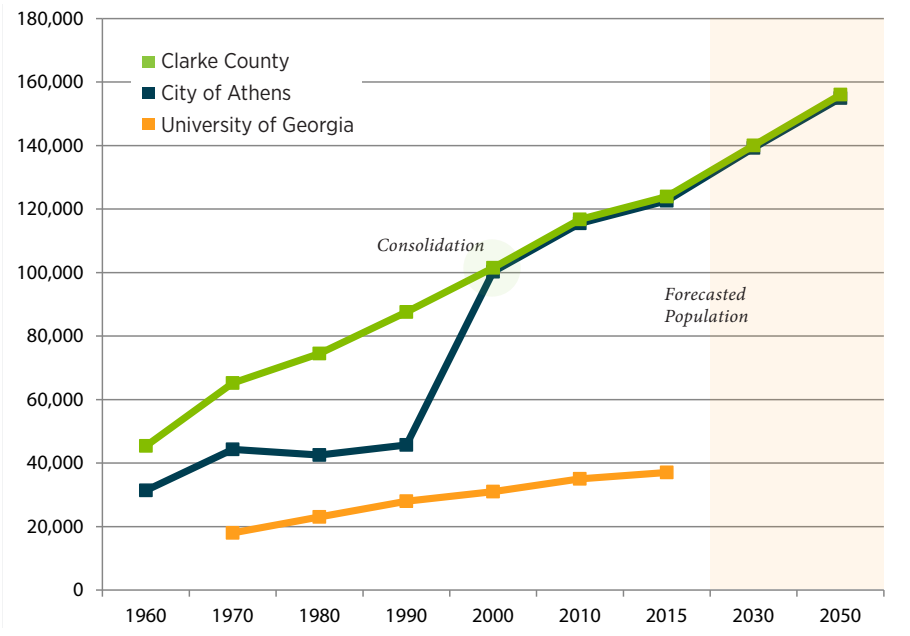
From 2000, more than 6,000 new residents were added to the Hispanic/Latinx community, Georgia's share is growing slightly faster at 110%

POPULATION

Strong population growth. The County has experienced growth in every decade since 1900. Steady growth, ranging between 14 and 18 percent, has been the trend since 1970. Between 2000 and 2015 the County added an additional 7,000 residents. Forecasts predict continued, linear growth well into the 21st century.

Consolidation merged the City of Athens and Clarke County. After several attempts starting in the mid-60s, the City and County officially unified on August 7, 1990 through referendum. As indicated by the graph on the right, the population jump from 1990 to 2000 for the "City of Athens" is artificial, as the two bodies merged in that decade. Athens-Clarke was the second county in the state of Georgia to unify, and 28th in the country.

FIG 1. POPULATION CHANGE & FORECAST, 1960-2030



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey, University of Georgia, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

HOUSEHOLDS

Single-person households are the fastest growing type. Dwellings with a single householder grew by 27 percent from 2000, and now represent 34 percent of the overall share of household types. This was the largest growth of any segment, and likely driven by the community's younger overall population and major university.

Family households with children under 18 in decline. While the overall number of households increased by 3,600 from 2000, and the family segment remained relatively stagnant (49 percent), households with children under 18 declined by around 40 percent or 3,600 families.

Smaller household size. Even with a slight increase in household size from 2000 from 2.35 to 2.55, the County has a smaller average household size than the state, 2.66. Household size refers to all cohabitation, not just families.

Fewer single-parent households. A modest decline from 2000 of four percent or 200 fewer single-parent households. In Georgia, this segment grew by 20 percent.

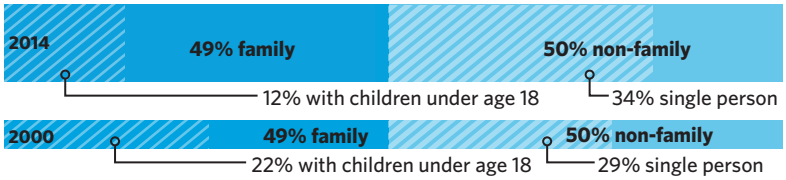
Understanding Households...
The following definitions related to households are used by both the US Census Bureau and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

what is a household (HH)?
A person or group of people living together in one housing unit.

what is a housing unit?
A house, apartment, mobile home, group of rooms or single room, which are intended as separate living quarters.

what is a family household?
A group of two or more people living together in a housing unit who are related by birth, marriage, adoption, etc.

TYPE OF HOUSEHOLDS 2000-2014



SINGLE-PERSON HH CHANGE

Georgia: +34%

FAMILY HH, CHILDREN <18 CHANGE

Georgia: -31%

AVERAGE HH SIZE

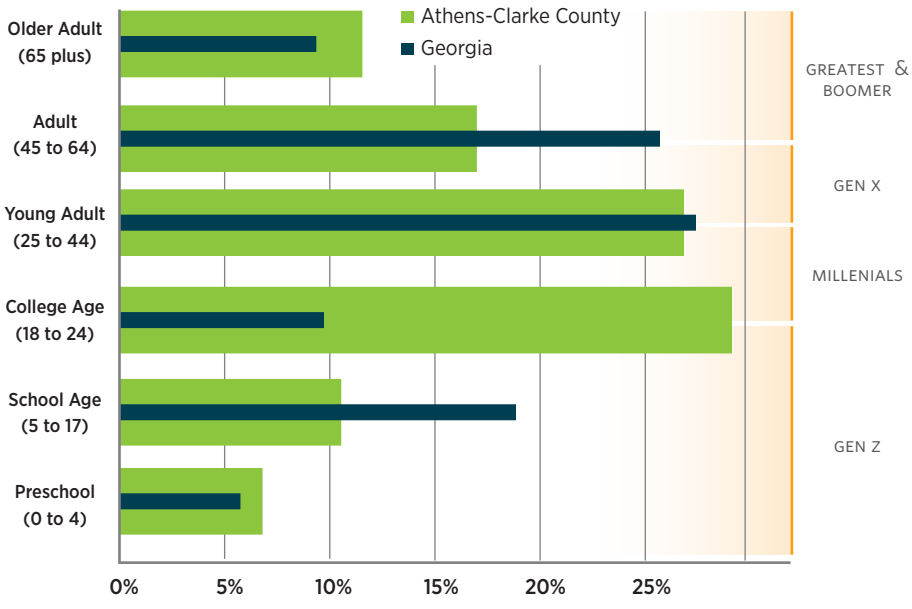
2.50

The HH size increased modestly from 2.35 in 2000, Georgia: 2.66

SINGLE PARENT HH CHANGE

Georgia: +20%

FIG 2. SHARE OF POPULATION BY AGE COHORT



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

AGE

A very young population overall. With a median age of 26.5, the community is nearly ten years younger than that of the state, 33.4. This means half of the County's population is under the age of 26. The 40,000 college students (aged 18 to 24), play a major role. The graph to the left shows the 20 percent difference in this age segment between the County and the state.

Over-65 the fastest growing cohort. While extremely young overall, the fastest growing age segment is the over-65 population. Between 2000 and 2015 this cohort grew by 38 percent, faster than any other. Second fastest, was the "Adult" or 45 to 64 population, adding 5,400 new individuals. The state's over-65 population grew by 52 percent over this period.

DIVERSITY

An increasingly diverse community. As the population increased from 2000 by more than 20,000 individuals, the community's racial and ethnic make-up was transformed. The overall share of the minority population has increased for each measured group, other than Black or African American' While this segment grew by 18 percent, its share of the overall population decreased from 27 to 26 percent. This was offset by gains in the Asian, Some other race, and Two or more races categories. Note, the Hispanic / Latinx* designation tallies under "ethnicity" and is not measured in the overall share of racial groups.

Growth of the Hispanic / Latinx* community. This was the fastest growing minority segment between 2000 and 2015, nearly doubling in size and adding more than 6,300 new residents. This trend is mirrored by the state, where the increase was 110 percent. This growth in the local share, correlates and is also captured in the increase in the foreign born population. A recent survey (2016) found 85 percent of the Hispanic / Latinx population are foreign born with 52 percent immigrating from Mexico. This same survey found, 41% of families live in mixed immigration status homes.

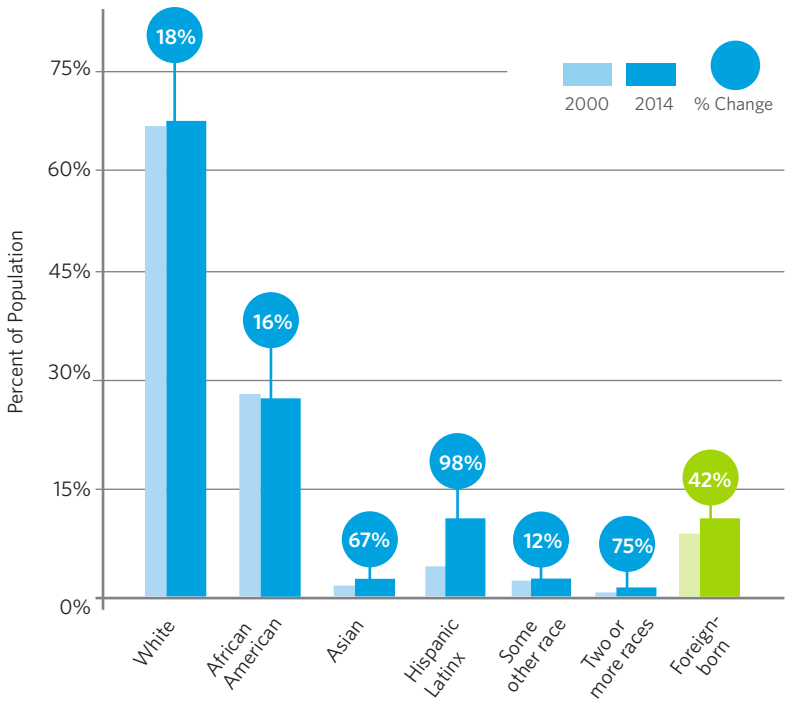
Special Source: ACC Hispanic/Latinx Community Needs Assessment, UGA LACSI

Large foreign-born population. This segment grew by 42 percent from 2000. The largest proportion, 53 percent, immigrated from Latin American, 33 percent from Asia, and ten percent from Europe.

Race and Ethnicity
Ethnicity and race are sometimes – but not always – synonymous. For example, the Census Bureau considers "Hispanic or Latinx" to be an ethnic designation, but it considers "African American" to be a racial designation. A person may identify with one or both. An ethnicity is often a social classification whereas race is primarily defined by physical characteristics.

***Latinx?**
Refers to the gender-neutral version of Latino or Latina.

FIG 3. RACE, ETHNICITY AND ORIGIN CHANGE FROM 2000



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

CHANGE IN THE HISPANIC/LATINX POP.

98.4%

From 2000, more than 6,300 new residents were added to the Hispanic/Latinx community, Georgia's share is growing slightly faster at 110%

CONTINENT OF ORIGIN, FOREIGN BORN

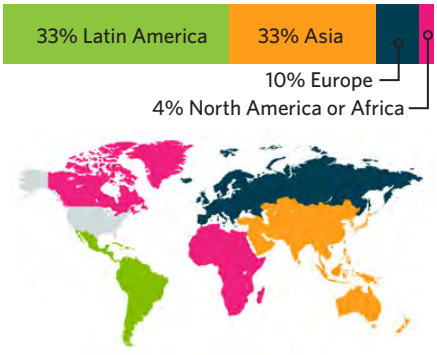


FIG 4. RACE, ETHNICITY AND ORIGIN OVERALL SHARE

	Athens-Clarke County		Georgia
	2015	% of Pop.	% of Pop.
White	**78,234**	**65.2%**	60.4%
Black or African American	**32,110**	**26.4%**	30.9%
Asian	**5,323**	**4.2%**	3.5%
Some other race	**2,470**	**1.8%**	2.9%
Two or more races	**2,496**	**2.3%**	2.0%
Hispanic (of any race)	**12,770**	**10.6%**	9.1%
Foreign-born	**12,120**	**10.0%**	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

PROSPERITY

The topic of prosperity in Athens-Clarke County is complicated. While many places can only dream of this community's low unemployment rate, wage growth has stagnated and the poverty rate remains high. A major shift in dominant employment sectors began in the 2000's and continues to this day. The local economy is driven by the University of Georgia, and its 10,000 jobs. The prosperity chapter includes analysis of these economic conditions and trends.

Key Findings

The following are key points from the economic research of the County.

UNEMPLOYMENT

4.5%

Given a steady decline in unemployment since the recession, this figure now likely represents full employment

UGA EMPLOYEES

10,370

The County's largest single employer is the University of Georgia, providing roughly one job per 3.5 students

POVERTY RATE

36.7%

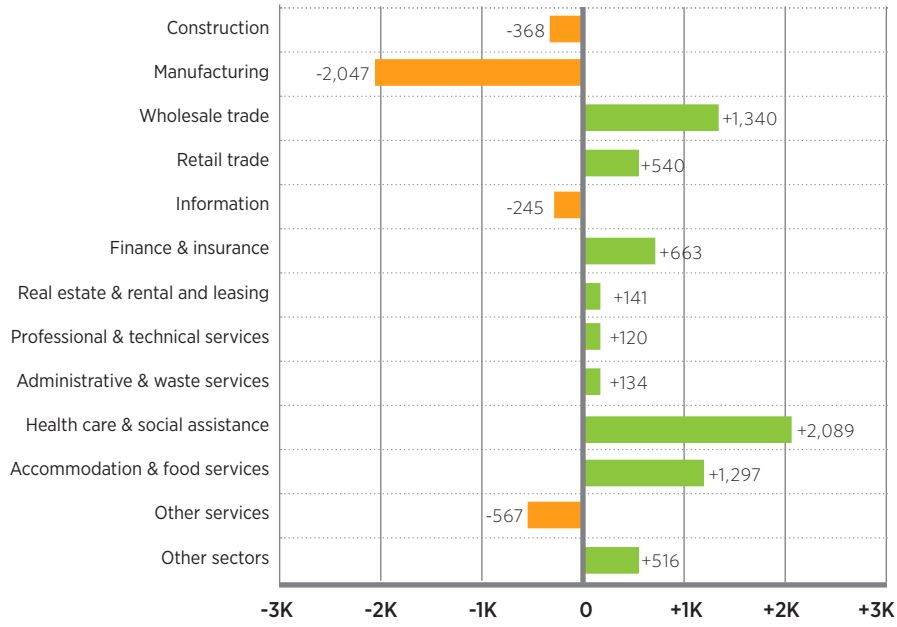
This is the fourth highest in Georgia, but when adjusted for the large student population, the rate is roughly 28.4%

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

Major shift in the dominant employment sector. There were 48,000 covered private sector jobs in 2015. Largest private sector employers include Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Accommodation & Food Services. These three sectors represent 55 percent of total covered private employment. Self employment estimates add another 16,500 jobs.

University of Georgia the largest employer. Jobs in this one institution are comparable to the total jobs in the largest private sector (Health Care & Social Assistance). University reported data in 2015 notes a total of 10,370 jobs. The University is a top research engine in the state of Georgia with $230 million in annual R&D expenditures.

FIG 5. CHANGE IN JOBS BY SECTOR, 2005-2015



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

Manufacturing remains a significant, if volatile, sector. Manufacturing is the fourth largest private sector employer, with 5,924 employees. Top manufacturing employers include: Pilgrim's Pride (1,800 jobs), Caterpillar (1,700), Power Partners Inc (480), Baldor (480), Carrier Transicold (450), Merial (450), and Burton & Burton (300).

Hospitals and health care are regional assets. Offsetting the losses in Manufacturing (-2,047), the Health Care and Social Assistance sectors experienced a large gain (+2,089) in employment from 2005 (see figure 5). This is the largest employment sector today. Just between the two major hospitals, Piedmont Athens Regional and St. Mary's Health Care System, there are just over 4,000 jobs.

Covered jobs have grown by eight percent since 2005. The greatest gains were in Health Care & Social Assistance and greatest losses were in Manufacturing. These trends mirror changes in the state as a whole though Athens-Clarke County lost more manufacturing jobs as a percentage than the state (-26 compared to -17 percent). Chemical manufacturing lost about 1,000 jobs.

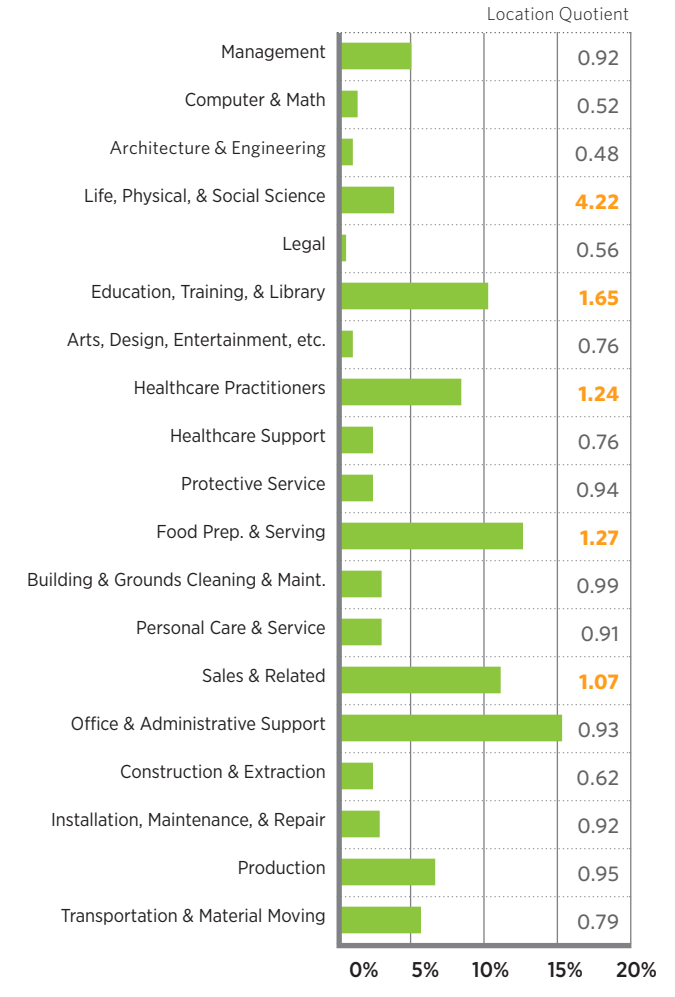
Self employment increasing. Estimated self-employment has grown fast, by 35 percent since 2005. The greatest gains were in Administrative and Support, other services, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing. Manufacturing and Construction were the only sectors to lose jobs with an 8 and 23 percent decline respectively.

FIG 7. MAJOR EMPLOYERS

NAME	EMPLOYEES
University of Georgia	10,000+
Piedmont Athens Regional	3,000
Pilgrim's Pride	1,800
Caterpillar	1,700
ACC Government	1,520
St. Mary's Health Care	1,400
Clarke County School Dist.	1,300
Dial America	500
Power Partners	480
Baldor Dodge Reliance	480

Source: ACC Economic Development Dept.

FIG 6. OCCUPATIONS OF RESIDENTS



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS

48,402

Includes covered jobs, or non self-employed jobs. Including self-employment would add an additional 16,000 jobs .

ECONOMIC OUTPUT (GDP)

$8.1 B

2015 measure of economic output is the quantity of goods and services produced in a given period by a firm, industry or geography.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

5,924

Manufacturing in the County remains relatively strong despite the loss of just over 2,000 jobs from 2005.

OCCUPATIONS

The University dominates in terms of resident occupations. The County has a higher occupational share than the national average in fields related to the higher education, for example life, physical and social sciences, with a location quotient of 4.2. Location quotient is a method of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry, cluster, occupation, or demographic group is in a region as compared to the nation.

Significant increase in service occupations. In a 5-year comparison with data from 2010, there has been a statistically significant increase in service occupations (from 19.9 percent of the labor force to 22.2 percent) and a significant decline in workers in construction (5.2 to 3.4 percent) and public administration (3.7 to 2.9 percent).

LABOR & WORKFORCE

County workforce is shrinking. From 2000 to 2016, the County's workforce participation rate decreased from 64.8 to 56.3 percent. At the same time the share of residents claiming Social Security disability benefits increased. A higher percentage of Athenians (18.4 compared 16.7 percent) claim these benefits compared to the state.

Employers pull from a large, multi-county region. Each day more than 40,000 workers commute into the community. Of these, 35 percent travel more than 25 miles. This has increased over time. 18,000+ residents commute out of the County each day, and just over 20,000 live and work in the County.

Full employment in the County, but not for everyone. The County's unemployment rate, 4.5 percent for the fourth quarter of 2016, is the second lowest of any Metropolitan Statistical Area in the state of Georgia and effectively represents full employment. While the overall figure is extremely low, the rate among African American workers is just over 13.4%, three times the national average in 2016.

TOTAL WORKFORCE

59,366

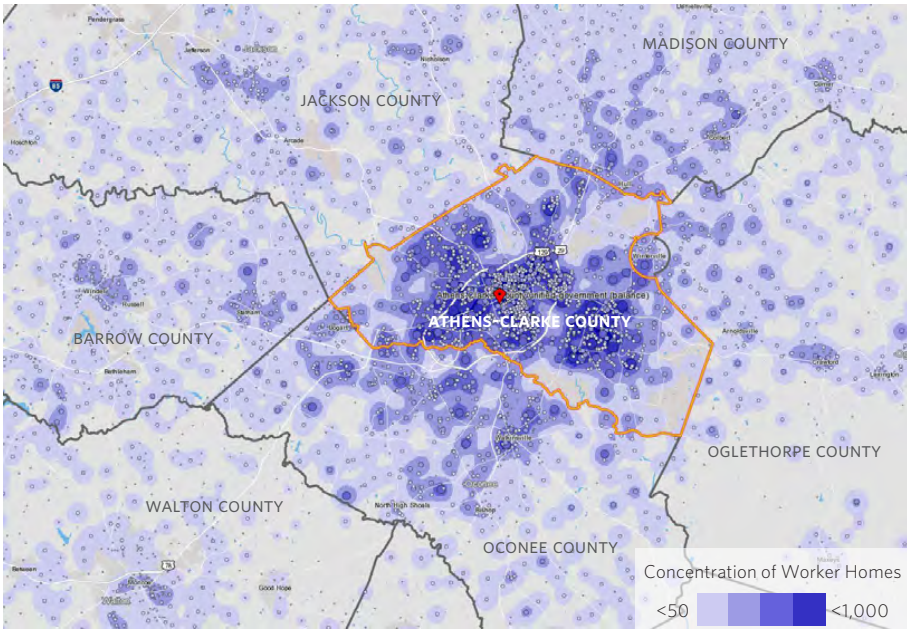
The workforce refers to those in the over-16 population employed or actively seeking employment.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, WINTER 2016

4.5%

The second lowest of any Georgia MSA, only Gainesville was lower.

FIG 7. WHERE ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY WORKERS LIVE



Source: LODES Data, OnTheMap Tool

INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Growing number of small firms. The number of firms has grown by 15 percent since 2005 (from 5,624 to 6,271). 68 percent of businesses in the County have between 2 and 9 employees. This has slowed recently and decreased by two percent between 2014 and 2015.

Etsy and Kickstarter indicate a strong arts entrepreneurial scene. The online markets provide another view into new entrepreneurs, particularly for artists and crafts people. In early 2017, residents of Athens-Clarke County had posted 268 campaigns on Kickstarter. Of these 108 of the campaigns were for music.

Large share of utility patents. Utility patents are a key measure of innovation capacity. A utility patent is issued for "the invention of a new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or a new and useful improvement". Inventors in Athens-Clarke County have filed 411 utility patents since 2000, which represents two percent of state total. The County is the 8th highest producer of patents in Georgia.

SHARE OF FIRMS WITH 2 TO 9 EMPLOYEES

68%

The total number of firms increased by 15 percent from 2005, a heavy majority of this growth was in small business

TOTAL UTILITY PATENTS FROM 2000

411

The County was the 8th highest producer of patents over this period

PERSONAL PROSPERITY

More than one in three residents live in poverty. Using the raw calculation (see box), close to 37 percent of residents live below the poverty line. This figure includes some, but not all of the college aged population. When corrected for this segment the rate decreases to 28 percent, still in the top half of Georgia counties. Regardless of the correction, every age segment (see below) has a higher rate of persons in poverty and has increased since 2000. Only the over-65 cohort ties the state and decreased since 2000.

Highest instances of poverty for school aged children. Close to 40 percent of children aged 5 to 17 live in poverty, an increase of more than 90% since 2000. The state also experienced an increase in the segment, but at a more modest rate. 25 percent of Georgia's children are in this category.

POVERTY RATE

36.7%

The raw poverty rate for the County is the fourth highest in the state of Georgia. The presence of 40,000 college students, however, mildly skews this statistic.

ADJUSTED POVERTY RATE

~28.4%

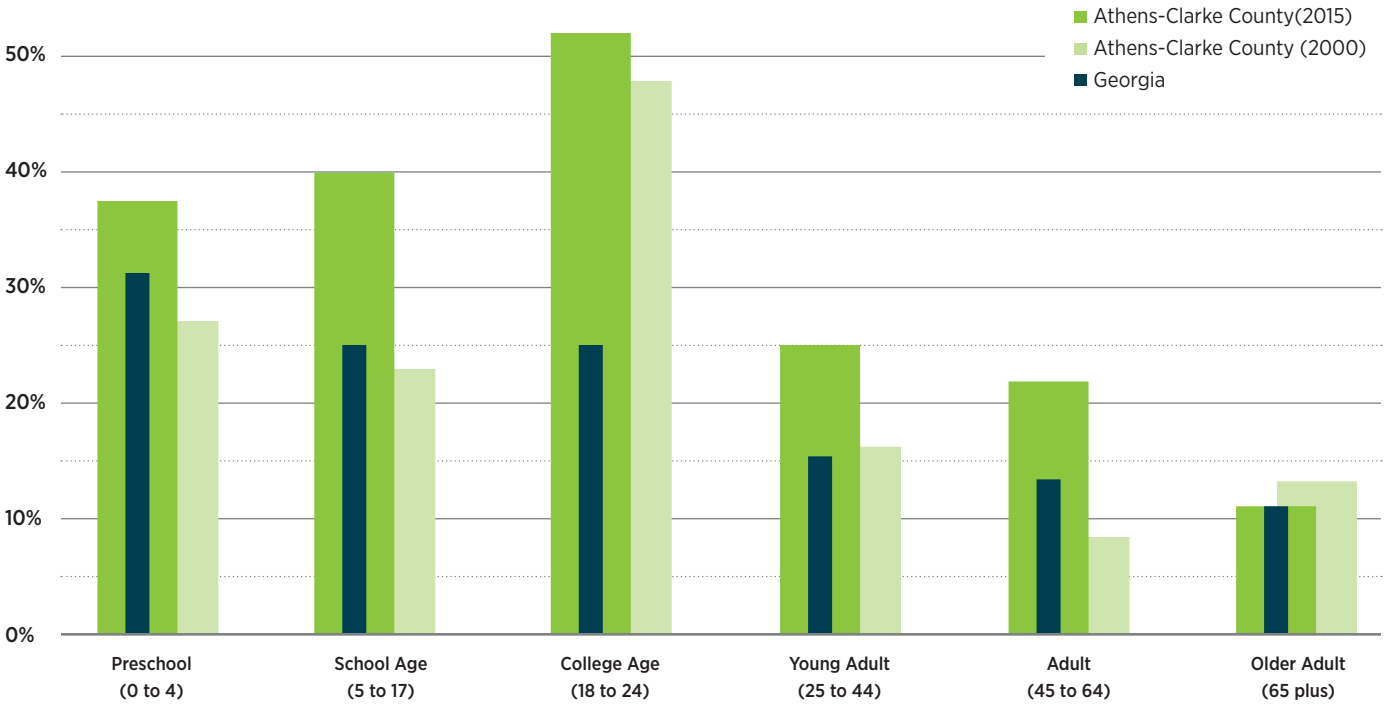
After removing the balance of college age residents from the measure, the poverty rate decreases by eight points, and is middling compared to Georgia's 159 counties.

Increase in households with children receiving food stamps. Between 2003 and 2013, 3,700 new households were receiving food assistance or stamps. This represented an increase of 183 percent over this period.

Decline in home ownership. The majority of residents, close to 61 percent, rent versus own their homes. This increased 23 percent since 2000.

Poverty Rate Calculation
The poverty rate refers to the percentage of the population whose household income falls below the nationally-calculated Poverty Thresholds. If a household's total (pre-tax) income is less than the corresponding threshold, all members of that family are considered to be in poverty. Thresholds are determined according to family size: for example, the threshold income for a family of four (with two children) is $24,008. The threshold for a single person under the age of 65 is $12,071. (Source: US Census)

FIG 8. POVERTY AS A PERCENTAGE BY AGE SEGMENT, 2000-2015



Source: U.S. Census, American Communities Survey

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

General improvements in educational attainment. From 2000 there was a 30 percent increase in residents with at least an Associate's Degree. This is equivalent to just over 7,100 individuals. Accordingly, fewer residents today are without a High School Degree (19 percent in 2000, 14 percent today).

A diverse community with an even more diverse district. Reflecting the surrounding community, the Clarke County School District is quite diverse. African American students represent half of enrolled students with Hispanic and Latinx making up 24 percent, White students 21 percent and Asian and Multi-racial students, six percent. There are dozens of languages spoken in the homes of children in the public school system

Large private, charter or home school enrollment. The balance of school age children not enrolled in the public system is just over 2,300 students.

INCREASE IN RESIDENTS WITH AN ASSOCIATES DEGREE

+30%

Educational attainment has increased, especially in residents with at least an Associate's Degree.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

30

There are dozens of languages spoken in the homes of children in the public school system.

TOTAL ENROLLMENT PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL

16,002

With just over 13,500 enrolled in public school the remaining school-age population attend either private, charter or home schools.

TOTAL ENROLLMENT POST-SECONDARY ALL INSTITUTIONS

41,000

The University of Georgia, Athens Tech, and Piedmont College host a large number of college students.

University of Georgia is a key community driver. The University, its 36,000 students, 10,655 faculty and staff and more than 170 majors and degree programs are a key community driver. As one of the larger research institutions in the country, each year the University tallies just over $200 million in research and development funding and collects $6.6 million in intellectual property income. As one of the original Land Grant Colleges established with the Morrill Act, the institution has a strong focus in Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. Of the 193 plant patents granted in Georgia since 2010, Clarke County represented 10 percent of the total, no doubt as a result of research work of the UGA Agriculture program.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Decreasing instances of adult obesity. From a high of 28 percent in 2012, obesity among adults has decreased each year to 25 percent in 2016. Obesity greatly increases the likelihood of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Smoking rates and instances of excessive drinking higher than the state. The percentage of residents who smoke regularly, 20 percent, is three points higher than the state average of 17 percent. Excessive drinking instances for individuals increased from 15 percent in 2012 to 17 percent in 2016.

Higher instances of food insecurity and limited access to healthy foods. Food insecurity, at 22 percent, is higher than than the state average of 19 percent. 21 percent say they do not have access to healthy foods, compared to 8 percent in Georgia.

ADULT OBESITY

1 in 4

In a state with high levels of adult obesity (29 percent) the County has improved but still exceeds national averages.

ADULT SMOKING

20%

Regular adult smoking average higher than the state's 17 percent.

TEEN BIRTHS PER 1,000

22

Teen pregnancies are less frequent in the County comparing to state average of 42 per 1,000 in the population.

Active Transportation and Health

The American Planning Association has identified cycling infrastructure as one of the simplest methods for confronting community health issues like obesity, and inactivity. Athens has an increasing vibrant biking culture and is expanding its bike-specific infrastructure.

PLACE

Athens-Clarke County is a beautiful community with a wide range of places and environments. It's also small. Of Georgia's 159 counties, Athens is the smallest by ten square miles. This limitation alone poses a significant challenge. When combined with the community's support for rural preservation, there are fewer easy areas for expansion. This has driven positive trends like reinvestment in the Downtown and infill development, but also contributed to concerns over housing availability and affordability. The Place section reviews the character of county's places, analyzes mobility and describes the key conditions and trends for housing.

Key Findings

The following are key points from the place-based research of the County.

TOTAL LAND AREA

122 sq mi

Of Georgia's 159 counties, Athens-Clarke is the smallest by more than ten square miles.

PERCENTAGE WORKFORCE HOUSING

11%

Between 2005 and 2015, a small share of workforce housing was constructed, with the majority of growth in student, multifamily.

LARGE RURAL PRESERVE

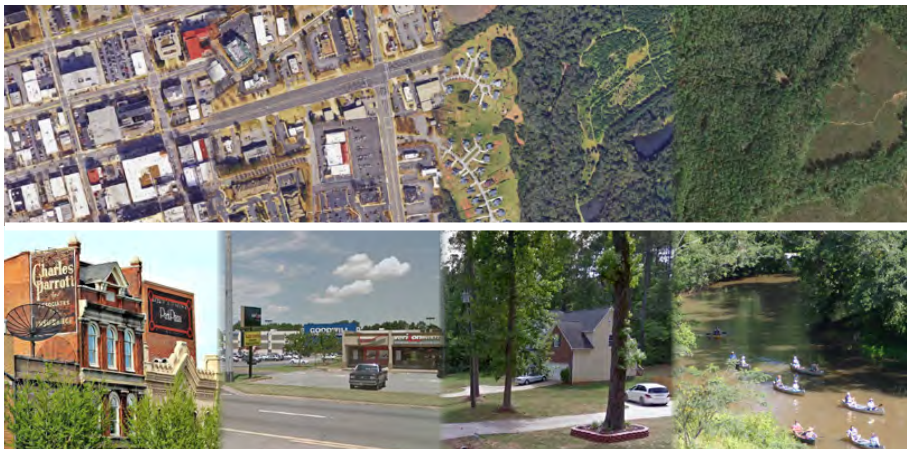
28,000

Around 38 percent of the County is classified into a rural zone, which limits subdivision / development.

DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

A variety of place types. From the fully urban environment of Downtown to the secluded rural areas along the edges of the County, Athens-Clarke has a wide variety of place types. The look and feel of these environments vary based on density, size and scale of development, as well as their mix of uses therein. There are four basic place types that have been explored in the graphic to the right and mapped on the following page. These include the Urban, Suburban, Rural Edge and Rural places. The boundary between these types is not hard or fixed. Rather, there is a gradual curve from the dense urban core toward the rural areas. This transect, or variety of places, is unique for a community of this size and is a central asset of the County.

URBAN ← → SUBURBAN ← → RURAL EDGE ← → RURAL



URBAN

Walkable, mix of uses, grid streets, tall, dense, dynamic, and the center of activity. Can also include close in neighborhoods.

SUBURBAN

Auto-dependant, separation of uses, mixed density, single use focus including residential, commercial and industrial

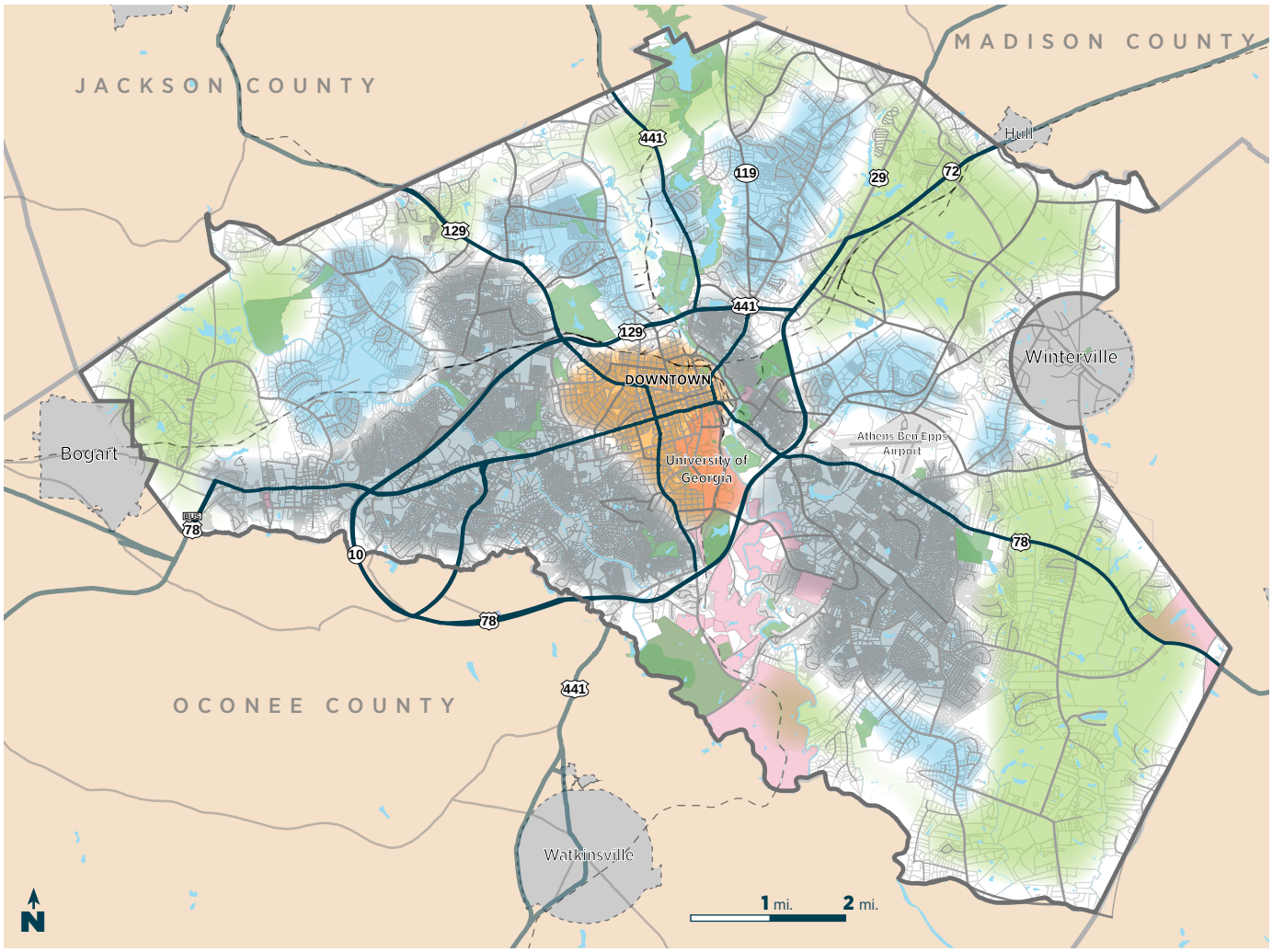
RURAL EDGE

Transition from suburban areas to fully rural, primarily residential, intermittent buildings on large lots

RURAL

Conserved land, waterways, natural areas, or agricultural land at the far edges of the County some in permanent preserve

FIG 9. DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER MAP



Source: ESRI, Athens-Clarke County Department of Planning and Zoning Data

Urban

The urban places in the County are clustered within Downtown and the UGA campus. Several of the adjoining Downtown neighborhoods also fit the definition. These places are where some of the first, pre-automobile development took place, hence their walkability. In most cases, urban places bleed into the suburban place type.

Suburban

The suburban place type encompasses a large portion of the developed part of the County. These areas tend to include post-war development that is more auto-oriented and less walkable. The neighborhoods beyond Downtown, commercial areas along Atlanta Highway and Lexington Road, or industrial development throughout the County all fit this category.

Rural Edge

Beyond the denser development in the urban and suburban areas, fingers of residential development weave into the more rural areas of the County. These places are sparsely developed, and separated by large tree stands, or agricultural fields.

Rural

The far edges of the County are made up of rural areas with large lots, working agricultural lands, or open areas. Intermittent residential developments sit on large lots and are not served with utilities like water and sewer.

HOUSING

Market heating up, but mostly in multi-family construction. Residential construction has seen a significant recovery since the low set during the recession. Much of this construction has been focused into multi-family projects. Since 2011, 72 individual multi-family projects added just over 1,500 units to the market. Over this same period, 653 single-family permits were pulled. In competitive markets, a higher share of permits are being issued to single-family projects. In 2015, 97 percent of permits (totaling $79 million in investment) were issued in Oconee County. In Athens, this was 27 percent or $22 million. The rate of construction for single-family housing actually decreased 27 percent from the previous year.

Most new multifamily housing is student apartments. Between 2005-2015, there were 19 apartment developments with 2,255 new units built in Athens. 67 percent of those units are considered student apartments or housing. Students living in non-group quarters or in off-campus housing are typically counted in all census measures including poverty statistics.

There is a need for workforce and senior housing. Only 11 percent of multifamily units built between 2005-2015 are considered workforce housing. Along with this, the zero percent vacancy rate for senior housing in the community indicates an un-met demand.

There are limited housing options for households earning 60-120 percent of median income. 64 percent of households make less than $50,000 per year. With a median family income of $32,162, affordable rent would equal $804 and an affordable home price would be between $130k-150k (depending on interest rates and available down payment). With the average sales price of $200,400 for all home types and $338,028 for new construction, there is a gap between affordability and availability.

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS BUILT 2011-16

2,153

Large share, or 73 percent, in 72 individual multi-family projects

NEW WORKFORCE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, 2005-15

11%

Between 2005 and 2015, a small share of workforce housing constructed, majority of growth in student, multifamily

TOTAL INVESTMENT IN SINGLE FAMILY PROJECTS, OCONEE CO. VS. ACC

$80M vs. $22M

In 2015, 97 percent of residential construction permits were issued to single-family projects, in Jackson County all permits, with a total of $96 million

TYPE OF OCCUPIED HOUSING

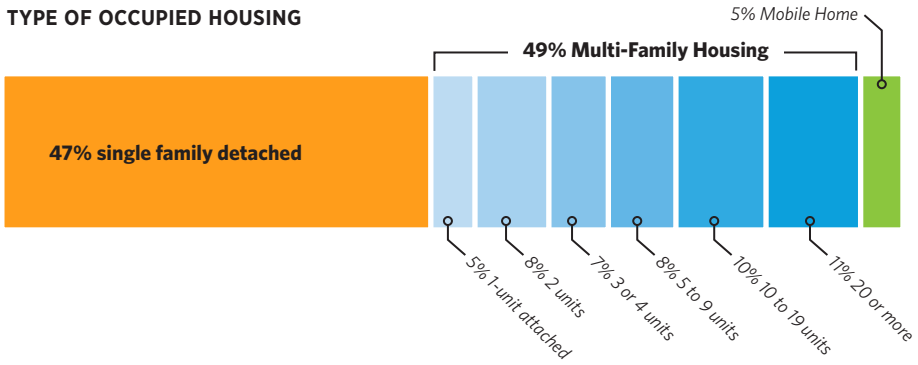


FIG 10. HOUSING COST VS. AFFORDABILITY

Source: Athens-Clarke County Workforce Housing Comprehensive Assessment, American Communities Survey

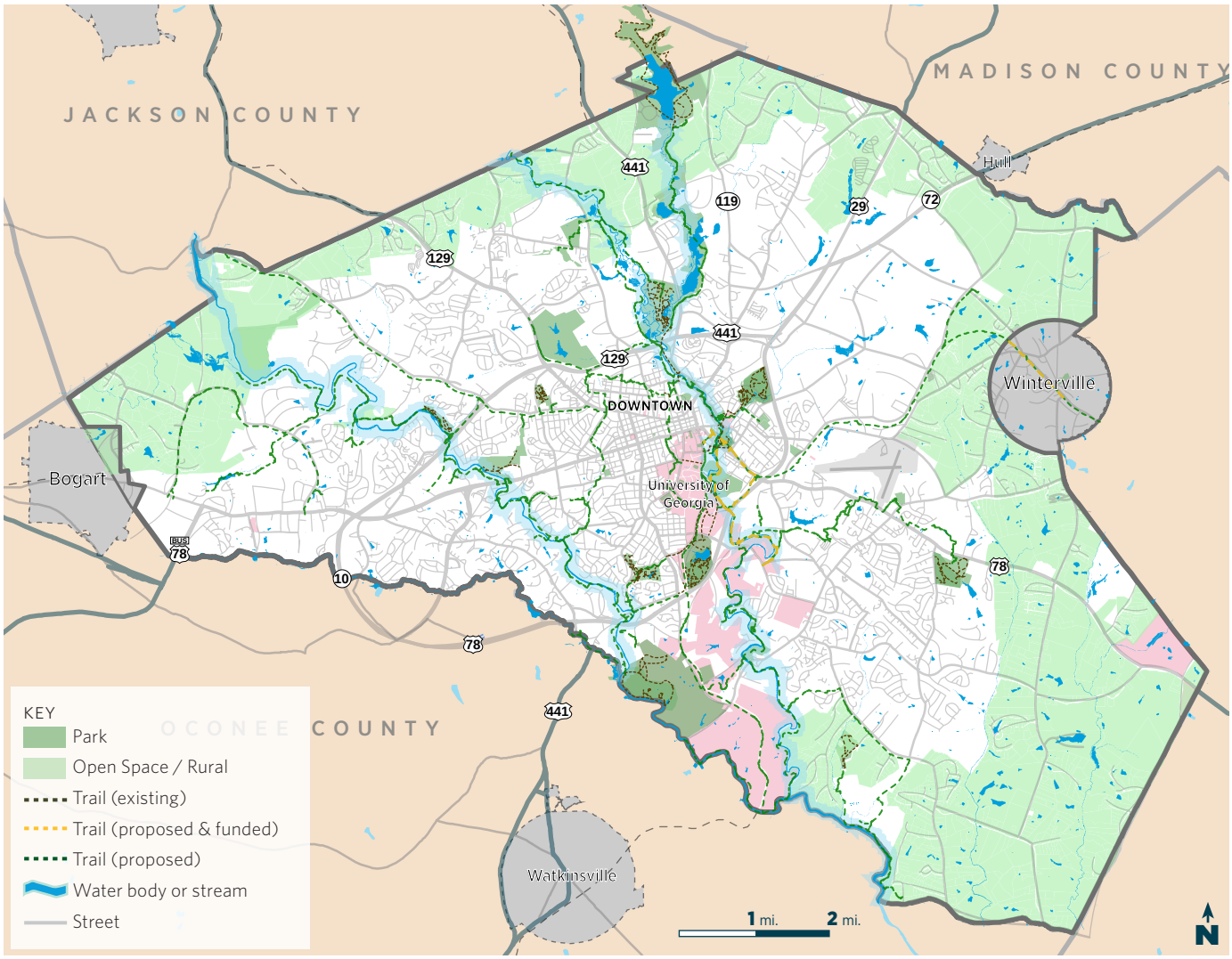
PARKS, PATHS & OPEN SPACE

Wealth of natural, open spaces and agricultural heritage. The County enjoys a unique mix of environments from a fully urban Downtown to untouched natural and rural areas on its periphery. Stream corridors snake from north to south, meeting to form the southern border of the County, the Oconee River. In the hillier areas there are woodlots, cut into by valleys of small-acreage agriculture. Designated park areas surround the center of the County, mostly along one of the major stream corridors.

Large park system with expanding trail network. The County's Leisure Service Department maintains more than 2,000 acres of parks and recreational facilities along with 37 miles of trails. The recently completed Greenways Master Plan update includes a number of recommendations for new trails and park space. Park areas, however, are not evenly distributed. The downtown areas have limited access to green spaces. This is slowly changing with improvements to the North Oconee River Corridor.

A focus on greenway and stream corridor protection. The County completed its first greenway plan in 2003, recommending a number of conservation and protection principles for its many streams and tributaries. The plan also introduced an evaluation technique to identify a hierarchy of streams and related protections. This plan was updated in 2016, including new and proposed trail projects along major greenways. These have been included in the map below.

FIG 11. PARKS, PATHS AND OPEN SPACES MAP



Source:

MOBILITY

A robust and proactive transit system. The County is served by two fixed-route transit service providers, Athens Transit and the University of Georgia. Athens Transit is a leader in comparably sized systems and won the 2016 award for Urban Community Transportation System of the Year. The system operates 19 routes, serves more than 1.7 million passenger trips annually, and has a service area population of 116,714. The UGA system serves the campus areas, along with several spurs to neighboring student apartment complexes.

Potential to improve service by studying underserved but high-potential ridership neighborhoods. In its 2016 Athens Transit Feasibility Study, several areas of the County were identified as having a high propensity for transit use, but a lack of frequent or available service. This map is included in Figure 12.

Expansion of cycling infrastructure and advocacy. On street infrastructure for cycling (bike lanes, painted sharrows, etc.) has become more common on major corridors and in Downtown. The Bike-Pedestrian Master Plan, launching in 2017, will seek to align major initiatives and develop high priority projects and programs. Safety is a primary concern. Bicycle injury accidents have increased 312 percent from 2012 to 2015.

Six corridor types identified in County Corridor Management Strategy. The County's roadway network includes roughly 600 miles of paved roads. The 2006 Corridor Plan divided these into three basic types, urban, suburban and rural or scenic streets. Urban corridors were those with higher density, more pedestrian activity, and more intense commercial and residential uses. Suburban corridors were higher volume, lower density. And Rural or Scenic corridors connected areas on the periphery.

MILES OF LOCALLY MAINTAINED ROADS

537

The County maintains local roads, there are 56 miles of state routes maintained by Georgia DOT

CHANGE IN YOUTH RIDERSHIP FROM 2014

+470%

Students from kindergarten to 12th grade now ride for free on the Athens Transit system

BICYCLE INJURY ACCIDENTS CHANGE FROM 2012 - 15

+312%

Both pedestrian and bicycle injury accidents have increased from 2012, pedestrian accidents up 81 percent

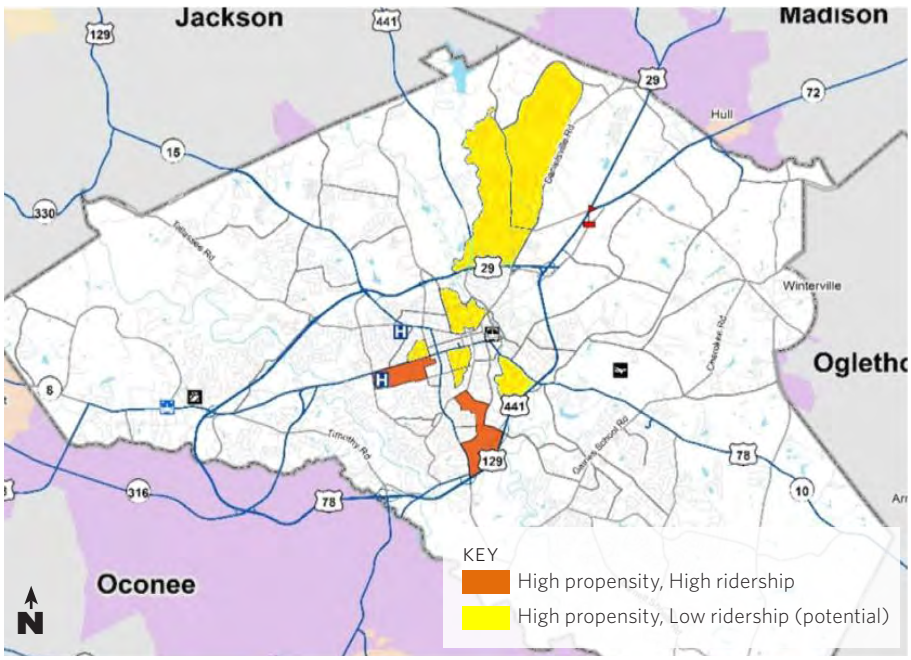
ANNUAL PASSENGER TRIPS ATHENS TRANSIT SYSTEM

1.7M

Down slightly, -6.7 percent, from a high in 2009 of 1.8m trips

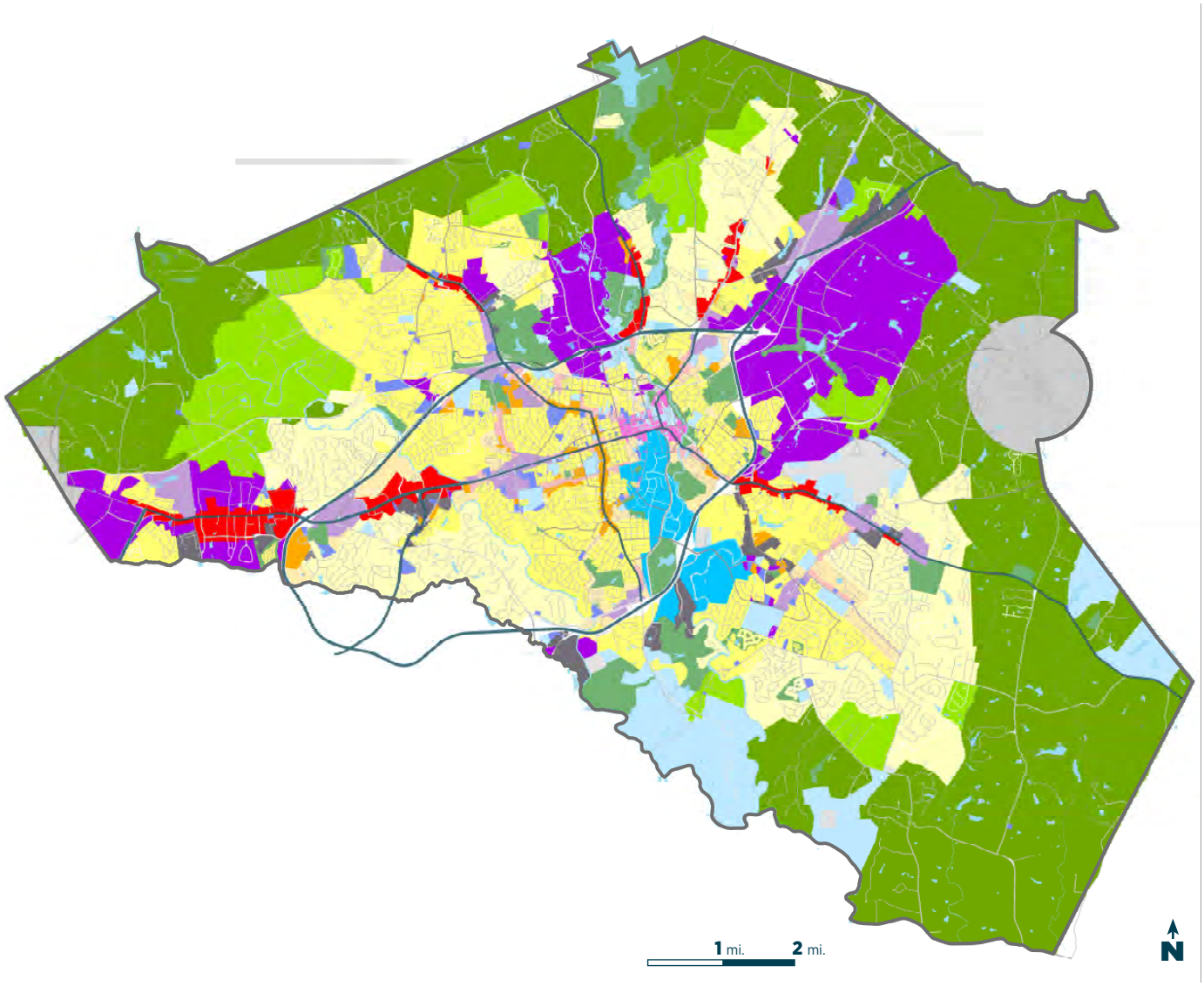
The Athens Multi-Modal Transit Center
Completed in 2006, the $4.5m Transit Center was built to increase rideshare opportunities between the various systems (community and regional) operating in the County.

FIG 12. NEW POTENTIAL RIDERSHIP MAP



Source: Athens Transit Feasibility Study (2016)

FIG 13. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP



Source: Athens-Clarke County Department of Planning

FUTURE LAND USES

- Community Center Mixed Use
- Community Institutional
- Corridor Business
- Corridor Residential
- Downtown
- Employment
- Government
- Main Street Business
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Other Parks and Open Space
- Public Owned Parks and Open Space
- Residential Mixed Use
- Rural
- Rural Residential
- Single family Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Transportation / Utilities
- University District

ADDITIONAL MAP ITEMS

- Street
- Water
- Other Jurisdiction

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

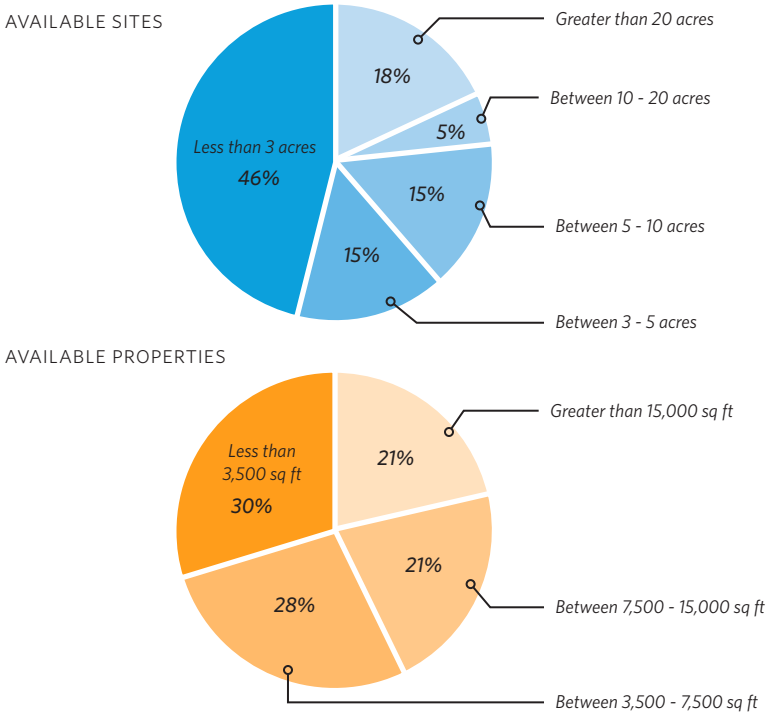
2008 Comprehensive Plan identified three major character areas to direct growth and development. The plan identified a rural zone (limited to no growth), a "Greater Athens", and "Traditional Athens" zone. Growth and development was recommended to take place at key nodes and either serve a neighborhood (small scale) or the community (large scale). Gateways would be developed at each character area boundary to better define boundaries between types.

The "Rural" zone helps preserve 38 percent of the County, mostly along the periphery. The 2014 Zoning Amendment formally designated roughly 28,000 acres as rural residential, limiting development to one unit per ten acres. This has effectively halted the subdivision and development of land in these areas.

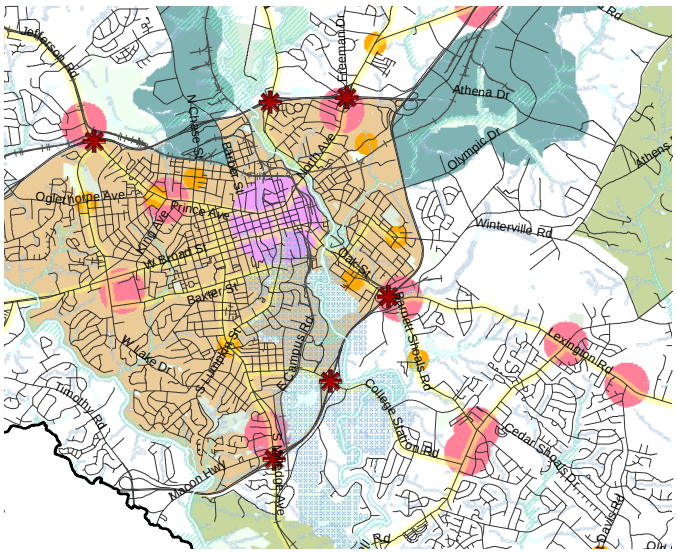
Limited number of marketed industrial and commercial land and property. There are 39 sites totaling 365 acres of available (actively marketed) land in the County. 62 percent are less than five acres in size. Only nine properties are more than ten acres. There are 47 properties totaling 550k square feet of available industrial and commercial building space in the County. 68 percent of the space is less than 10k square feet in size, with little contemporary flexible space available.

By 2020, 253 parcels or 411 acres of land will shift into a timely state for redevelopment. A 2007 development analysis, identified a great deal of opportunity for redevelopment in the 2010's and 2020's. Parcels were evaluated based on a land value ratio to determine which properties would be primed for redevelopment and when. The cumulative value of eligible property primed by 2020 was equal to $100 million in land value, with a potential recaptured improvement value of $145 million. As greenfield sites become scarcer, redevelopment will be increasingly important.

FIG 14. BREAKDOWN OF AVAILABLE COMMERCIAL LAND / PROPERTY (2017)



Source: CoStar Data



Source:

The 2008 Growth Concept Map
The Concept Map divides Athens-Clarke County into three general future growth areas: Rural, Greater Athens, and Traditional Athens. Nodes, or crossings of major thoroughfares are the preferred locations for commercial activity. There are two scales: Neighborhood serving the needs of the walkable radius, and Community serving a larger, drivable customer base.

TOTAL REDEVELOPMENT VALUE (LAND & PROPERTY) 2020

$245M

More than 250 parcels will be primed for redevelopment 2020, representing $100 million in land value, and $145 in property value.

TOTAL MARKETED ACREAGE

365

As of first quarter 2017 there were 39 total sites being actively marketed in the County, 62 percent of these were less than five acres.

POTENTIAL

The potential for Athens economy is mixed. While employment and complementary data reveal that there is a small but emerging creative and innovation economy, the County will be challenged to find enough workers to meet significant growth in innovation sectors. Further, while Athens can accommodate its local economy it could be challenged to meet space needs if a few of these businesses requiring office space or specialized space (such as bioscience) have significant rapid growth or if a major company wanted to relocate there. The Potential Chapter includes an analysis of key economic factors related to Athens' future economic growth.

Key Findings

The following are key points from the economic potential research of the County.

BUSINESS SIZE DISTRIBUTION

90%

Businesses between 1-10 employees represent nearly 90% of all firms but account for less than 25% of employees

WORKERS IN TECH/CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

11%

At least 1,000 people work in tech or creative industries (excluding UGA)

LAND ZONED FOR BUSINESS

28,000

14% of the County is zoned for commercial, industrial or employment uses but much of the land faces development constraints

INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION

Small businesses are important but are not the primary source of employment. Small businesses (those employing less than ten employees) represent nearly 90 percent of businesses, but less than 25 percent of employment. The size distribution of firms across industries reveals that Manufacturing and Healthcare/Social Services are industries with the largest employers. For instance, Manufacturing represents only three percent of all establishments but 12 percent of businesses larger than 50 employees.

Self-employment plays an important role. When self-employment data is added to unemployment insurance covered jobs, an additional 16,000 jobs exist. This adds an additional 26 percent to the overall job base. This is an important contributor to the employment base. The number of people engaged in the professional technical services industry doubles. Similarly, the arts and entertainment sector doubles from 600 to just under 1,300 people.

FIG 15. INDUSTRY MIX BY FIRM SIZE

Industry	Firm Size									
	All	1 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 49	50 - 99	100 - 249	250 - 499	500 - 999	1k or more
Construction	38%	5%	4%	3%	3%	6%	4%	-	-	-
Manufacturing	3%	1%	3%	4%	4%	7%	17%	38%	-	33%
Wholesale trade	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%	4%	25%	-	-
Retail trade	18%	15%	24%	20%	14%	18%	20%	13%	-	-
Transportation & warehousing	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	6%	-	-	-
Information	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	-	-	-
Finance & insurance	6%	6%	8%	6%	2%	2%		-	-	-
Real estate & rental & leasing	7%	10%	6%	5%	2%	-	6%	-	-	-
Professional & technical services	11%	16%	7%	7%	3%	-	4%	-	-	-
Mgnt. of comp. & enterprises	-	-	-	-	-	1%	-	13%	-	-
Admin. & waste services	4%	5%	2%	5%	3%	5%	11%	13%	-	-
Educational services	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	-	-	-
Health care & social assistance	15%	14%	18%	15%	15%	11%	19%	-	-	67%
Arts, entertainment, & rec.	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%	4%	-	-	-
Accommodation & food services	12%	5%	7%	17%	38%	36%	2%	-	-	-
Other services, except govt	9%	10%	11%	10%	5%	3%	2%	-	-	-
TOTAL	100%	49%	19%	15%	11%	4%	2%	0.3%	-	0.1%

Source: NP analysis 2015 County Business Patterns
Note: University of Georgia and Athens Tech are not listed as private employers

The Atlanta region offers insights into potential growth industries. Digital tech firms represented 28 percent of the firm growth and 17 percent of the traded sector job growth in the Atlanta metro area between 2007 and 2015. A large percentage of these jobs are driven by lifestyle choices (i.e. where proprietors want to live) balanced with the ability to attract talent and access clients. While manufacturing firms employ more people on average than traded sectors advanced manufacturing and "maker" type businesses lag traded services in both job and firm growth.

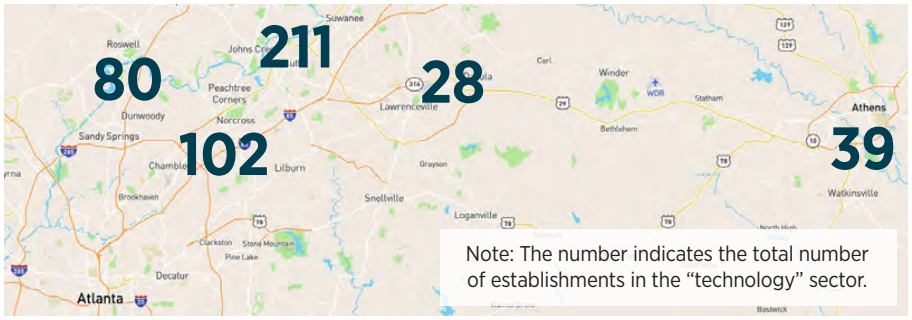
INNOVATION POTENTIAL

A breadth of tech and related companies exist in the County. It's estimated that roughly 1,000 people (excluding UGA) work in tech or creative industries. It is likely that at least ten percent and possibly as much as 20 percent work in life science related businesses.

Consumer facing product based activity is part of the economic picture. By looking at tech related establishment creation in combination with data from sources like Etsy and Kickstarter, it is clear that there is both an active tech culture starting to form in the County as well as entrepreneurs focused on consumer oriented products.

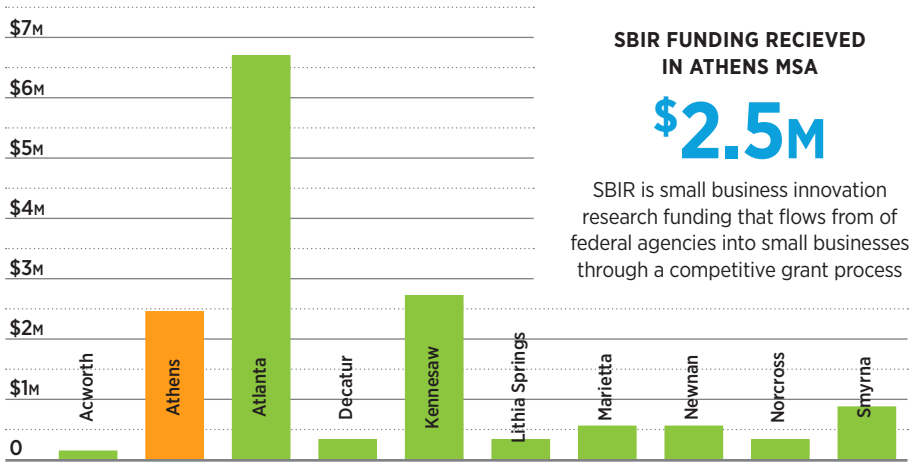
Athens is a key location for developing a home-grown biotech industry. In terms of technology development potential, the County has the 2nd highest level of National Institute of Health (NIH) research funding in the state. UGA is unparallelled in the country in research funding for state universities. The state's ability to develop a homegrown biotech industry will in part depend on the trajectory of UGA in this area.

FIG 16. TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES OF NORTH ATLANTA



Source: Mapbox, Bureau of Statistics

FIG 17. SMALL BUSINESS INNOVATION RESEARCH FEDERAL FUNDING



SBIR FUNDING RECIEVED IN ATHENS MSA

$2.5M

SBIR is small business innovation research funding that flows from of federal agencies into small businesses through a competitive grant process

Source: SBIR

WORKERS IN TECH & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

1,000

Between 10 and 20 percent work in life science related business

NIH RESEARCH FUNDING RANKING BY COUNTY, GEORGIA

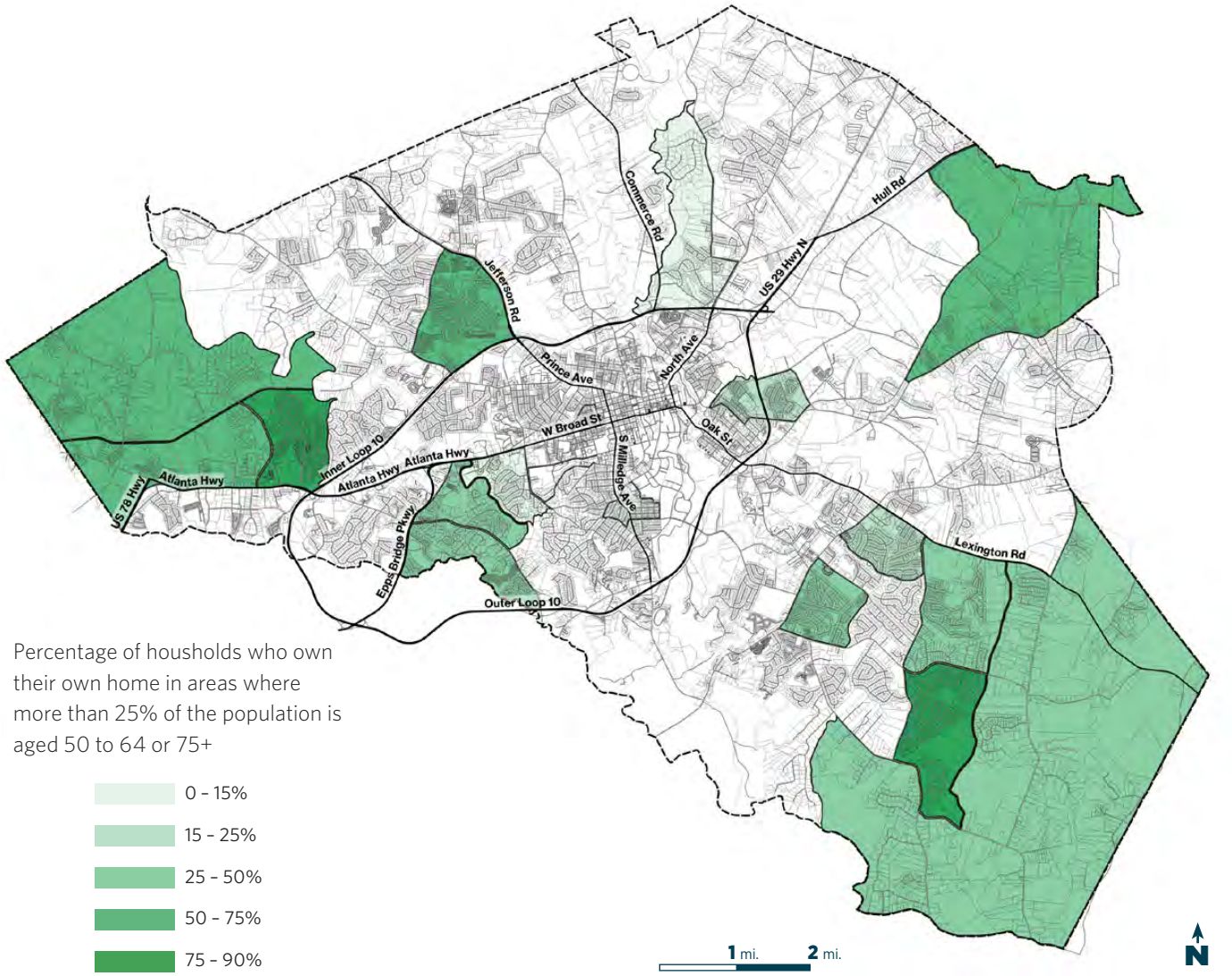
2ND

ACC has received just over $50 million in 2016 for research funding trailing only the Atlanta metro area

The County is a major recipient of small business research funds. Small business innovation research funding (SBIR) flows from a variety of federal agencies into small businesses through a competitive grant process. Athens based businesses are important contributors to the state's SBIR funding levels. Moreover, despite the substantially larger research base in Atlanta (NIH funding alone is almost eight times larger), SBIR funding in Atlanta is just over 2.5 times larger.

Athens has high concentrations of jobs in biological sciences but lags in other key areas. While the County has high concentrations of workers in biological sciences it lags well behind national averages for computer-oriented occupations such as programmers and application developers. Further, its employee pool is relatively low in a number of technical fields typically associated with innovation industries.

FIG 18. NEIGHBORHOOD PROPENSITY TO CHANGE BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS



Source: NP analysis of Athens-Clarke County Department of Planning Data

POPULATION & HOUSING DYNAMICS

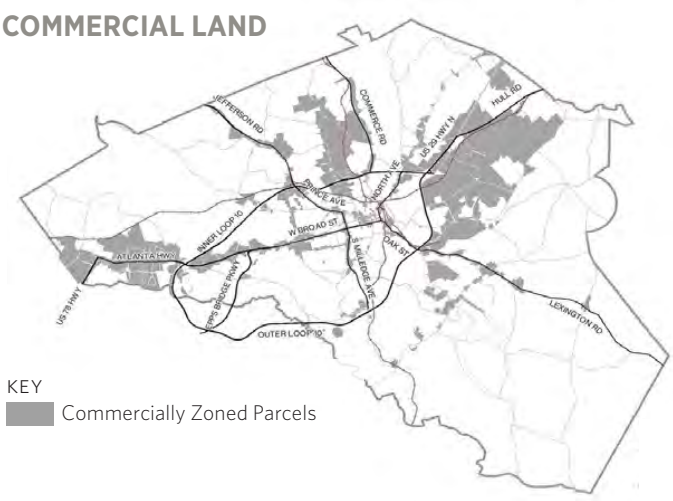
The County draws workers from the northern Atlanta suburbs. While Athens-Clarke County draws workers from a wide area, commuting patterns indicate that those workers are weighted toward the northern Atlanta suburbs. There is a clustering around the smaller towns in those neighboring counties and additional commuting spreads up toward Interstate 85.

Neighborhoods with the greatest propensity for change tend to be in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the County. A neighborhood's propensity for change is based on demographics using age as a predictor of life stage (examining households with people aged 50 and 64 as an indicator of potential downsizing and as households with 75+ ages as an indicator of changing housing needs). Looking at Census tracts that had high numbers of these age groups and high home ownership rates, several areas have been identified and may see substantial demographic change over the next several years.

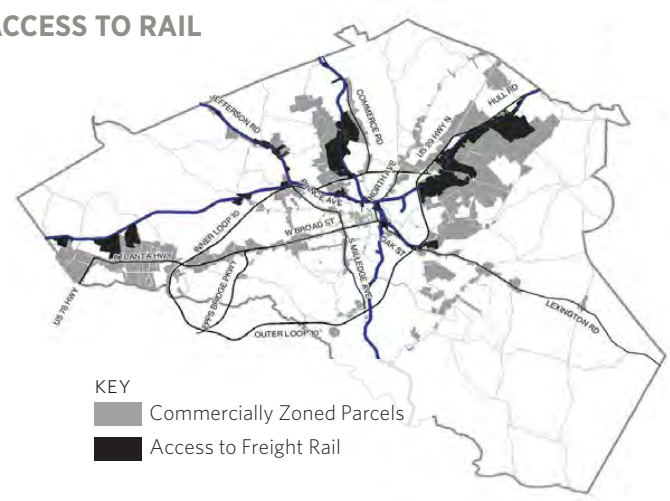
Home sale prices and rents relate to proximity to Athens core and access to northern Atlanta. While there is a wide range of housing prices, looking at price on a per square foot basis reveal that homes closest to the County's core are the most expensive. Homes on the western edge of the commuting shed are 20 to 40 percent more expensive per square foot. Rents follow a similar pattern and differential to for-sale home prices.

FIG 19. MULTI-FACTOR STUDY OF ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

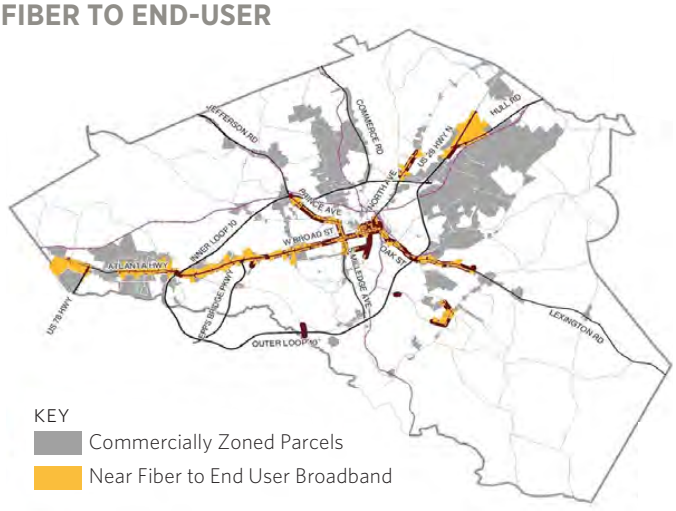
COMMERCIAL LAND



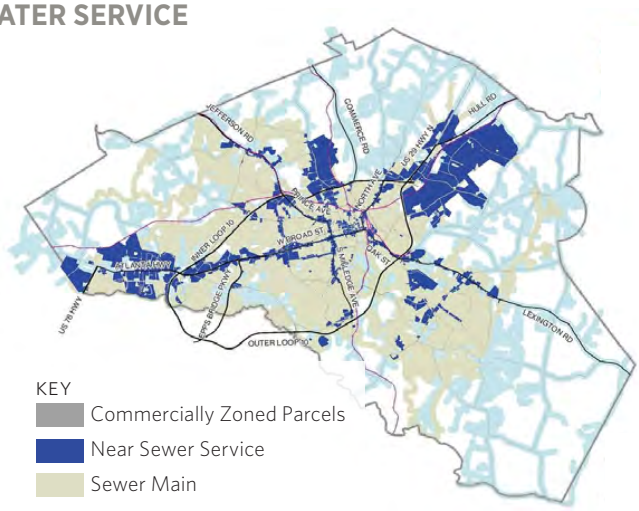
ACCESS TO RAIL



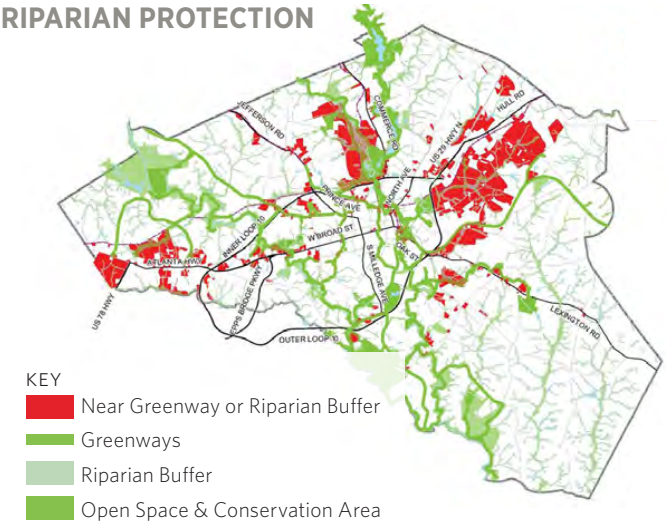
FIBER TO END-USER



WATER SERVICE



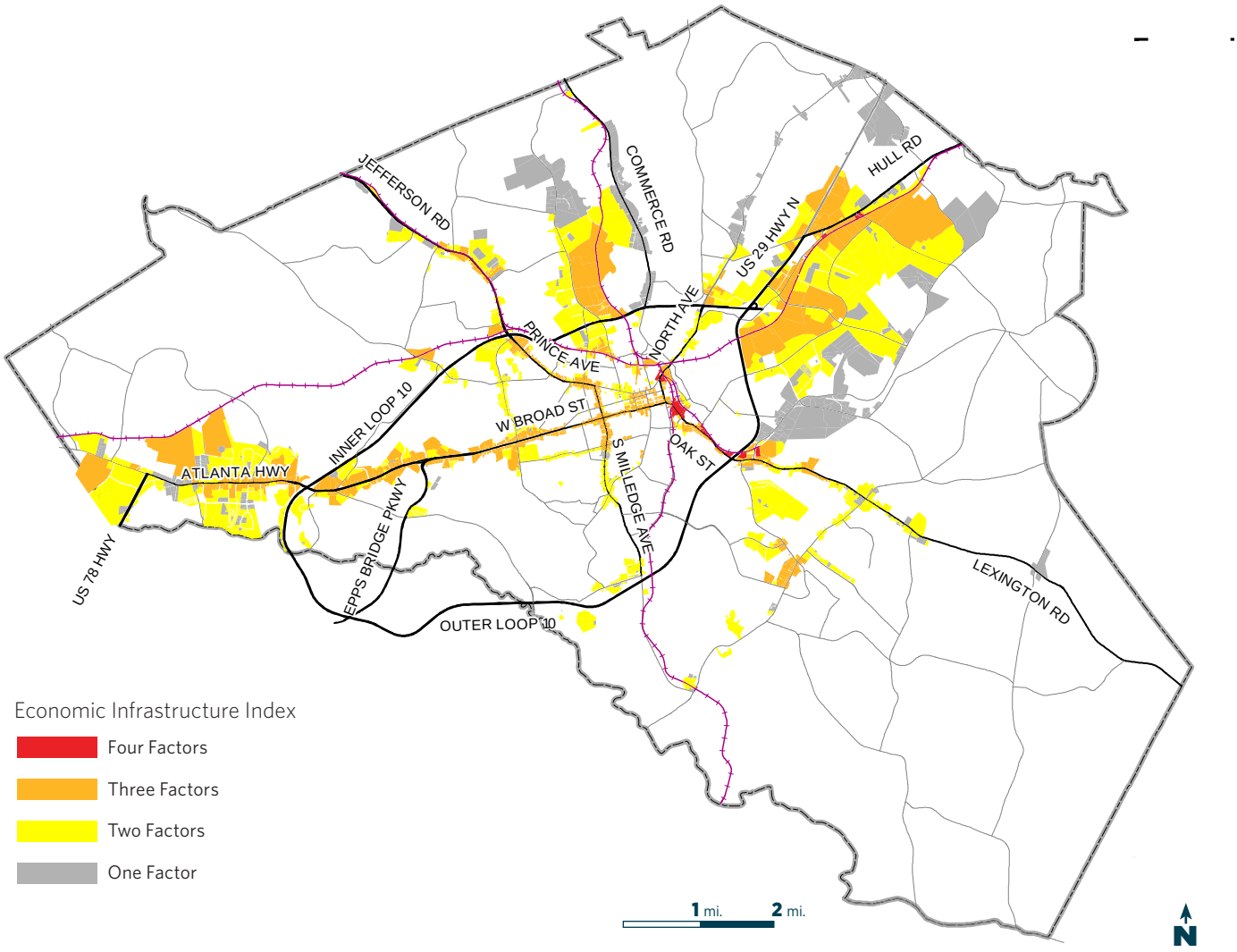
RIPARIAN PROTECTION



Multi-factor land analysis reveals very little land available for new commercial development. The analysis illustrated above reveals the limitations to commercial development in the County. As the smallest county in Georgia, Athens-Clarke starts from a disadvantage. Around 11,000 acres of the County's 122 square miles are zoned for commercial development. The majority of that land, however, is constrained. The analysis uses a five-factor index to measure the relative suitability for future commercial investment. These include underlying zoning, freight rail access, fiber to end-user, water service and environmental constraints. A final map, on the next page, reveals the parcels that meet one or more of these classifications. Only commercial land is included in the analysis, thus four-factor parcels have received the highest score possible. As indicated by the map, very few areas receive a four-factor score, and those that do are small, concentrated near Downtown, and relatively discontiguous.

Source: NP analysis of Athens-Clarke County Department of Planning Data

FIG 20. ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE INDEX



Source: NP analysis of Athens-Clarke County Department of Planning Data

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Land with available critical infrastructure is mixed. Of the 10,757 acres that are zoned commercial, employment, industrial (CEI) only one percent of those acres have all infrastructure including rail access, broadband, water and sewer. 76% of CEI land has two or three of these factors.

62% of CEI lands are near a greenway or riparian buffer. In addition to the infrastructure limitations, major portions of the County's zoned land face some form of potential conservation conflict or limitation that impedes full utilization of the property. However, while a number of these parcels have constraints, only 10% have more than 50% of their total acreage limited by these conservation and natural resource issues.

The County has a mixed ability to meet the land and building needs of interested industries. An analysis of opportunities presented to the County's Economic Development agency indicated the County's mixed ability to meet the land or building requirements of different industries. The County has the potential to meet many of the large-scale land needs but in some cases additional site infrastructure will be needed. The ability to meet the building needs is more problematic and can be impacted by quality, layout, columns, and height. Sales leads without space requirements include six manufacturing and two back office firms.

FOCUS

What are the key challenges Envision Athens should address? What are the opportunities that will move the community closer to its vision over the next 20 years? These questions help to define the focus of the Action Agenda. The following statements connect the results of the community engagement and the findings from the research and analysis with the 100+ projects, policies or programs. Note the symbol to the left. These have been included in the Action Agenda as a reference.

PROVIDING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Illuminate a path for individuals and families to escape the cycle of poverty, find gainful employment, and fully explore their unique potential.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reduce poverty
- Improve educational outcomes
- Unlock human capacity
- Inspire community reinvestment

PROTECTING, ENHANCING AND LEVERAGING ASSETS

Identify the positive and unique characteristics in Athens' people and places, finding leverage opportunities, and passing them, enhanced, to the next generation.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve our environment
- Create dynamic, fun and functional places
- Leverage natural advantages, overcome disadvantages
- Protect our human capital

KEEPING ATHENS...ATHENS

Maintain those authentic, Athenian attributes that make the place unique, create identity, and build a strong attachment between residents and where they live.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage the arts "scene"
- Allow room for experiments
- Demand thoughtful design
- Keep the past in sight

RAISING THE TIDE

Fight to expand the economic capacity of the region through competition, collaboration, and innovation that leverages the community's natural advantages.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Create more livelihoods
- Improve wages for all
- Capture entrepreneurial growth
- Build on existing assets

TAPPING THE TALENT

Consider the full potential of every resident and meet their abilities with opportunities, their aspirations with willing partners, and their career goals with local options.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Keep the brains
- Train for the next economy
- Unleash new leaders
- Build and grow locally

LIVING BETTER, LONGER AND STRONGER

Inspire individuals to live healthy, safe lifestyles through education, community design, and collaboration between healthcare, social service, and non-profit organizations.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve health outcomes
- Create safer communities
- Coordinate communication
- Protect human assets

IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

Build strong and lasting connections that are both physical - with multiple modes - and relationship based - between individuals and organizations.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Consider the future of transportation
- Connect the region to the world
- Forge new connections between organizations and institutions
- Cross-pollinate ideas

COMING TOGETHER, STAYING TOGETHER

Create a strong understanding and recognition of the power of Athens' diversity through community conversations, vibrant events, and new-found relationships.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Foster better understanding and commitment
- Celebrate more often
- Build strong and stable neighborhoods
- Develop inclusive policies

BUILDING AN EQUITABLE COMMUNITY

Empathize with the experiences of others to build a community where all voices are heard, ambitions are pursued, and lives are fulfilled.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide opportunities for all
- Remove arbitrary barriers to entry
- Think holistically, community-wide
- Lift up every individual

LEADING, INNOVATING, PUSHING FORWARD

Join the vanguard in technological, industrial, and human innovation to unlock new opportunities for current and future residents, all in the name of Athens.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Fully leverage the University
- Invent new jobs, careers, economies
- Build a sustainable future
- Broadcast Athens globally

envision ATHENS our community • our future

"I'm invested in making this community better for ALL Athenians. This city is where I intend to live as long as it takes to implement these plans, and I believe in playing a part."

— Envision Athens Focus on the Future Meeting Participant

PART II
THE ACTION AGENDA

Introduction 49
Place 53
Prosperity 69
People 77
Vitality 85
Foundations 91

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SHOP

INTRODUCTION

The Envision Athens Action Agenda lays out a bold, but achievable set of strategies that will, together, move the community closer to its vision. These projects, policies or programs have been selected through a rigorous engagement program involving more than 1,600 participants. They're informed by solid research and analysis into the community's key conditions and trends, and prioritized by need. The Agenda has been broken into five chapters and fourteen topics. They are as follow:

PLACE
MAKING A GREAT PLACE

- *Agriculture*
- *Land Use*
- *Housing*
- *Neighborhoods*
- *Environment*

PROSPERITY
CREATING LIVELIHOODS

- *Economic Development*
- *Education*

PEOPLE
STRENGTHENING LIVES

- *Health*
- *Safety*
- *Social Services*

VITALITY
INVIGORATING THE COMMUNITY

- *Arts & Culture*
- *Civic Engagement*

FOUNDATIONS
BUILDING & MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION

- *Transportation*
- *Infrastructure*

PARTICIPANTS

1,621

The thousands who participated in Envision Athens represent the diversity of the Athens community.

COMMENTS & IDEAS

8,613

Insights were gathered through in-person meetings, online forms and stakeholder / focus group discussions.

ACTION PROPOSALS

103

Actions are organized into five chapters and represent discrete projects, policies or programs that will help achieve the vision.

Starting with our Priorities

TOP ACTION PROPOSALS

Through community engagement and technical analysis, the Steering Committee proposed 103 projects, policies or programs which are organized into five chapters and fourteen topics. While every proposal is important, there are several actions that have risen to the top. The ten presented were identified through direct engagement with the community and verified by the Steering Committee. They address some of the community's most pressing challenges and exploit its most important advantages. These proposals represent a starting point for implementation. Each is elaborated upon further in the respective chapter.

Voting on priorities
The Committee invited the public to review the full draft Action Agenda in meetings held throughout the County. Participants were asked to indicate their top five priority actions by placing stickers on the posters.

FINDING THE PRIORITIES

The draft Action Agenda was shared with the public in a series of Open House meetings in August and September 2017. Each meeting began with a brief presentation from the Planning Team recapping the Envision Athens process and outlining the evening's events. Participants were then encouraged to read the draft Action Agenda (printed on large poster boards) and vote on their top five priority actions. Through in-person and online feedback, the Open House sessions generated more than 2,000 priority action votes. These results were used to identify the top ten action priorities indicated to the right. Each of the 103 actions received at least one priority vote. The top actions were reviewed by the Steering Committee and the final list is presented on the following page.

A NOTE ON PRIORITIZATION

The top ten priority actions listed to the right appear first on the list of each topic in the plan. Additional actions listed below the priority action are not organized in any particular order of priority or importance.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following are the priority actions for Envision Athens. A more detailed description has been included in the following pages. To read more, please refer to the page number reference provided.

PRIORITY ACTION	TOPIC	PAGE
Develop zoning standards and incentives to include greenspace, art and other public amenities.	Land Use	p. 54
Achieve goal of 20% of County as protected greenspace.	Environment	p. 57
Utilize neighborhood schools as hubs for diverse school and neighborhood engagement.	Neighborhoods	p. 59
Target challenged multi-family developments for major redevelopment, especially mixed-income.	Housing	p. 62
Establish an Eastside Farmer's Market.	Agriculture	p. 65
Create a comprehensive economic development plan.	Economic Development	p. 70
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.	Education	p. 73
Develop an effective mental health crisis response team.	Health	p. 78
Provide and identify sufficient funding to implement the Athens-Clarke County Police Department Strategic Vision Plan.	Safety	p. 80
Address poverty by targeting unemployment and underemployment by training and preparing individuals for vocational success.	Social Services	p. 82
Measure economic impacts of arts, culture, and heritage tourism.	Arts & Culture	p. 86
Create gathering spaces that are available and accessible to all.	Civic Engagement	p. 88
Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure through respective master plans.	Transportation	p. 92
Repair and replace infrastructure assets commensurate with physical depreciation.	Infrastructure	p. 94

FOCUS STATEMENTS KEY

- PROVIDING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY
- PROTECTING, ENHANCING & LEVERAGING ASSETS
- KEEPING ATHENS....ATHENS
- RAISING THE TIDE
- TAPPING THE TALENT
- LIVING BETTER, LONGER & STRONGER
- IMPROVING CONNECTIONS
- COMING TOGETHER, STAYING TOGETHER
- BUILDING AN EQUITABLE COMMUNITY
- LEADING, INNOVATING, PUSHING FORWARD

A note on Focus Statements

Each action has been assigned one or more focus statements connecting it to the community assessment and findings from engagement. Refer to page 44 for further description.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

At just over 120 square miles, Athens-Clarke is the smallest of Georgia's 159 counties. But a unique variety of environments exist within this tiny frame. From wide open rural spaces to the dense and vibrant Downtown, the places in Athen are almost as diverse the people. The character of these areas - how people feel about them - is made up of multiple elements. Land use, housing and environmental quality, agricultural and open areas, and neighborhood vibrancy all combine to define the community's quality of place. This section provides actions within five areas to help improve the quality of Athens' places and create an even better, more vibrant community in the future.

LAND USE

The impact of land use goes far beyond colors on a zoning map. Rather, the interaction and regulation of these uses can help to improve or detract from the community's quality of place. Through zoning, careful planning and experimentation, Athens has the potential to improve and strengthen all of its diverse environments.

ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is one of Athens' primary assets and the community has taken many steps to protect it. From recycling programs to land and stream preservation, the County has a well-earned reputation for ecological stewardship. The community can continue to strengthen its initiatives and expand programs to remain a leader both regionally and around the country.

NEIGHBORHOODS

A community's character is largely defined by its neighborhoods; the variety in Athens adds to its richness and contributes greatly to its quality of place. Neighborhoods are more than a collection of houses. Great neighborhoods engender pride, encourage civic engagement, and serve as the smallest unit for democracy. The actions collected in this section seek to strengthen all the neighborhoods in Athens, add to their resiliency and make them even better places to live, play and raise a family.

HOUSING

One of the most pressing challenges facing the Athens-Clarke community is housing – the variety, the density, and the affordability. Like in all communities of choice, housing costs in Athens have increased over time. The quality of life and the University make this a vibrant place to live, but also create stress on the housing market. To meet its needs Athens must consider innovative new actions that address the quality, quantity and affordability of housing throughout the community.

AGRICULTURE

While not often touted, Athens has a productive agricultural community. The County leads the state in many areas including hydroponic technologies. The UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences is home to groundbreaking research, nine departments with dozens of related majors, and more than 2,000 students. These all represent opportunities that have been explored in the action recommendations.

Quality of place
One of Athens' primary assets is its variety of environments. From streams and open spaces to a vibrant Downtown, the community places are diverse.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

LAND USE

GOAL

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.

PRIORITY ACTION

LU1 **Develop zoning standards and incentives to include greenspace, art and other public amenities.** Through a combination of regulations and incentives the community can ensure that development and redevelopment include appropriately-scaled greenspaces and/or other public amenities to better integrate projects into the surrounding neighborhoods. These accommodations should be public and provide equitable access to residents/users/customers and the general public.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

LU2 **Develop incentives to reuse existing development before new developments in greenfields.** The relatively small geography of Athens-Clarke County, and the desire of the community to protect its greenspace and environment, make reuse of existing developed properties a high priority. Moreover, several areas of the County will require infrastructure investment to maximize their development potential. Components of a potential program include:

Reuse/Reclaim Commercial Industrial Land Program:

The analysis of industrial and commercially-zoned properties suggests that development on greenfields face two major constraints: strong riparian buffer regulations, and a lack of existing infrastructure. In combination, these limit the number of sites that may be developed. For example, only 35 percent of existing Commercial / Industrial zoned acreage has no riparian or conservation limitations. Therefore, development should focus on a Reuse/Reclaim approach, including:

- Site assembly and preparation capability to include potential demolition of existing structures;
- Facility modernization fund aimed at assisting existing industrial or commercial buildings for conversion, utility upgrades, stormwater management, or other issues related to increasing the viable reuse and reclamation of existing properties.

LU3 **Create a River District Plan and development strategy.** The north branch of the Oconee River winds just east of downtown Athens. There is an opportunity to better protect and take advantage of this asset, and in doing so, capture more real estate value and capitalize on a primary amenity. The community should consider best practices from around the world and develop a strategic development plan that provides better access and attention to the river.

LU4 **Create nodal development tied to transportation, healthcare, schools, jobs, workforce, and housing.** The intersections of major transportation routes are logical locations for higher-density, mixed-use developments. Nodal developments mimic the downtown land use pattern but along major transportation routes throughout the County. This pattern has the potential to improve the efficiency of transportation and provide more housing options, creating vibrant neighborhoods across the community.

LU5 **Develop zoning standards and incentives to develop and/or redevelop quality multi-family options for a diverse group.** There is a need for greater diversity of housing products throughout the County. Multi-family developments (especially on the periphery of the community) should be integrated into surrounding neighborhoods and include a range of price points from affordable to workforce to market-rate. The movement of student housing preferences from the periphery of the campus to Downtown should be studied and older developments should be allowed to redevelop to provide more diversity in housing options.

LU6 **Re-examine Future Development Map.** The Land Use Development Map provides the basic framework for future growth and development in the community. This map provides the rationale for modifications to the Zoning Code and helps determine appropriate policies to achieve the community's development goals. Through its Comprehensive Plan update in 2018, the community should review relevant policies in the Envision Athens Action Agenda and consider relevant updates based on the community's vision and goals. These recommendations should integrate long-term plans for the University, and consider impacts to the enrollment and diversity of the County's school districts.

LU7 **Establish Corridor Redevelopment incentives or zoning policies for gateway and other important corridors.** The County has a number of high-volume, commercial road corridors including Atlanta Highway, Lexington Road, Prince Avenue, North Avenue and US 441. As American retail continues to evolve, so will each corridor. Increasing vacancies and related disinvestment should be met with innovative plans for redevelopment and revitalization. In revising zoning practices, the community should consider potential uses along each corridor that balance real estate value with aesthetics, movement with safety, and create appealing community gateways from the outside of the County into Downtown.

LU8 **Re-examine density allowances in all zoning districts.** Density relates to the number of units or residents within a defined area. As a small community interested in preserving its greenspaces, Athens should consider an evaluation of its density policies. Strategic and appropriate increases have the potential to improve the affordability of housing and provide more options for all residents (from young adults to empty nesters). In the overall review of development density allowances, the Athens-Clarke County Consolidated Government should consider parking minimums especially in downtown.

LU9 **Establish incentives for new development to incorporate environmentally sustainable standards including, but not limited to, material re-use, responsible management of construction waste, etc.** The community should review its current standards and incentives related to sustainable building practices and consider appropriate best practices that could be incorporated. These practices include construction, maintenance, and integrated systems like water and waste management.

LU10 **Encourage the use of development incentive options.** Rather than a single-policy approach, the community should develop a menu of options for protecting sensitive areas. These policies should focus on incentives rather than regulations and enable increases in density in downtown or nodal developments, or other remedies to further incentivize their use. Potential policies include, but are not limited to, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), Commercial Improvement Districts (CID), Tax Allocation District (TAD), and Business Improvement District (BID).

LU11 **Create an inventory of local publically-owned land that could be developed.** A detailed inventory or database of publically-owned land would serve as a useful tool for all community partners including public, private and institutional organizations. This database should include government property as well as areas controlled by the schools and other public entities.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

ENVIRONMENT

GOAL

Stewardship of the natural environment, including improved water and air quality and conserved areas – woods, farms, streams and wetlands.

PRIORITY ACTION

E1

Achieve goal of 20% of County as protected greenspace. The Community should continue to preserve a significant portion of its agricultural and open land in perpetuity, but also consider methods for "greening" its urbanized areas. Projects could include pocket parks, tree plantings, green infrastructure, or other initiatives.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

E2

Provide more safe, affordable transportation options including walking, biking, and clean transit. Athens is already home to a healthy biking community, but there is an opportunity to broaden the appeal and help more people feel safe and dedicated to alternative modes of transportation. Through hard infrastructure upgrades such as bike lanes, trails, etc., and soft initiatives such as educational programs, safety legislation, and employer incentives, the community can increase the number of alternative commuters.

E3

Increase energy efficiency, sources, and use of renewables. Using kilowatt hours per citizen as a measure, Athens should decrease the amount of energy derived from fossil fuels by 30% and make progress wherever and whenever possible. The community should start by cultivating big wins from large institutional partners like the University, local government, school district and others.

E4 **Improve the health and quality of rivers and streams to meet local standards for public use and enjoyment.** The rivers and streams bisecting the County are a prime natural asset and should be protected from point and non-point sources of pollution wherever possible. Improving the health of streams positively affects wildlife, improves recreation options like kayaking and canoeing, and secures the amenity and water source for future generations.

E5 **Reduce landfill disposal of solid waste by diverting 75% through management, education, collection, and enforcement.** There is an opportunity to divert significant amounts of solid waste from landfill through a proactive mix of incentives and regulation. Athens is a relatively small community with the potential to greatly impact its solid waste stream. The community should consider the educational campaigns promoting recycling initiatives, and explore new policies like a "Net-Zero" initiative for UGA home athletic events.

E6 **Identify and protect rare, threatened, and unique natural resources.** The community should commission an assessment of its environmental assets and resources to better understand their sensitivity, map their location and prepare a resiliency and protection plan to ensure long-term sustainability. Environmental resources include, but are not limited to, wildlife, soils, water sources, etc.

E7 **Decrease single-occupancy car rides by incentivizing alternative transportation.** Through a variety of means, the community should seek to reduce the number of single-person car trips per day. The initiative has the potential to improve local air quality, reduce congestion, and positively impact community health. Initiatives could specifically target students and include educational campaigns, proliferation of alternatives like bike / car share, increased transit, etc., or events like a "car-free" day.

E8 **Decrease water consumption per capita.** Athens-Clarke County exists in a region that is susceptible to drought and water shortage. The community, therefore, should be proactive and seek to plateau and slowly reduce its use of water to less than 110 gallons of raw water per person per day.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL

Vibrant, stable, and safe places—primarily residential—for where and how to live, including neighborhoods with a range of integrated housing types.

PRIORITY ACTION

N1

Utilize neighborhood schools as hubs for diverse school and neighborhood engagement. Schools are a natural, central location for effective engagement and service delivery. These facilities provide a comfortable, neutral location and help remove psychological or physical barriers for community members who might be less likely to become engaged. During the Envision Athens engagement process, meetings were held at schools throughout the community. These events attracted hundreds of residents and reflected the significant diversity of Athens. Generally, attendees felt more comfortable sharing ideas in this setting and were more likely to invite friends and family along. The community should continue to utilize these facilities in this way and take advantage of these assets.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

N2

Expand sidewalk network and other basic infrastructure in neighborhoods such as lights, trees, and neighborhood businesses. Neighborhoods throughout the County should have equitable access to basic infrastructure like sidewalks, street lights, and shade trees, and these assets should be actively maintained. These basic elements are essential assets for a safe and attractive community. The County could consider developing a neighborhood streetscape plan to establish basic standards and strategies to improve coverage.

N3

Incentivize neighborhood grocery stores, farmer's markets, co-ops, etc. Neighborhoods throughout the County should have equal access to groceries, farmer's markets, or co-ops that provide fresh, local food close to where they live. There is a deficit of these uses on the County's east side. This should be addressed proactively through a combination of incentives and coordination with neighborhood leadership.

N4

Create neighborhood planning units, neighborhood councils, and promote neighborhood leaders program. Neighborhood planning and governance can help broaden community leadership, better represent local issues, and promote more effective and responsive policy. Through a neighborhood council, each identified community would participate in an ongoing dialogue sharing key issues, opportunities, and/or challenges. Councils are most effective when leaders are given the resources and authority to move small community initiatives forward. This can also create a pathway for young leaders.

N5

Create incentives to encourage revitalization in neighborhoods and commercial developments. Like all communities, Athens has several districts in transition. This can create a cycle of disinvestment that is hard to break without direct intervention from the public, private or institutional sectors. Good projects or initiatives are those with a high multiplier or the ability to set off additional, positive action. The community should proactively address these challenges in transitional areas and consider strategic incentive packages that help launch or enable catalytic projects. Density bonuses, as one example, can provide a developer with more options and potential scale for a site while the community receives the benefit of the investment and related improvements.

N6 **Educate tenants about their rights and responsibilities.** More than fifty percent of Athens-Clarke County residents are renters. To ensure fair practices by landlords and safe housing conditions, tenants should fully understand their rights. Correspondingly, property owners should be aware of building codes and keep safe accommodations for their tenants.

N7 **Evaluate current process for identification, adjudication, education, and funding clearance of nuisance properties.** Nuisance properties violate a portion of the zoning or building code and prevent neighbors from enjoying their homes or businesses. Every community has its share of troublesome properties. However, the response of code enforcement can vary widely. The process of reporting and enforcement should be reviewed to ensure claims are processed quickly and issues are addressed in a safe and timely manner.

N8 **Increase and promote communication among neighborhoods via listservs and other communication tools.** Better communication between neighborhood groups will help spread best practices, share innovative solutions to common problems, and generally improve cross-community understanding. This should be addressed through a variety of methods including online tools (email listervs, Facebook, websites, etc.), community events or roundtables, and other means.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

HOUSING

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.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

H1

Target challenged multi-family developments for major redevelopment, especially mixed-income. Multi-family housing has shifted over the past thirty years. A boom in in-town student options has left many older student housing complexes with diminishing rents and related disinvestment. These properties present an opportunity for well-planned redevelopment that incorporates diverse housing options, captures greater real estate value, and provides more affordable options for low income or working income residents. The community can begin by creating an inventory of vulnerable properties and considering strategic purchases when available.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

H2

Increase amount of and provide access to affordable housing. Housing affordability is a multi-faceted and complex issue. Athens lacks housing for middle income ranges and has little to no vacancy for housing aimed at certain age groups such as senior housing. Housing production has increased but has largely been focused on the student housing market. Newly constructed single family homes ccost approximately seventy percent more than the asking price for existing homes for sale. Housing prices vary depending on the proximity to downtown Athens and the Atlanta metro area, with closer homes typically costing twenty to fourty percent more than houses on the eastern side of the County.

In order to address the affordability of housing, action must be taken to address the two key drivers of costs; the cost of housing production and the role of supply and demand imbalances across the market and within different housing segments (small single family, garden apartments, etc).

Housing production costs include the following:

- Land costs
- Development costs including regulatory & soft costs associated with architecture and engineering
- Construction costs (site prep, materials and labor)
- Financing costs (the cost of money and the amount of owner equity)
- Developer profits (required rates of return)

To address costs and provide a sufficient supply of affordable housing, several innovative approaches may be used. A more active low-income housing tax credit program is needed, and a better system to connect local developers with the federal subsidies available to them.

In addition the redevelopment of large-scale properties, smaller-scale infill development of single-family options should be encouraged in order to supply a wide spectrum of housing types and locations. Another option for managing the escalation in the cost of home ownership is to promote and support alternative forms of ownership, such as the creation of a community housing trust which uses a shared equity approach to maintain the affordability of single-family homes.

H3

Acknowledge and develop strategies to address issues related to gentrification. Gentrification is a cycle where investment into a neighborhood, through either a public or a private-sector project, leads to related increases in rent or taxes. This process has been well documented in large cities, where older urban neighborhoods have been revitalized and rents for long-time residents or businesses have risen dramatically. Athens is a relatively small community, but its older neighborhoods have experienced similar challenges related to this cycle. The need for workforce housing makes this process especially acute. Athens will not solve gentrification, in the same way it will not "solve" equally vexing issues like poverty or crime. It can, however, become a leader in addressing the issue by studying its root causes and effects and developing experimental models for ensuring long-time residents are not priced out of their neighborhoods. Larger communities have employed several techniques from rent control to building moratoriums. Athens should learn from the best, most effective practices and develop a solution regime that is unique to the community's context and issues.

H4 **Provide more options for the homeless.** Addressing the most critical and basic housing needs related to housing insecurity and homelessness remains a priority for the Athens community. Through its continuum of care approach and effective organizations like the Northeast Georgia Homeless and Poverty Coalition, the region has a strong framework to confront these issues. Existing initiatives and organizations should be regularly evaluated to determine effectiveness, capacity deficiencies or common-sense partnerships with other organizations operating in the community.

H5 **Create quality housing for older adults using innovative techniques like accessory dwelling units.** It is important that residents in the community are able to find quality, affordable housing at each stage of life. Senior housing has generally been handled in large apartment-style buildings. While effective, these facilities can push older residents to the periphery of the community, and create a segmentation of the County's neighborhoods by age or life cycle. Multi-generational neighborhoods will allow older adults to access the more walkable portions of the community, keep up an active lifestyle, and continue to contribute to the community's civic vitality. These neighborhoods can be achieved through a variety of initiatives including accessory dwelling units (mother-in-law lots), in-town senior housing (small scale), or other innovative approaches.

H6 **Support and expand the Housing Rehabilitation Initiative.** The same limitations that impact industrial commercial locations impact housing. As part of the portfolio of housing tools a housing rehabilitation initiative should be supported and expanded to help preserve and update existing single family housing stock within the urban core. The program could be further funded in part through assistance from local banks that would provide rehabilitation loans for major upgrades to housing. Elements of this program take into consideration the age of the house and the value and type of rehabilitation needed, and require that the home owner live in the home. The program could be further enhanced with employer-assisted housing initiatives that provide financial assistance to employees who live within targeted areas.

PLACE: MAKING A GREAT PLACE

AGRICULTURE

GOAL

Agriculture remains a viable and productive component of the local economy by leveraging use of agricultural land for economic development, such as for eco-tourism, beautification projects, support of plant nurseries, etc.

PRIORITY ACTION

AG1

Establish and Eastside Farmer's Market. Farmer's markets offer access to fresh, locally produced food at "pop-up" locations on a regular schedule. These markets help connect local producers directly with customers and offer healthy alternatives to fast food. While the Athens community is already home to a number of regular markets, some parts of town, such as the East Side, are not currently served. A coalition of community actors (led by the Athens Farmer's Market) should take the initiative to develop full markets for underserved areas and improve access to fresh food.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

AG2

Evaluate, establish, and expand community gardens to include "vertical farming", or farming in small places. Community gardens and vertical farming techniques remove one of the biggest barriers to agricultural production, the need for large amounts of land and labor. After soil tests prove the area safe, small gardens can proliferate in pockets throughout the community and serve a micro-market in the surrounding neighborhood. Vertical farming eliminates the need for large acreages by moving production into stacked arrangements. Through hydroponic methods, the technique multiplies the production potential for a small area and is capable of multi-season production. The community should consider common sense regulations and incentives for these uses and help the process connect into the local food movement.

AG3

Mobilize fresh food. Equitable access to fresh, healthy food is a priority. While the proliferation of farmer's markets and local production has helped improve access generally, there are segments of the community who are out of reach of these amenities. A more direct set of policies related to education, production and the mobilization of fresh foods is needed to ensure all residents have access to healthy food choices. This is especially important as it relates to the school-age population.

AG4

Identify and evaluate tax incentives on Agricultural (AR)-zoned property to incentivize maintaining agricultural land. Development pressure on agricultural land poses a difficult problem in the County. While the preservation of this land helps maintain the character and environmental diversity of the community, top-down regulation can pose a hardship for landowners who are interested in selling their land assets. The community should consider a non-regulatory path, where incentives to maintain agricultural land in perpetuity, create a third path forward. In this scenario, development tools like Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) or density bonuses can give land owners and developers a remedy while maintaining open spaces on the periphery. A menu of potential programs should be developed to avoid a "one size fits all" approach, and ensure parcels of all sizes have a program option.

AG5 **Enhance and further develop connections with the University of Georgia Agriculture program, Clarke County School District, and Young Urban Farmers Program.** There are tremendous opportunities to further enhance the connection between the UGA Agriculture program and the community through direct outreach and engagement of young people. The UGA Cooperative Extension Service and the Athens Land Trust already host a number of effective programs, like the Young Urban Farmers Program, that expose young people to agriculture, and allow them to participate directly in the local foods movement. The community should seek to solidify funding for these programs.

AG6 **Support the initiatives of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service programs.** The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service provides a myriad of services related to research, education and advocacy for agriculture and natural resource protection. The program leverages the innovative work of the University and delivers direct community benefits. This program and its initiatives should be supported and new connections, especially into the youth development tract, explored.

AG7 **Create an Agriculture Council.** An agricultural council provides a vehicle through which those interested in agriculture may work together, exchange ideas, tackle community challenges and generally work on key issues. The many agricultural interests in Athens could co-benefit from better coordination and advocacy through this type of organization. The group could include, but not be limited to, farmers, landscape companies, nurseries, bee keepers, animal farmers, and others.

AG8 **Further develop the idea of "local flavor".** There is great potential for the Athens community to take better advantage of its agricultural assets and connect restaurants, schools, and other food producers to a "Local flavor" movement. Farmer's markets could be better promoted as a cultural amenity that dovetails with sustainability goals, and supports the food culture for tourism. This initiative could be supported by local farms, CSAs, farm-to-table restaurants, or other relationships that could have an impact on tourism, culture, and the economy.

FOCUS STATEMENTS KEY

- PROVIDING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY
- RAISING THE TIDE
- IMPROVING CONNECTIONS
- LEADING, INNOVATING, PUSHING FORWARD
- PROTECTING, ENHANCING & LEVERAGING ASSETS
- TAPPING THE TALENT
- COMING TOGETHER, STAYING TOGETHER
- KEEPING ATHENS....ATHENS
- LIVING BETTER, LONGER & STRONGER
- BUILDING AN EQUITABLE COMMUNITY

A note on Focus Statements

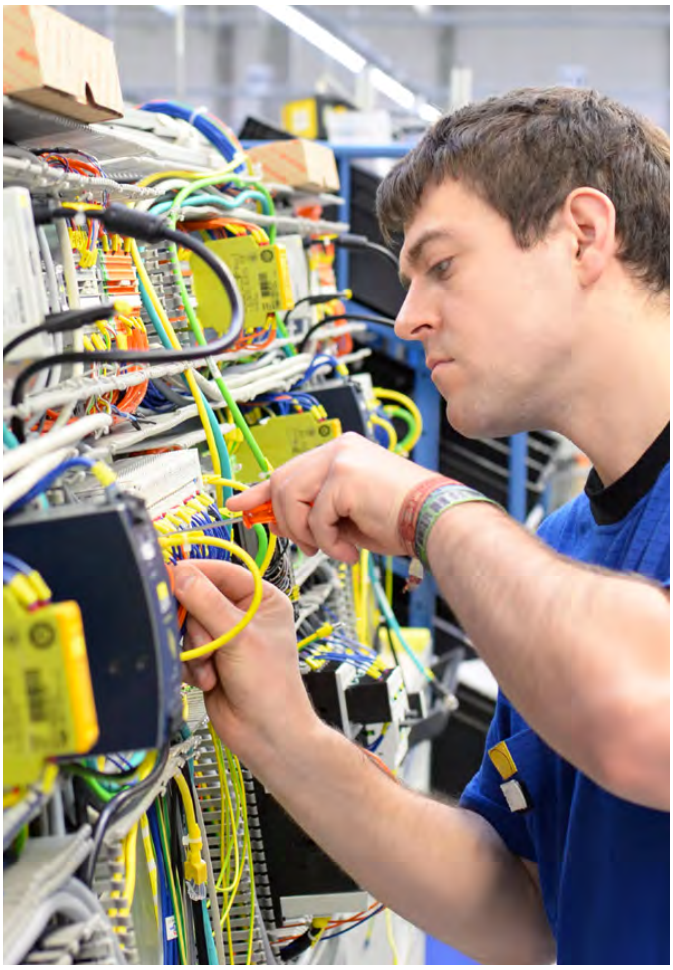
Each action has been assigned one or more focus statements connecting it to the community assessment and findings from engagement. Refer to page 44 for a further description.

PROSPERITY: CREATING LIVELIHOODS

The prosperity of a community is not solely defined by the success or output of its businesses. Rather, a prosperous place is community where opportunity abounds. Where businesses are born, grown and mature. Where innovation keeps pace with the world, and leads to new opportunities. For individuals, it's a place where a good education is fundamental and learning opportunities prepare the young, and the not so young, for the opportunities that surround them. The prosperity section highlights actions from two of these areas, economic development and education.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A strong local economy is diverse and resilient, and it grows primarily from within. This economy is fed by a community that encourages entrepreneurs to experiment with ideas, grow locally and scale their enterprise in place. Individuals have access to opportunities and a ladder to climb. Industry adds value at multiple points along the production chain. With regards to Economic Development, Athens-Clarke will focus on the "next economy" and the emerging opportunities it will present. It will provide clear pathways out of poverty through an expanded collection of jobs and careers. And it will enable small businesses to launch their ideas locally and reap the rewards of expanded employment and production as they scale.



EDUCATION

The Athens Action Agenda presents a vision for the future of the community twenty years on. A first grader today will celebrate their 26th birthday as this vision is realized. This generation will experience this transformation and play an active role. Their education, and the education of their children, will be the legacy of the process. Each child can positively impact their community and must be given the resources to explore this potential. The Athens community, in many ways, is built on education. The actions presented in this topic leverage the existing assets and expand on new resources and initiatives.

PROSPERITY: CREATING LIVELIHOODS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL

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).

PRIORITY ACTION

ED1

Create a comprehensive economic development plan. Create a plan to continue the improvement of coordination and cooperation of Athens entities concerned with economic growth and the attraction and creation of jobs which offer wages that support a normal standard of living for Athens-Clarke County workers. This includes the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Economic Development Department, University of Georgia, Athens Technical College, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau (Convention and Visitors Bureau), Classic Center, and Clarke County School District (CCSD). This action includes the following:

- Create a collective vision and common branding for economic development.
- Offer strategies to connect workers with employers' needs; offering training to fill industry needs in Athens.
- Create opportunities for underemployed, unemployed, and vulnerable sectors of the population.
- Ensure businesses and industries understand the advantages of Athens' population.
- Consider the diversity of the community - related to race, socio-economics, etc. - to craft equitable policies.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

ED2

Implement ordinances, policies, and infrastructure to address impediments to locating or expanding business and industry. These should be amended as necessary to align with best practices for attraction and retention, continuing the work necessary to demonstrate that Athens is welcoming to business and industry. This action to include:

- Strategic expansion of water and sewer infrastructure in unserved parts of the County
- Review of existing development standards, including exploration of shared storm water facilities.
- Creation of tax incentives in distressed areas to attract development and jobs.
- Creation of a Reuse/Reclaim Commercial Industrial Land Program
- Creation of a spec building product
- Creation of a Tech innovation and Research Complex

ED3

Provide the facilities and services necessary to attract, incubate, and grow businesses across a variety of sectors. This action will include:

- Purchase and control of significant tracts of property for new industrial development.
- Creation of an incubator space for small, entrepreneurial businesses in the technology, biomedical, arts, fabrication, and engineering sectors.
- Development of navigational tools to connect businesses to support resources
- Marketing of the Athens maker community.
- Promotion of minority-owned businesses. (Chamber, SBDC) Research Park.
- Explore retirement services as a new industry. Targeting the 55+ age segment.

ED4

Improve access to Downtown as everyone's neighborhood. As the vibrant heart of Athens, Downtown should feel like everyone's neighborhood and offer programming and amenities for residents of all ages and backgrounds. To achieve this, the community should consider an internal marketing plan that identifies core assets and deficiencies for the district, expands on recommendations from the physical downtown plan, and identifies potential barriers for residents – psychological or physical.

ED5

Continue building a comprehensive entrepreneur development program to complement the existing retention attraction initiatives. Athens has a robust entrepreneurial community spanning across consumer goods, food businesses, digital technology, creative industries such as music and the biosciences. This diversity is a real strength of Athens and should be of equal focus to the traditional economic development recruitment activity. The economic development function has been steadily working on growing its capabilities in this area. It should not solely focus on creating entrepreneurs but help them scale as businesses. It should be encouraged to expand these efforts including building on existing initiatives and capabilities by:

- Helping to create a co-working, incubator, accelerator space near the Downtown with Four Athens or other such companies that can serve as showpiece of Athens' growing start up activity
- Building on the Athensmade initiative and ensure it includes the County's growing tech center to help develop the brand of Athens (both within the community and across Georgia and the mid-South) as center for Entrepreneurship and Tech Innovation
- Consider development of a consumer product (food & beverage, clothes, entertainment, etc) incubator that would have some production capacity and limited ability to scale businesses
- Wrap physical space program with a business advice / mentoring support
- Targeted recruitment in focal areas such as digital tech, consumer products or biosciences (areas that are of interest in Athens and growing in metro Atlanta) that can help build workforce depth and create a job opportunity set for potential talent is an important complementary part of this initiative

ED6

Leverage Athens' most distinctive products - such as the music scene - to further position it as a destination and brand. Between its arts, music and culture, Athens has a well-earned national reputation as a funky and fun community. This "scene", however, can dissolve if the community fails to recognize its importance and contribution. The Georgia Department of Economic Development Product Development Resource Team developed a range of recommendations related to leveraging this important community asset. These include short term recommendations (venue support, signage, etc.) and long term ideas (Georgia Music Hall of Fame and others). The community should consider these recommendations and develop a coordinated public / private action plan for maintaining the Athens brand and fully leveraging its contributions.

ED7

Create a marketing plan that will better position Athens to successfully compete for in-state and regional leisure and conventions travel. Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau's budget is roughly half of that of Columbus and Macon, and roughly one third of Augusta's. Across the southeast, cities like Greenville, Chattanooga and Birmingham are three, five and seven times larger, showing significant investment in tourism development. There are opportunities to better exploit the tourism potential for Athens, through more competitive funding of its prime supporters. Future assets, like an arena for music, sporting, and other events will expand the portfolio of amenities for tourists.

PROSPERITY: CREATING LIVELIHOODS

EDUCATION

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.

PRIORITY ACTION

EC1

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. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Provide learning opportunities for children that will enable them to successfully enter the workforce (i.e. Great Promise Partnership, Career Academy, soft skills training, educational opportunities outside of school that will prepare them for jobs currently available in Athens through classes with UGA and Athens Tech)
- Identify the employee gaps of local industries and teach classes to middle and high school students that will provide them with the skills needed to fill these specific gaps with local industries; this could be done through Clarke County School District, UGA, Athens Tech, and other non-profits, such as Four Athens
- Expose students to local businesses earlier in their academic careers so that young people can begin planning for job skills in middle school; waiting until high school is too late
- Integrate learning opportunities for young people with the economic development goals for the community so that local high school graduates have received training that enables them to go straight to work in ACC (i.e. music business, coding, industry needs, hospitality industry, etc.)

- Expand and enhance internship and apprenticeship opportunities for middle and high school students through partnerships with the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce and other business-oriented organizations
- Develop an entrepreneurship program for K-12 students to creatively think about how to address needs in our community, state, country and world through developing products or other items through brainstorming, teamwork, etc.
- Provide career programs for students beginning in elementary school
- Create a technology consortium that will encourage students to engage with technology and prepare them for entering the workforce

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

EC2

Provide a robust Early Childhood Education for birth to Pre-K children to help prepare them for academic success in the future. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Increase literacy in early childhood education; work with both parents and children
- Provide support for family and children from birth to Pre-K
- Create funding for social workers and other staff to work with families as they prepare their children for school

EC3

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. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Provide leadership development training opportunities for teachers across community
- Work to retain the best teachers through variety of means
- Incorporate a cultural curriculum for teachers that will address the various learning styles within our schools; this training for teachers might include mentorship, in-depth research/investigations, etc.
- Empower and train teachers to incorporate cultural diversity in the curriculum for students in order to increase cultural awareness and empathy amongst children in our schools

EC4

Provide a variety of learning opportunities for both adult and nontraditional students' education and development, which support a variety of learning styles and emotional/health needs. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Provide educational opportunities for nontraditional students, such as previously incarcerated individuals, adult learners, senior citizens, etc.
  Create free or reduced cost learning opportunities for nontraditional learners
- Promote educational opportunities for adult learners (i.e. OLLI) across the community

- Create learning opportunities for the homeless population in locations that are convenient and comfortable for them so that they will be better able to find jobs and assistance that may lead to housing in the future
- Design learning opportunities that complement the varied learning styles that nontraditional students bring to a classroom
- Promote educational opportunities for adult learners (e.g. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) across the community
- Build a library on the east side of the county

EC5

Enhance the learning environment to provide student support for the variety of needs within our community. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Increase opportunities for community members to mentor school-age children
- Increase resources and education on trauma informed care in the schools to assist with needs of children facing traumatic situations outside of school
- Increase access to healthy food for students
- Provide more non-traditional and alternative education to meet the needs of young people with a variety of learning needs, including students with social anxiety, dyslexia, mental health issues, etc. as well as opportunities for STEAM and STEM education, Montessori methods, alternative high school learning opportunities and home schooling
- Increase the capacity, standardization and understanding of students with special needs
- Provide opportunities for children with special needs to be successful and share those opportunities with the larger community to reduce negative perceptions
- Increase literacy for all children in Athens-Clarke County

EC6

Enhance opportunities for families to engage in the learning process so they may be active participants in their child(ren)'s education and help their child(ren) achieve their individual educational goals. To achieve this, the community should consider the following strategies and tactics:

- Invite parents to school events and classroom activities
- Provide learning opportunities for parents who would like to further their learning/education through GED classes, technical training classes, ESOL classes, etc.
- Increase graduation rates

EC7

Provide support for traditional college. Continue to provide to students services that help them explore a variety of post-secondary educational career opportunities that are supported by appropriate counseling on what steps the student(s) would need to take to achieve their individual career goals

FOCUS STATEMENTS KEY

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A note on Focus Statements

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PEOPLE: STRENGTHENING LIVES

Athens' diversity is a strength. The sheer variety of backgrounds, viewpoints, experiences and ambitions add to the richness of the County and make up its unique culture. And as it is across the country, this diversity is increasing. Beyond just race and ethnicity, diversity in Athens also includes age, nativity, and time in the community. As a college town, there's no shortage of young people or the energy they provide. But Athens is also a home for recent immigrants, entrepreneurs, parents, factory workers, and lifelong residents. Each of these groups has something to contribute. The People chapter addresses the health and safety of the people and those social services that ensure every resident has access to care and opportunity.

HEALTH

A healthy lifestyle is a physically and mentally active one. It starts as a young person when habits are formed. Exploring the environment, building a routine, and challenging one's self. These habits flower out of an initial education on the importance of fitness. Maintenance and motivation are a big part of the equation. But so are top-down initiatives to provide assistance to those most in need. Mental illness has been excluded from the discussion of community health for too long. The Envision Athens health actions suggest several initiatives to address this issue along with other public health projects, policies and the programs that will keep the Athens community strong and vital.

SAFETY

Safety is a vital component of a vibrant and healthy community. Athens has taken strong steps to ensure that its residents feel protected at home or out in the community. The initiatives in this topic address a myriad of issues from traffic to policing to community-led safety initiatives.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The abundanceof non-profits in Athens proves that it is a community that cares. Through these organizations, the University, and the local government, Athens offers a set of social services unmatched by other counties its size. These organizations cover hundreds of issues from homelessness, to the environment, to education. This has made Athens a destination for people in need from around the region. Because of this, the community effectively delivers services even beyond its borders. Through these organizations, the University, and the local government, Athens offers a set of social services unmatched by other counties its size. The challenge is in coordinating these actors, reducing redundancies, and identifying gaps. The Social Services action proposals seek to address these challenges.

Living strong, healthy lives
The People chapter includes 23 actions to address pressing challenges around health, safety and social service delivery.

PEOPLE: STRENGTHENING LIVES

HEALTH

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.

PRIORITY ACTION

HE1

Develop an effective mental health crisis response team. Communities are typically well-positioned to deal with medical emergencies related to physical health, but less so for mental health crises. Athens should become a leader in this regard, and continue to develop a response team to deal with a range of mental health emergencies. This includes wraparound services that accompany the patient from the incident through discharge and recovery. The community's hospital systems have begun work on this initiative and should partner with Athens-Clarke County Police Department for implementation.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

HE2

Identify mental health issues in youth and put preventive measures, services, and interventions in place. Through community-wide strategic planning, there is significant potential to improve outcomes for youth in the County struggling with mental health. The diversity and number of community partners will greatly increase the impact of programs. These groups should be convened around the issue and better understand this potential.

HE3

Create more opportunities and coordinate services for people moving back to the community from incarceration. The transition from incarceration to the workforce can be difficult, but is an essential step in full rehabilitation for the individual. Programs and resources for the short-term and long-term incarcerated should involve a coalition of partners from housing, social services, employment, government, economic development and safety fields.

HE4 **Expand substance abuse and addictive disease treatment.** Drug treatment must be addressed proactively and for all segments of the community, including those unable to pay. The emergent opioid crisis has exposed serious deficiencies in drug treatment policy across the country. The Athens community should emerge as a leader in treatment for this and other drug issues.

HE5 **Create a regional hub for health care to centralize health care facilities and providers.** With its two major hospital systems, Athens is a regional hub for health care in Northeast Georgia. Beyond the obvious community health benefit, this also delivers tremendous economic impact to the County. The community should build on these assets and consider opportunities to consolidate or centralize services where logical, and should co-market broadly.

HE6 **Coordinate communication on health care issues to increase the public's understanding of service providers.** The community health care network can be complex and intimidating, especially if services and communications are not coordinated. As a regional hub for health care, Athens can improve the delivery and accessibility of these services by organizing information and communication (especially to the community's most vulnerable).The community should provide clear direction through its various networks and provide wraparound services like translation, information on program requirements for clients, and other strategies.

HE7 **Continue to support effective healthy living initiatives.** The Athens health network is extensive and offers a range of healthy living initiatives. These include wellness and lifestyle initiatives as well as direct service interventions for issues like homelessness. Progress should be monitored against clear indicators that rely on benchmarks. Successes should be celebrated and communicated.

HE8 **Create education programs to help citizens make healthy lifestyle choices.** Healthy lifestyles start with education. Through understanding of basic nutrition and recognition of the importance of exercise and fitness, residents can improve their overall health outcomes and greatly decrease per capita spending on health care. Through initiatives like SNAP-ED and the work of St. Mary's Hospital and Piedmont Athens Regional Medical Center, the community has already begun to tackle this issue and should continue to add momentum and resources.

HE9 **Recruit specialists in health care based on defined areas or need.** The community should maintain and expand its role as a regional health care hub by continuing to recruit specialists to its systems. Mental health, aging, and other niche fields should have strong local practitioners.

PEOPLE: STRENGTHENING LIVES

SAFETY

GOAL

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

PRIORITY ACTION

SA1

Provide and identify sufficient funding to implement the Athens-Clarke County Police Department Strategic Vision Plan. The Strategic Plan for the Athens-Clarke County Police Department sets out a vision to build the highest levels of trust and confidence within the community through fair and impartial policing. Its goals are to prevent and reduce crime, enhance community trust, legitimacy, and accountability, provide the highest quality public safety communications, exhibit optimal organizational health and effectiveness, and recruit, develop, and retain a high-quality workforce. The community should support the department's vision, goals and related actions.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

SA2

Develop a comprehensive Community Supervision Plan. Successful reintegration from incarceration leads to productive outcomes for the individual and society. This process should be consistently supervised to protect public safety and also allow the individual to find his or her productive next step. The community should seek out and apply best practices (such as the American Probation and Parole Association) from around the country and develop a holistic Community Supervision Plan.

SA3

Further expand youth development programs for public safety using data from the Youth Development Task Force. The Youth Development Task Force launched its work in 2017 with the goal of understanding youth perceptions and experiences of crime in the community, and to develop strategies to create measurable

decreases of the effects of crime in their lives. The recommendations are sorted into six broad goals including: promote family environments that support healthy development, provide quality education early in life [and beyond], strengthen youth's skills, connect youth to caring adults and activities, create protective community environments, and intervene to reduce harm and prevent future risk. These goals and their related recommendations for action should be supported and the task force broadened to achieve measurable results.

SA4 **Create a bicycle/walking safety enforcement and education program.** As cycling in a community increases, tension can arise between riders and drivers. The community should invest in a communication campaign to help everyone understand the rules of the road, share safety tips, and develop common-sense laws to protect riders and walkers.

SA5 **Develop and fund retention incentives for public safety officers.** Compensation for officers tasked with maintaining the safety of the community should be competitive and reflect the gravity and importance of the career. Retaining more officers will improve the continuity of the mission and ensure stronger accountability through the department.

SA6 **Identify and evaluate ways to leverage existing and future technology to better coordinate efforts between residents and local law enforcement.** Community policing should be enhanced through the use of tested, cutting-edge technology to enhance the relationship between police and the community. This relates to preventative approaches as well as communication.

SA7 **Evaluate and update policies that aim to reduce traffic fatalities.** The community will continue to study traffic safety patterns to identify dangerous intersections and stretches of road, work with logical partners to correct or mitigate the issue, and study the effects of interventions to develop best practices.

SA8 **Develop a Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan to enhance and grow fire service delivery in areas of significant medical emergency.** This includes personal and family emergency plans through an "all-hazards" approach. The action will identify ways to enhance and grow fire service delivery in areas with frquent and significant incidences of medical emergencies.

SA9 **Review and enhance safety programs for at-risk populations to reduce sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.** An audit of existing programs and services may reveal key gaps. This is especially important for at-risk populations such as the disabled, elderly, youth or other identified segments.

PEOPLE: STRENGTHENING LIVES

SOCIAL SERVICES

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.

PRIORITY ACTION

SS1

Address poverty by targeting unemployment and underemployment by training and preparing individuals for vocational success. The community will focus on special populations - including returning citizens, people who are chronically unemployed, young people emerging from high school - and prepare them for vocational success by illuminating potential career paths, providing necessary training, and inspiring the next generation to achieve. It will consider current programs by Action Inc, Action Ministries, Bread for Life, and others and how these might partner with employers to put more trained people to work in Athens. This action will take into account the limited ability to attract employers to the area.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

SS2

Create a community that is supportive of, and provides opportunities for, individuals with limited opportunity. These special populations include, but are not limited to, people with mental health diagnoses, immigrants, refugees, those experiencing homelessness and poverty, returning citizens, and others. These groups are chronically underrepresented in quality of life indicators such as income, food security, stable housing, community inclusion, etc. In order to measure progress, these segments should be identified and, where possible, evaluated across several quality of life indicators. Effective support will include

access to opportunities that allow individuals to achieve a productive lifestyle and provide for their family. The community will enact a task force to 1) identify vulnerable segments of the Athens population; 2) understand the level and variety of need (i.e. food and housing insecurity, employment, education, etc.); 3) establish key indicators for measuring progress, and; 4) develop an action strategy that maps best practice projects, policies or programs to the web of social services organizations throughout Athens and the region. These action steps will make the Athens community more welcoming to (and protective of) vulnerable people, especially immigrants and refugees, and supporting these individuals and families to thrive by offering education and support, including civic and cultural education and legal services.

SS3

Develop and expand youth development programming that is accessible and provide adequate and affordable child care. The action will help answer the question of programming availability for all young people, especially those in low income situations with little to no transportation. Programming should be relevant, affordable, and accessible. This involves transportation and affordability.

SS4

Develop a clearinghouse to make programs and social services more easily accessible. Develop a method for non-profits to more effectively leverage volunteers, interns, and expertise, removing silos that currently exist between programs and departments. The University of Georgia currently maintains a robust list of community organizations. A platform such as this could be expanded to serve a a highly effective tool.

SS5

Encourage non-profits to collaborate, convene productively, and effectively communicate services. The community will improve communication by non-profits so their services are well-marketed, financially supported, and understood. This includes individuals and families in need; volunteers and philanthropists; other non-profits; and information hubs such as universities, hospitals, etc. This action will help manage community knowledge and understanding of the non-profit sector an increase the accessibility of services. Collaborative sessions between non-profits should be conducted, with a focus on actionable outcomes and

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A note on Focus Statements

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VITALITY: INVIGORATING THE COMMUNITY

Athens is creative, exciting and ever-changing. The place has an energy that makes it different and noteworthy. This is most evident in the community's vibrant arts scene and civic activism. There is a unique culture that is derived from the creativity of residents; but it must not be taken for granted. Without recognition and stewardship, this spirit can be lost. This would have a tangible impact, as arts, culture, and engagement help drive local tourism. To keep Athens weird and keep Athens...Athens, a set of actions has been developed. These address two fundamental categories: Arts & Culture and Civic Engagement.

ARTS & CULTURE

Around the country, people know about Athens for its exports. They look to bands like REM; they see brands like Southern Brewing Company or Terrapin, and they see they came from Athens. There is an openness to, almost an expectation for, experimental creativity. Whatever the medium, the community is a patron. This spirit, however, must be supported. Venues are as critical as artists; expanding local interest is as important as the national reputation. The initiatives collected within the Arts & Culture section prioritize several projects, policies and programs to ensure that the spirit of Athens is maintained and enhanced for years to come.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Envision Athens engagement program has shown just how critical face-to-face conversations can be. Over a ten-month process, more than 1,200 people chose to participate, not because they were against something, but because they wanted to listen and be heard. A unified community is an engaged community. It is a place that solves problems together, overcomes challenges together, and celebrates together. This unity creates better alignment among institutions and individuals. It builds trust and understanding. The Civic Engagement topic collects actions aimed at pulling people together, sharing ideas and moving the Athens community together, as one.

VITALITY: INVIGORATING THE COMMUNITY

ARTS & CULTURE

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.

PRIORITY ACTION

AR1

Measure economic impacts of arts, culture, and heritage tourism. What's the dollar value of a painting or a concert performance? How do you measure the collective impact of the Athens arts and cultural scene? These are difficult questions, but are critical to protecting and advancing the arts in Athens. In order to better highlight the importance of the arts, the community should seek to quantify their impact. Though an exact dollar value may be hard to determine, there are metrics available for measuring their effect. Whether it is the number of events, hotel stays, or some other figure these data should be regularly collected to understand the current state and health of the scene. This can help spur future investment and document the related return. The community should set five, ten, and twenty-year goals based on benchmarks to be sure the arts and cultural scene continues to grow.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

AR2

Develop, foster, implement, and fund a Historic Resources Master Plan. The Historic Resources Master Plan for Athens would help the community identify, preserve, and promote its cultural heritage and history. Plans such as these typically include a robust history of the area, its buildings, and people as a foundation to the preservation criteria. The plan should set out basic goals and measurable objectives for preservation and promotion of its historic sites and areas. Primary and secondary

assets – areas, buildings or districts – should be designated using clear criteria. An action plan will connect regulatory options at the local, state, and federal levels with grant opportunities, local champions and potential partners. This plan should serve as the foundation for community action and should be updated as progress is made. The Beech Haven property is a potential beneficiary of such a study.

AR3 **Promote, fund, and implement a Public Art Master Plan.** Public art pulls the creativity of the community out of the galleries and concert halls and into the public realm. Well-executed public art is appropriately scaled and sited, and has an emotional impact. From the Bean in Chicago's Millennium Park, to small single-brick paintings, the sum of these installations or performances is a greater attachment to place and more love for where you live. In most communities these projects happen without direction, guidelines or a plan. While this is part of the spirit and the origin of public art, by developing a plan, the community can establish some basic guardrails to ensure greater variety, participation and coverage of installations and performances. The Athens community, through the Athens Cultural Affairs Commission has developed its own Public Arts Master Plan connecting strategic actions and artists with potential funding and implementation mechanisms. Its recommendations should be supported and fully funded.

AR4 **Create a public space and venue for the arts.** While encouraging art in the public realm is important, the arts and cultural scence in Athens also needs permanent physical spaces where it can be expressed. Venues are where art happens, and artists will go to where the venues are. But as is the case in many communities, as rents rise (especially in Downtown) these spaces become harder to afford and maintain. The past ten years have seen an alarming decrease in the number of arts venues in the community. While several have opened, more have closed. If the community values the impact of the arts, it must identify and open up new spaces for artists and performers. Through public / private partnerships the community should inventory potential buildings or sites, consider novel ownership models, and ensure a net growth in the number of artistic venues over time.

AR5 **Develop an inclusive approach to the arts.** The diversity of Athens' people should be reflected in the diversity of Athens' artists. There is a unique opportunity to blend the perspectives and backgrounds of each individual into an ever-expanding gallery of artistic expression. The variety of mediums today is already impressive, but the growth potential is significant. If a larger and more representative group is given greater exposure into the scene (especially youth), the Athens performance, music and visual arts scenes will flourish. A task force should be commissioned to study arts education in the County, identify opportunities and strategies to expose students and adults to arts-related experiences, and recruit local artists to get involved with specific initiatives or develop their own.

AR6 **Identify barriers to inclusion and engagement in the arts.** Athens has a national reputation for its arts and culture. For residents, this wealth of cultural amenities is a unique and treasured asset. But exposure to the arts is not universal. For some segments of the community it can be difficult to access the arts, even though they are so close at hand. Barriers to engagement can be subtle, but actively prevent equitable inclusion for all. These barriers should be illuminated through an evaluation of various arts mediums, venues, etc. This assessment process will identify the root challenges to accessing the arts for specific segments of the population, develop strategies to overcome the barriers, and establish metrics to benchmark progress in the future.

VITALITY: INVIGORATING THE COMMUNITY

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

GOAL

Residents feel a strong connection to each other and are engaged in the community's overall well-being.

PRIORITY ACTION

CE1

Create gathering spaces that are available and accessible to all. In a vibrant community, people get together. Great public spaces are magnets for people and help them strengthen their personal connection to where they live and who they live with. In Athens, the community should continue to cultivate these spaces at all scales and in every part of the County. From the rural areas to Downtown, leaders should demand room for public gathering spaces wherever possible. A recent project announcement from Southern Brewing Company to build an outdoor amphitheater provides a great example of this kind of project.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

CE2

Continue to identify common goals among UGA and Athens. The University of Georgia and Athens must continue to forge strong connections between student and faculty programs and the broader community. Like all college towns, the town-gown relationship is critical to the health of the local economy, and communication is key. There are, no doubt, countless opportunities for the University's programs to interact with, and make a profound impact upon the community. These efforts should be continually evaluated and expanded.

CE3 **Encourage a more easily navigable government system.** A more easily navigable government system – whether the interaction is in-person or online – will encourage more engagement from residents. It will help leaders improve their responsiveness to neighborhood needs and improve openness. Finally, it will lead to better, more inclusive policy development by local government.

CE4 **Identify the relationships and connections between neighborhood groups and the broader community.** Athens is made up of a web of unique neighborhoods. From east to west, north to south, or in Downtown, each community has its strengths and challenges. Sharing among neighborhood leaders is key to communicating successful strategies for dealing with common problems, advocating for County or state policy, and generally understanding what is happening around the community. The community could consider formalizing this relationship through a neighborhood council, or conducting regular, informal community summits or meetings.

CE5 **Create a collective identity that reflects our unique diversity.** Understanding the identity of a place starts by examining its underlying DNA. Athens is a diverse community, both in terms of its people and its places. It is this diversity that makes it unique and interesting. This also makes it difficult to align with a single message. To move forward, however, Athens should seek to speak with a single, unified voice. By developing a more collective identity, the community can communicate both internally – to its residents and businesses – and externally – to the wider world – what the Athens brand means. These are positive, common messages that can be adapted to a range of formats and audiences. This community branding process is an increasingly common practice for cities and counties of all sizes. Core assets are identified that help develop common, shared messages about the place. These are packaged into simple statements that capture the essence of the community, and collectively make up the brand. A collaborative brand would allow public, private and institutional partners all to share these messages consistently as they speak about Athens. For residents, these positive messages reflect their experience and become the default description for the community. Athens should consider launching a collaborative branding program that will create a collective, positive identity.

CE6 **Expand and coordinate local leadership academies.** Community leaders don't just appear; they are nurtured by individuals and through formative experiences. These are generational concerns, and the community must work with youth across the County to develop its next batch of leaders to move Athens forward. Envision Athens will depend heavily on this group to implement the Action Agenda. There are effective programs in the community today like the Citizen Government Academy and the Chamber's LEAD Athens program that can be bolstered and expanded to meet this need.

FOCUS STATEMENTS KEY

- PROVIDING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY
- RAISING THE TIDE
- IMPROVING CONNECTIONS
- LEADING, INNOVATING, PUSHING FORWARD
- PROTECTING, ENHANCING & LEVERAGING ASSETS
- TAPPING THE TALENT
- COMING TOGETHER, STAYING TOGETHER
- KEEPING ATHENS….ATHENS
- LIVING BETTER, LONGER & STRONGER
- BUILDING AN EQUITABLE COMMUNITY

A note on Focus Statements

Each action has been assigned one or more focus statements connecting it to the community assessment and findings from engagement. Refer to page 44 for a further description.

FOUNDATIONS: BUILDING & MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION

There are a lot of daily miracles behind a well-run community; they usually go unrecognized...until there's a problem. Transportation and infrastructure are certainly two. These elements create a framework around which the rest of the community is built. Smart investments enable long-term and sustainable growth. They boost efficiency, improve safety, and are increasingly charged with solving larger problems like climate change. Athens' infrastructure has come a long way in 200 years, from dirt roads and wooden pipes, to a fully modern system. The Foundations chapter and its recommendations expect this progress to continue.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In the modern sense, infrastructure is about more than pipes buried under ground. It's about communication, efficiency and, increasingly, green technology. The Infrastructure topic collects the priority actions to modernize the community's various systems and keep pace with growing demand and new technology.

TRANSPORTATION

A strong community is well-connected and provides efficient and equitable access to a variety of transportation options. For some, this means a well-maintained road network. For others, it is regular and efficient public transportation. And for others still, it is about feeling safe riding a bike to work. The transportation topic includes actions that seek to improve the safety, efficiency and connections provided in Athens. It looks at hyper local options like cycling and walking, regional commuting challenges like congestion, and opportunities to connect Athens to the world through highways and air service.

FOUNDATIONS: BUILDING & MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION

TRANSPORTATION

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).

PRIORITY ACTION

TR1

Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure through respective master plans. The ACCUG update to the 2001 Bike Master Plan and Community Pedestrian Plan provides a host of improvements to the original document including: a clearer philosophical approach; best-practice designs, low-cost solutions, and perhaps most importantly, an updated list of community-approved priorities. The implementation of the plan's recommendations will be supported through public and private investments and include a number of community organizations including BikeAthens, Complete Streets Athens, Firefly Trail, Inc. and other stakeholder groups.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

TR2

Pursue sustainable coverage of transit within community. Funding for transit must always balance coverage with frequency. For its size, Athens is well served by Athens Transit and the University of Georgia bus system. The County should seek to maintain high levels of service and then develop a sustainable model for funding and equitable access.

TR3 **Explore commuting options to Atlanta.** Regional leadership will convene to reinvigorate the discussion of a major commuting route between Athens and Atlanta. This conversation should involve all regional partners from the public, private and institutional sectors. The Georgia Department of Transportation prepared a study in 2006 on the so-called "Brain Train" to describe potential service, forecast ridership, and outline potential costs. This revealed a latent demand of more than 8,000 trips per day by 2015, and 10,000 by 2030. But progress has stalled since this and other studies were conducted, and significant reinvigoration of leadership would be necessary. This action does not prescribe a single solution. Rather, suggests a reinvigoration of the discussion of this important connection at a regional and macro-regional scale.

TR4 **Continue to build out fiber network and continually invest in new technology.** Envision Athens is a twenty-year plan to guide the community forward. The disruptive technology emerging in the automotive and mobility industries (like autonomous vehicles, smart grids, etc.) will fundamentally change the way Athenians get around by 2038. With that said, Athens should be prepared to not just accept this technology but move into the vanguard, with smart infrastructure investments. A fundamental component of this shift will rely on a comprehensive fiber network. The community should study these advancements in smart mobility and make strategic investments into enabling technology.

TR5 **Grow and advance commercial air service into Athens-Clarke County.** Commercial air service to the Athens Ben Epps Airport ceased in 2014 with SeaPort Airlines pulling their service to Nashville. Since then, the regional airport has served only private flights along with supporting general aviation. The community should continue its work to attract regular service back to the airport and to better leverage the asset for economic development. The completion in 2017 of a $4.4 million terminal replacement should be complemented with improved gateway upgrades.

TR6 **Develop an over-arching transportation plan.** There are currently transportation recommendations scattered among a number of community plans. To increase education, communication, and coordination between plans, this action will create a centralized plan depository where all community recommendations live and can be related. Logical partnerships, conflicts or implementation steps will be identified. Additionally, the community should consider completing a Freight Master Plan to understand movement of goods into, out of, and throughout the County. This plan could also include an economic impact analysis.

TR7 **Pursue a comprehensive transportation safety program.** A comprehensive transportation safety program would address the 'four E's', including engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical services (EMS).

FOUNDATIONS: BUILDING & MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION

INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL

Well-maintained infrastructure is strategically expanded and upgraded to unlock economic potential and help meet the needs of individuals in full consideration of environmental practices.

PRIORITY ACTION

I1

Repair and replace infrastructure assets commensurate with physical depreciation. In order to maintain the economic value and reliability of public assets, sustained reinvestment, replacement and rehabilitation must keep pace with the deterioration of those assets. This will also avoid an expensive backlog of capital maintenance. These assets include pavement, bridges, traffic control devices, stormwater conveyance structures, water lines, sewers, parks and facilities.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

I2

Ensure adequate water supply to meet current and future demand. Athens-Clarke County has scarce water resources, and must be proactive to avoid future emergencies. Water supply can be ensured through conservation (demand management), water recycling/reuse, and additional water storage. The reuse program will begin by targeting bulk users of reclaimed water with the aim of displacing water demand. Future phases could include development of a water storage facility, which would complement potable water reuse.

13 **Improve Downtown streetscape and infrastructure and Downtown physical and IT infrastructure.** Make Downtown more accessible and beautiful. This action item encompasses related ideas, such as exploring better ideas for access for the disabled, and advocating for Downtown streetscape and infrastructure improvements.

14 **Reduce the risk of flooding events and improve the quality of streams and rivers through a proactive and innovative stormwater program.** Stormwater master planning will include a review of development standards, an evaluation of prospects for regional detention facilities, and a review of rates, funding and policies. Implementation of the stormwater master plan will reduce risks of flooding and improve water quality. Watershed protection plans and watershed improvement programs are also under way.

15 **Coordinate sanitary sewer expansion with the future land use framework.** Extension of water and sewer provision should be carefully measured and coordinated completely with the future land use framework. Expansions to the network can be exceedingly expensive, especially when end users do not pay for the full cost of the expansion, leading to a net-fiscal loss for the community. Even developer-paid extensions can be net-losers over time if the fiscal impact does not adequately fund lifetime maintenance.

16 **Increase communications and information connectivity.** As steps to becoming a smart city, take steps to integrate and enhance information and communication technology; increase wireless bandwidth; and network more sensors and actuators to data centers. Improve transportation efficiency through technological advances.

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"Excited for this community process. I hope ACC will become a place where people live, work, spend and send their kids to school proudly."

—Envision Athens Focus on the Future Meeting Participant

PART III
IMPLEMENTATION

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Moving forward, realizing success, building momentum

AN APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

The realization of the Envision Athens Action Agenda should not, and cannot, be the responsibility of a single organization. Completing the 100+ actions will require collaboration between full network of government, institutional, non-profit, and private organizations throughout the community. Through this collective action, Athens will align behind its common vision and achieve greater unity, equity, and prosperity. The implementation chapter assigns each of the actions to a logical lead entity, connects supporting partners, and considers the timeframe for completion.

HOW TO USE THE ACTION AGENDA

The Envision Athens process and its recommendations have provided community leaders with a solid foundation for action. The proposals can be used in a number of ways, by a range of community actors. Below are several examples.

1. **Annual Work Programs and Budgets.** Staff and administrators should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets.

2. **Community Planning.** Planning efforts should be aligned with the vision and the recommendations of the Action Agenda and further specific actions where possible.

3. **Philanthropic giving.** The agenda should be considered when evaluating grants or giving programs.

4. **Capital Improvement Plans.** Capital improvement plans (CIP) should be consistent with the Agenda's recommendations.

5. **Economic Incentives.** Incentives should align with the vision and goals, and be reviewed to ensure consistency with specific actions.

6. **Private Investment Decisions.** Property owners, developers, and other private entities should consider the recommendations in their planning and investment decisions.

7. **Civic and Social Engagement.** Community groups should be aware of the Action Agenda, identify opportunities to leverage their work with larger goals, and continue to work collaboratively through the implementation effort.

8. **Consistent Interpretation.** Envision Athens implementation leadership should collaborate with staffs and other critical decision-making entities to ensure clear and consistent interpretation of the Action Agenda.

MAINTENANCE, UPDATES & BENCHMARKING

The Action Agenda should be monitored on a regular basis, and, when necessary, revised or updated. This section outlines guidance for monitoring the Plan's effectiveness and maintaining its relevancy.

1 **Updating.** A major update of the Plan should be considered every five years to incorporate new demographic data, update accomplishments, and when necessary introduce new actions. In the interim, key milestones may be reached which necessitate an update sooner than a five-year cycle.

2 **Monitoring.** The plan should be continually monitored for implementation effectiveness. This review should happen on a formal basis and occur no less than once per year. A status report should accompany this review and be promoted throughout the community. The Envision Athens website (www.**envisionathens.com**) could be maintained to share this report along with other news related to implementation success.

ONGOING COLLABORATION

Commitment to the recommendations and their implementation will require the ongoing, coordinated efforts of individuals and organizations representing the public, private, and civic sectors of the community. Even those actions that require public sector involvement need an active and engaged citizenry to place them on the agendas of these agencies and ensure follow through. While government does have a large role in implementation, the majority of actions are spread throughout the community's network of private and non-profit organizations.

Establishing a structure for implementation

ONGOING PROJECT MANAGEMENT, EVALUATION, AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR ENVISION ATHENS

Realization of the Envision Athens Action Agenda will require coordination between a wide variety of community leaders and organizations. To direct this work and maintain momentum the Steering Committee developed the following approach to implementation. Management of the implementation program will be shared between institutional partners and key community stakeholders. Their actions will be coordinated by a project manager.

Project Manager

ROLE

- *Provide management services for the Action Agenda as approved by the process Steering Committee*

RESPONSIBILITIES

- *Overall project management*
- *Work program development*
- *Plan administration*
- *Evaluation and monitoring*
- *Communications and marketing*
- *Milestone discovery and celebration*

Institutional Partners

ROLE

- *Co-fund the implementation of the Action Agenda and monitor activities of the project manager and stakeholders*

RESPONSIBILITIES

- *Oversight of project management*
- *Regular coordination of activities*
- *Coalition building among Community Stakeholders*

Community Stakeholders

ROLE

- *Implement the recommendations of the Action Agenda through direct action or by connect project champions*

RESPONSIBILITIES

- *On-the-ground implementation of the 77 projects, policy and program recommendations*
- *Connecting other community stakeholders to the program*

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following table provides more information on each community action, including timeframes for completion or initiation and identification of a lead coordinating body, along with any additional responsible organizations.

TIMEFRAME KEY

Ongoing	Continually occurring
Short term	1-2 years
Mid term	3-5 years
Long term	Up to a decade

* indicates priority action

PLACE | Making a great place

Land Use

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* **LU1**	**Develop zoning standards and incentives to develop and/or redevelop quality multi-family options for a diverse group.**	Mid-term	Planning Division - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	ACC Georgia Inititative for Community Housing (GICH) Committee
LU2	**Develop incentives to reuse existing development before new developments in greenfields.**	Ongoing	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-
LU3	**Create a River District Plan and development strategy.**	Short-term	ADDA, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government Leisure Services, ORGC	Convention and Visitors Bureau, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government , ORGC
LU4	**Create nodal development tied to transportation, healthcare, schools, jobs, workforce, and housing.**	Long-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	ACC Planning Commission
LU5	**Re-examine Future Development Map.**	Short-term	2018 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
LU6	**Establish Corridor Redevelopment incentives or zoning policies for gateway and other important corridors.**	Short-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-
LU7	**Develop zoning standards and incentives to include greenspace, art and other public amenities.**	Short-term	Atlanta Highway and Lexington Road Corridor Studies Committees	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
LU8	**Re-examine density allowances in all zoning districts.**	Ongoing	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
LU9	Establish incentives for new development to incorporate environmentally sustainable standards including, but not limited to, material re-use, responsible management of construction waste, etc.	Ongoing	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-
LU10	Encourage the use of development incentive options.	Ongoing	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	ACC Economic Development Department
LU11	Create an inventory of local publically-owned land that could be developed.	Short-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government , Clarke County School District, University of Georgia	-

Environment

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* E1	Achieve goal of 20% of County as protected greenspace.	Long-term	Greenspace Group - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	-
E2	Provide more safe, affordable transportation options including walking, biking, and clean transit.	Ongoing	Bike Athens, ACC Transit, Transportation and Public Works - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	N/A
E3	Increase energy efficiency, sources, and use of renewables.	Long-term	Georgia Power, UGA, Athens Clarke County Unified Government, Clarke County School District	-
E4	Improve the health and quality of rivers and streams to meet local standards for public use and enjoyment.	Mid-term	Public Utilities Water Conservation Office - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission
E5	Reduce landfill disposal of solid waste by diverting 75% through management, education, collection, and enforcement.	Long-term	Solid Waste - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	Local Private Haulers
E6	Identify and protect rare, threatened, and unique natural resources.	Short-term	Sustainability Office - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
E7	**Decrease single-occupancy car rides by incentivizing alternative transportation.**	Mid-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government M&C, UGA	-
E8	**Decrease water consumption per capita.**	Mid-term	Public Utilities Water Conservation Office - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	-

Neighborhoods

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* N1	**Utilize neighborhood schools as hubs for diverse school and neighborhood engagement.**	Short-term	Clarke County School District Local School Governance Teams	Athens Wellbeing Project
N2	**Expand sidewalk network and other basic infrastructure in neighborhoods such as lights, trees, and neighborhood businesses.**	Mid-term	Athens-Clarke County Transporation and Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan	UGA Small Business Development Center
N3	**Incentivize neighborhood grocery stores, farmer's markets, co-ops, etc.**	Long-term	Neighborhood Associations	UGA Small Business Development Center
N4	**Create neighborhood planning units, neighborhood councils, and promote neighborhood leaders program.**	Short-term	Existing neighborhood leaders program (Family Connection-Communities in Schools of Athens) - Clarke County School District LSGTs	Athens-Clarke County through comprehensive plan- planning according to planning units
N5	**Create incentives to encourage revitalization in neighborhoods and commercial developments.**	Mid-term	Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission,	ACC Housing Team of Georgia Inititative for Community Housing (GICH), ACC Housing & Community Development Department, Athens 4 Everyone
N6	**Educate tenants about their rights and responsibilities.**	Ongoing	Georgia Legal Services	Hancock community development corporation
N7	**Evaluate current process for identification, adjudication, education, and funding clearance of nuisance properties.**	Short-term	ACC Community Protection Division (aka: Code Enforcement Division)	Courts, ACC Housing and Community Development, ACC Police Department, ACC Attorney
N8	**Increase and promote communication among neighborhoods via listservs and other communication tools.**	Ongoing	Athens-Clarke County Neighborhood Listserv	Neighborhood Associations

Housing

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* H1	**Target challenged multi-family developments for major redevelopment, especially mixed-income.**	Ongoing	ACC Govt	Individual property owners, ACC Housing Team of the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), ReNew Athens, Athens Housing Authority
H2	**Increase amount of and provide access to affordable housing.**	Ongoing	Public/Private Parnership led by Athens Housing Authority	Athens Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity, Athens Behavioral Health Systems, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government HCDC, Georgia Initiative for Community Housing, Athens Area Homebuilders Association
H3	**Acknowledge and develop strategies to address issues related to gentrification.**	Mid-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government , Georgia Initiative for Community Housing	"Hancock Community
H4	**Provide more options for the homeless.**	Long-term	Homeless Coalition, Continuum of Care, Northeast Georgia Homeless Coalition	Challenge Grants
H5	**Create quality housing for older adults using innovative techniques like accessory dwelling units.**	Mid-term	Developers and ACC Govt	Athens Community Council on Aging
H6	**Support and expand the Housing Rehabilitation Initiative.**	Ongoing	Athens Housing Authority	ReNew Athens

Agriculture

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* AG1	Establish an Eastside Farmer's Market.	Athens Farmer's Market	East Athens Business Leader's Association	Short-term
AG2	Evaluate, establish, and expand community gardens to include "vertical farming", or farming in small places.	Cooperative Extension Office	Farmer's Roundtable and other "trade" associations involved in agriculture	Mid-term
AG3	Mobilize fresh food.	Athens Land Trust	Cooperative Extension Service	Short-term
AG4	Identify and evaluate tax incentives on Agricultural (AR)- zoned property to incentivize maintaining agricultural land.	Farmer's Roundtable and other "trade" associations involved in agriculture	ACC Mayor & Commission	Short-term
AG5	Enhance and further develop connections with the University of Georgia Agriculture program, Clarke County School District, and Young Urban Farmers Program.	Cooperative Extension Office	Athens Land Trust, UGArden	Short-term
AG6	Support the initiatives of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service programs.	University of Georgia Cooperative Extension	ACC Mayor & Commission	Ongoing
AG7	Create an Agriculture Council.	Cooperative Extension Office	Farmer's Roundtable and other "trade" associations involved in agriculture	Short-term
AG8	Further develop the idea of "local flavor".	Athens Farmer's Market	Convention & Visitors Bureau, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, ACC Economic Development Department, Athens Made	Short-term

PROSPERITY | Creating livelihoods

Economic Development

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* ED1	**Create a comprehensive economic development plan.**	Ongoing	ACC Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce	Athens Technical College, Clarke County School District, Housing & Community Development, Four Athens
ED2	**Implement ordinances, policies, and infrastructure to address impediments to locating or expanding business and industry.**	Short-term	ACC Mayor & Commission	ACC Public Utilities ACC Planning, ACC Transportation & Public Works ACC Economic Development
ED3	**Provide the facilities and services necessary to attract, incubate, and grow businesses across a variety of sectors.**	Mid-term	Public Private partnership including various private and public actors	ACC Economic Development, UGA Innovation Gateway, UGA Small Business Development Center, Four Athens, Athens Made, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chamber, ACC Housing & Community Development
ED4	**Improve access to Downtown as everyone's neighborhood.**	Mid-Term	Athens Downtown Development Authority	Convention and Visitors Bureau, ACC Unified Gov't
ED5	**Continue building a comprehensive entrepreneur development program to complement the existing retention attraction initiatives.**	Ongoing	ACC Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce	-
ED6	**Leverage Athens' most distinctive products - such as the music scene - to further position it as a destination and brand.**	Ongoing	Convention and Visitors Bureau	Athens-Clarke County (ACC), ACC Economic Development, ADDA, Classic Center Authority, Chamber of Commerce
ED7	**Create a marketing plan that will better position Athens to successfully compete for in-state and regional leisure and conventions travel.**	Mid-term	Convention and Visitors Bureau	ACC Unified Gov't, Airport Authority, Athens Downtown Development Authority, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

Education

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* EC1	**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.**	Mid-term	Clarke County School District, Athens Tech, University of Georgia	Chamber of Commerce, Athensmade, Four Athens, Real Edge, ACC Economic Development, Career Academy, Athens Land Trust (West Broad Farmers Market initiative)
EC2	**Provide a robust Early Childhood Education for birth to Pre-K children to help prepare them for academic success in the future.**	Short-term	Early Learning - Clarke County School District	Clarke County School District, Athens Tech, Piedmont College, UGA, daycare providers in Athens
EC3	**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.**	Long-term	Clarke County School District	UGA, Piedmont College, non-profit organizations, PTO
EC4	**Provide a variety of learning opportunities for both adult and nontraditional students' education and development, which support a variety of learning styles and emotional/health needs.**	Mid-term	OLLI/UGA/Athens Tech	Advantage Behavioral, Homeless Shelter, Athens Tech, UGA, Foothills, Council on Aging, other non-profit organizations, etc.
EC5	**Enhance the learning environment to provide student support for the variety of needs within our community.**	Ongoing	Clarke County School District/Family connection/Communities in schools	Athens Tech, Piedmont College, UGA, Advantage Behavioral, Athens Montessori, Four Athens, Foothills, Clarke County Mentor Program, ACC Police Dept/Sherriff's Dept, ESP, other non-profit organizations

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
EC6	Enhance opportunities for families to engage in the learning process so they may be active participants in their child(ren)'s education and help their child(ren) achieve their individual educational goals.	Ongoing	Family connection/ communities in schools	Clarke County School District, Early Learning, UGA, Athens Technical College, Piedmont College, non-profits
EC7	Provide support for traditional college.	Ongoing	Clarke County School District (middle and high schools), Clarke County School District Career Academy, Athens Christian School, St. Joseph's Catholic School, Monsignor Donovan Catholic School	UGA, Piedmont College

People | Strengthening lives

Health

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* HE1	Develop an effective mental health crisis response team.	Short-term	Advantage Behavioral Health, Benchmark and ACCPD.	-
HE2	Identify mental health issues in youth and put preventive measures, services, and interventions in place.	Short-term	Piedmont Regional and Advantage Behavioral Health	-
HE3	Create more opportunities and coordinate services for people moving back to the community from incarceration.	Short-term	Athens Justice Project	-
HE4	Expand substance abuse and addictive disease treatment.	Short-term	Advantage Behavioral Health, Commencement Center	-
HE5	Create a regional hub for health care to centralize health care facilities and providers.	Long-term	Piedmont and St. Mary's Hospitals	-
HE6	Coordinate communication on health care issues to increase the public's understanding of service providers.	Ongoing	Community Connection of Northeast Georgia? United Way? New entity?	-

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
HE7	**Continue to support effective healthy living initiatives.**	Short-term	Athens Health Network	-
HE8	**Create education programs to help citizens make healthy lifestyle choices.**	Short-term	Piedmont Athens Regional Foundation in partnership with the Clarke County School District and Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-
HE9	**Recruit specialists in health care based on defined areas or need.**	Mid-term	Piedmont and St. Mary's Hospitals	-

Safety

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* **SA1**	**Provide and identify sufficient funding to implement the Athens-Clarke County Police Department Strategic Vision Plan.**	Short-term	ACC Police Department	ACC Mayor & Commission
SA2	**Develop a comprehensive Community Supervision Plan.**	Mid-term	ACC Probation Services Office	Domestic Violence Task Force of ACC and Oconee Counties, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Families 4 Change, "
SA3	**Further expand youth development programs for public safety using data from the Youth Development Task Force.**	Short-term	Youth Development Task Force, Sheriff's Office	Clarke County School District, Leisure Services Department, ACC Police Department, Juvenile Court, Family Connection - Communities in Schools of Athens, Clarke County Mentor Program
SA4	**Create a bicycle/walking safety enforcement and education program.**	Ongoing	BikeAthens	ACC Transportation and Public Works Department, Leisure Services Department, ACC Police Department
SA5	**Develop and fund retention incentives for public safety officers.**	Mid-term	All agencies, ACC HR Department	ACC Mayor & Commission

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SA6	**Identify and evaluate ways to leverage existing and future technology to better coordinate efforts between residents and local law enforcement.**	Short-term	ACC Police Department, Sheriff's Office	Neighborhood Groups
SA7	**Evaluate and update policies that aim to reduce traffic fatalities.**	Mid-term	ACC Transportation and Public Works Department, Sheriff's Office	ACC Police Department, BikeAthens, ACC Fire Department
SA8	**Develop a Fire & Emergency Services Strategic Plan to enhance and grow fire service delivery in areas of significant medical emergency.**	Mid-term	ACC Fire Department	UGA, ACCPD, ACC Police Department dispatch, privately contracted Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
SA9	**Review and enhance safety programs for at-risk populations to reduce sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.**	Short-term	Council on Aging, Project Safe, The Cottage, UGA, ACC Police Dept - Family Protection Unit	HCD

Social Services

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
*** SS1**	**Address poverty by targeting unemployment and underemployment by training and preparing individuals for vocational success.**	Short-term	Northeast Georgia Regional Commission - Workforce Development through distribution of WIOA funding	For youth: Great Promise Partnership, Clarke County School District Career Academy, Foothills Charter For Adults: Action Ministries, Bread for Life, Goodwill GoodBiz program, Vocational Rehab Business support: manufacturer's roundtable
SS2	**Create a community that is supportive of, and provides opportunities for, individuals with limited opportunity.**	Long-term	Homeless and Poverty Coalition, Social Mobility Task Force	UGA LACSI, Public/Private sector entities such as non-profits, hospitals, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government Housing & Community Develoment, Athens Immigrant Rights Coalition, Athens 4 Everyone

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SS3	**Develop and expand youth development programming that is accessible and provide adequate and affordable child care.**	Mid-term	Clarke County School District	YMCA, YWCO (girls), ESP (students with different abilities), Athens-Clarke County Leisure Dept.
SS4	**Develop a clearinghouse to make programs and social services more easily accessible.**	Long-term	Office of Service Learning	-
SS5	**Encourage non-profits to collaborate, convene productively, and effectively communicate services.**	Short-term	United Way- incentivize collaboration	HCD, H&PC, 2-1-1 Information and Referal

Vitality | Invigorating the community

Arts & Culture

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
⁎ **AR1**	**Measure economic impacts of arts, culture, and heritage tourism.**	Ongoing	The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau	Athens Cultural Affairs Commission, Athens-Clarke County Economic Development Department
AR2	**Develop, foster, implement, and fund a Historic Resources Master Plan.**	Mid-term	Historic Preservation Commission, Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation	The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau, ACC Mayor & Commission, Georgia Historical Society, State, Tribal, and Local Plans & Grants Division (National Parks Service), Athens Historical Society
AR3	**Promote, fund, and implement a Public Art Master Plan.**	Ongoing	Athens Cultural Affairs Commission	Athens Art Association, Lyndon House Arts Foundation, Inc, Athens Area Community Foundation
AR4	**Create a public space and venue for the arts.**	Ongoing	Athens Cultural Affairs Commission	The Classic Center Cultural Foundation, UGA Performing Arts Center
AR5	**Develop an inclusive approach to the arts.**	Ongoing	AthFest Educates	Athens Cultural Affairs Commission, Clarke County School District

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
AR6	Identify barriers to inclusion and engagement in the arts.	Ongoing	AthFest Educates	Clarke County School District

Civic Engagement

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* CE1	Create gathering spaces that are available and accessible to all.	Mid-term	Planning Department - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	Athens Downtown Development Authority, Neighborhood Associations
CE2	Continue to identify common goals among UGA and Athens.	Ongoing	UGA, Athens Clarke County Unified Government	Athens Downtown Development Authority, ACC Federation of Neighborhoods, ServeUGA
CE3	Encourage a more easily navigable government system.	Short-term	Public Information Office - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	ACC Information Technology, Federation of Neighborhoods
CE4	Identify the relationships and connections between neighborhood groups and the broader community.	Short-term	Planning Department - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	Neighborhood Associations, ACC Federation of Neighborhoods
CE5	Create a collective identity that reflects our unique diversity.	Short-term	Public Information Office - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	Athens downtown Development Authority, UGA, Athensmade
CE6	Expand and coordinate local leadership academies.	Ongoing	Manager's Office - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, ACC Economic Development Department, UGA, Young Professionals Network

Foundations | Building & maintaining the foundation

Transportation

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* TR1	**Support bike and pedestrian infrastructure through respective master plans.**	Short-term	Citizens Committee, Transportation and Public Works	Bike Athens
TR2	**Pursue sustainable coverage of transit within community.**	Ongoing	ACC Transit	GDOT, Federal Transit Authority, Mayor and Commission - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
TR3	**Explore commuting options to Atlanta.**	Long-term	Transportation and Public Works - Athens Clarke County Unified Government, Transit, Airport Authority	GDOT
TR4	**Continue to build out fiber network and continually invest in new technology.**	Mid-term	Transportation and Public Works - Athens Clarke County Unified Government , Information Technology	-
TR5	**Grow and advance commercial air service into Athens-Clarke County.**	Short-term	Airport Authority	Local business & Convention and Visitors Bureau, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
TR6	**Develop an over-arching transportation plan.**	Short-term	Transit, Transportation and Public Works - Athens Clarke County Unified Government , Airport Authority	Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study, Planning,
TR7	**Pursue a comprehensive transportation safety program.**	Short-term	Transportation and Public Works - Athens Clarke County Unified Government	ACCPD, Fire, PIO, UGA, Planning, EMS

Infrastructure

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR	ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
* I1	**Repair and replace infrastructure assets commensurate with physical depreciation.**	Ongoing	Transportation and Public Works, Public Untilities , Central Services, Leisure Services - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	GDOT, Federal Highway Administration, Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study, Mayor and Commission - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
I2	**Ensure adequate water supply to meet current and future demand.**	Ongoing	Public Untilities - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	M&C
I3	**Improve Downtown streetscape and infrastructure and Downtown physical and IT infrastructure.**	Long-term	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government , Athens Downtown Development Authority	Property owners, business owners, Convention and Visitors Bureau
I4	**Reduce the risk of flooding events and improve the quality of streams and rivers through a proactive and innovative stormwater program.**	Long-term	Transportation and Public Works - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	private dvplmt, Econ Dvlp, ADDA
I5	**Coordinate sanitary sewer expansion with the future land use framework.**	Mid-term	Planning Department, Public Utilities - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	-
I6	**Increase communications and information connectivity.**	Long-term	Information Technology, Transportation and Public Works - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government	GaDOT, Economic Development, Public Utilities - Athens-Clarke County Unified Government