

## **Economic Development Subcommittee**

### *Vision Statement:*

Athens-Clarke County will be the educational, cultural, medical, and economic hub of Northeast Georgia. Athens-Clarke County's strengths and qualities will make it a world-class center for research and innovation. Athens-Clarke County's workforce will be capable of supporting existing and new enterprises. Athens-Clarke County will have a resilient, diverse economic base that provides a stratified range of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, making Athens the best place in the world to live, work, and retire.

### *Potential Issues and Opportunities:*

- A. Increased utilization of the University of Georgia's unique resources will advance local and regional economic development.
- B. Local small businesses need substantial increases in technical, financial, and logistical support.
- C. The community lacks workforce development coordination between employment and training. The Department of Labor could play an important role in fulfilling this need.
- D. Athens has areas that could be developed as regional industrial parks.
- E. The community needs a substantial increase in moderate income jobs.
- F. Athens is the regional center for health services.
- G. Athens has a significant and growing life sciences (biotech) research and technology industry.
- H. The potential satellite campus of the Medical College of Georgia will greatly enhance opportunities for medical research, training, and services.
- I. Athens schools and academic institutions offer business and specialized technical curricula.

- J. There is potential for increased regional planning and cooperation. Athens is the regional commercial center, but not all industries are suitable for Athens-Clarke County.
- K. Athens and the region have a significant and growing small-scale agricultural industry.
- L. Athens diverse economy has the market potential to satisfy the mutual needs of local businesses, governmental entities, and consumers. (“Buy Local”)
- M. There is lack of guiding principles for business recruitment that reflect the economic goals of Athens-Clarke County citizens.
- N. Athens needs measurable data for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of its business recruitment incentives.
- O. Athens needs formal procedures for the retention of businesses.
- P. Declining daily commercial flights will have a negative impact on local economic development.
- Q. Athens has a significant and growing Arts Industry.
- R. Athens is recognized nationally as a center for music. The economic impact of the music industry has not been formally researched.
- S. Downtown Athens will benefit from continued preservation and development as a vibrant center for all ages.
- T. Athens historic heritage provides economic opportunities for tourism and enhances quality of life.

*Policies:*

- A. Policies for Enhancing the Local and Regional Business Climate
  - 1. Create an effective business resource center that serves as a single point of contact for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

2. Implement and promote a “buy local” campaign that targets business-to-business, governmental and personal buying decisions.
  3. Measure the economic impact of Ben Epps Airport and investigate methods of enhancing daily commercial air service.
  4. Encourage the preservation and development of Downtown Athens as a vibrant center for all ages.
  5. Focus on creating moderate income jobs.
- B. Policies for Workforce Development
1. Partner with local schools and academic institutions to enhance business, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of the workforce.
  2. Enhance coordination between employers, training providers, and the members of the workforce with leadership from the Georgia Department of Labor and the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center.
- C. Policies regarding Agriculture
1. Promote and support local and regional small-scale agriculture.
  2. Investigate alternatives for a local farmers market.
- D. Policies towards Arts and Music
1. Retain the appropriate University of Georgia entity to conduct an economic impact study of the music industry.
  2. Establish a committee that will investigate opportunities to expand Athens-Clarke County’s niche as a provider of value added services to the art and music industries.
  3. Continue to encourage development of downtown and neighborhood arts districts.
- E. Policies for Health Care and Biomedical Sciences
1. Promote and support the vitality and growth of the Athens-Clarke County health care industry.
  2. Promote and support life sciences (biotech) research and technology.
  3. Identify methods by which Athens-Clarke County can economically capitalize on the opportunities for research, training and services from a potential satellite campus of the Medical College of Georgia.
- F. Policies regarding Economic Recruitment and Retention
1. Define guiding principles that reflect the economic and quality of life goals of Athens-Clarke County citizens.

2. Establish formal procedures for the retention of existing businesses, including the identification of a focal point retention representative.
  3. Establish government-owned industrial and/or research park(s) to enhance recruitment, growth and retention efforts.
  4. Establish a formal data measurement process to evaluate the effectiveness of economic development incentives.
- G. Policies for Enhancing Regional Planning and Development
1. Actively participate in regional planning in partnership with other North Georgia communities.
  2. Partner with the University of Georgia to advance local and regional economic development.
  3. Use the University of Georgia's Carl Vincent Institute of Government to develop, implement and evaluate the results of this plan.
- H. Policies towards Tourism
1. Protect the historic heritage of the community.
  2. Support the Carl Vincent Institute of Government's efforts to market Athens-Clarke County as a tourist destination.