

PARTNERSHIP FOR A PROSPEROUS ATHENS

April 24, 2006

Housing and Transportation Issues **

Housing

Gentrification issues

- Need housing for those displaced by development (several examples given: Ruth Street, Rocksprings...)
- Problem with rental properties being demolished and not replaced
- New development in traditional low-income neighborhoods has caused increases in property taxes that are beyond the means of many to pay
- Elderly are being displaced due to gentrification
- *Provide "rental to own"*
- *Property location*

Homebuyer assistance (housing counseling, down payment, etc)

- Loan products are often not what they appear to be: mortgage starts out reasonable for a couple of years, but then balloons to payments beyond the availability of many to pay
- Need housing counseling
- We need to physically go to the poverty areas to get more input from the people in poverty
- *Homebuyer services*
- *Long-term mentoring for first time home owners*
- *Address issues of "unbanked"*
- *Plus Credit/budget counseling*

Home repair and upkeep assistance

- Funds are needed for upkeep and assistance
- Must ensure the basics for those living in poverty: water, power, heat, etc.

Availability of housing at different price ranges

- There's not enough affordable housing
- Need "REAL" affordable housing: housing designated as affordable oftentimes is not
- Need for affordable housing located in close proximity to services available to persons living in poverty
- Presently, affordable housing is often not considered "safe" and "decent"
- Mortgages for affordable housing need to be in the \$400 to \$500 range
- Should investigate converting currently vacant housing (e.g. apartment complexes) to affordable housing, using the government's power of eminent domain if necessary

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- Need to consider market based solutions
- *We don't won't mobile homes*
- *Think about the families*
- *Housing price*
- *Rent control*
- *More property tax freeze opportunities*
- *Incentives for developers to build affordable along side upper-income homes*
- *Lack of buildable land*
- *Tight zoning/variance regulations*
- *Resistance to higher density within central area*

Barriers to affordable housing

- Problem with the city/county's definition of "family" and other limitations on the number of persons allowed to reside in a residence
- Zoning laws are obstacles for establishing and maintaining affordable housing
- Persons released from incarceration are ineligible for many affordable housing benefits
- Need accessible housing for disabled persons
- *Need jobs*
- *Need to distinguish between owner occupied and non-owner occupied*
- *Universal, accessible for elderly—one level, wide bathrooms, hold bars, etc. (near bus route and grocery store)*
- *What are the zoning laws and at which level of government (city/state)—Enact them*
- *Unfair treatment*
- *Need more education about affordable housing needs to encourage support of policy makers and general public*

Manufactured housing issues (may overlap a bit with "regulatory barriers"...))

- City/county restrictions on manufactured housing are too restrictive

Inclusionary zoning

- Inclusionary zoning approach to require missing in affordable housing units with market-rate units (example: Decatur)
- *Inclusionary zoning is a slow solution that amounts to a very local tax increase*

Housing for homeless people and families

- Need temporary housing for the homeless—could use vacant motels or other rooms
- *Small mobile housing for homeless (nicer than MAD(?)Housing—could be manufactured*
- *Go to where they live*
- *Plan for emergency shelters*

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- *Church sponsor small shelters*
- *Social worker supported semi-permanent HUD program*
- *Parks where it's okay to go*

Accessible and Affordable Housing

** Elderly housing concerns: affordable rentals, homeowner repairs, predatory lending*

Transportation

Bus hours/routes

- *Extended hours of service are needed for the transit system*
- *All bus stops need shelters with seating*
- *Transit system needs routes that provide access to green spaces*
- *Transit system doesn't serve enough areas and takes too long*
- *Not convenient for making multiple trips per day*
- *More cross-town express routes*
- *Routes could be split to be more efficient (e.g. plans for Baxter/Prince)*
- *Some major areas not served at all (5 pts weekend; some Westside areas)*
- *State the bus number route and times when the bus is expected to stop at each bus stop*
- *More frequent stops—like...a bus comes by high traffic areas every 15-20 minutes*
- *Sunday bus service—to church and back*
- *Need to provide access to shopping malls, grocery, governmental services, hospitals, and medical care*
- *Grocery stores largely in pedestrian-unfriendly locations... as are hospitals and doctors for that matter*
- *What about state ID cards at DMV?*
- *Need a single sheet including all schedules*
- *Need a map showing how routes inter-connect; more attention to how a person can get from one place to another (Posted on the web, but what about those without internet? Also, impossible to read in black and white)*
- *Upgrade routes to current needs of the city*

Taxis

- *Need properly functioning, fairly priced, and efficient taxi services*
- *Serve more than just the bar-hopping community!*

Bike and pedestrian needs

- *Bike lanes—biking is a cheap form of transportation, though we tend to think of it as just recreation*
- *Sidewalks and crosswalks lacking (ATL highway, Milledge, etc.)*

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- *Need sidewalks and crosswalks outside of the “well-to-do” areas of town. Sidewalks will help pedestrians in dealing with speeding cars and rude drivers who are in a hurry*
- *5pts need sidewalks*
- *When 2 bus stops are across from each other, there should be a crosswalk*
- *Inadequate enforcement of traffic laws (i.e. speed limits, running red lights, stopping for pedestrians) Makes Athens more unsafe for cyclist and pedestrians than necessary*
- *Pot holes*

Transportation funding structure

- *The transit system should use alternative fuels (like Knoxville) and make more use of smaller buses*
- *Transit system needs to be oriented towards those really in need of transportation versus accommodating UGA students*
- *The county’s transportation funding budget is skewed to serve car owners, not the population in general*
- *Should at least focus on making roads bike/pedestrian friendly*
- *Get Athens Tech to buy into public The Bus as UGA does*
- *15/85 biofuel*
- *Coordination between UGA and The Bus*
- *Better distribution needed between campus routes and city routes*

Alternatives

- *Need voucher system to help those in need pay for transportation (buses and taxi)*
- *Car sharing as an alternative (Madison, WI)*
- *Trolley circular*
- *What are we doing for the homeless*
- *Other alternatives for people with disabilities*
- *Communication network for ride sharing for entire town or for UGA/ATC, private businesses, etc.*

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Break Out Committees:**

What are we missing?

- Real cost of housing
- Future projections/needs—water
- Population density—making bus routes bigger
- Fuel costs
- Employment Opportunities for surrounding counties
- Rapid rail for surrounding counties
- Education trends
- Regional Approach—Need regional planners and other county people
- ACC has lost its middle class to outlying counties, particularly Oconee

Transportation: what additional data is needed

- Ridership—UGA/City
- Route information—miles, location, costs, average rides, maps, hours
- Funding—UGA, ACC, Federal
- Trips per day by a person
- After hours needs
- Relative cost by transportation type—smaller bus cost per mile
- Pedestrian Infrastructure—sidewalks, etc.
- Rail possibilities
- Pedestrian overpasses
- Separate UGA autos from statistics
- Homeless—tokens/vouchers
- 20-year prediction of needs and trends
- Safety statistics—two wheel, pedestrian, car, bus, bike, motor
- Matching service needs to routes—low income population centers to job locations/education
- What works to increase public transit use?
- Parking costs/taxi data/bus stop locations and design
- Traffic engineering and Athens Transit to address our questions

Housing and Transportation Logistics

- Locations
 - Classic Center
 - Downtown Churches
 - Clarke Central and other schools
 - East Athens Community Center
 - Lay Park
 - Athens Regional Library
 - YMCA
 - Georgia Center

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- H.T. Edwards
- Morton Theatre
- Public housing community centers for subcommittee meetings
- Hispanic moving space to get involvement
- Transportation
 - Mayor's Office
- Childcare

Housing: What questions do we need to ask? What are our data needs?

- Why is it okay for 175 structures to not have plumbing?
- Why are people living under bridges?
- 5.7% vacancy rate? Really?
 - Identify types of housing that are most often vacant
- Why are people staying in tent city?
- Does planning commission have newer data?
- How to educate landlords about subsidies?
- Oversight of landlords and new and old apartment buildings—is there any?
- Can we require set-aside units for low-incomes?
- Other approaches to low income housing (e.g. landtrust)
- How have other communities addressed these problems
- Mixed use/mixed income
 - Will community accept mixed income?
- Writing for HUD \$ (HED does it)
- Permitting older people to live together
 - “Family” definition for students
- What “affordable housing” means—equation, income levels
- What are the biggest hurdles to overcome—what strategies are successful in overcoming low income housing?—many causes (multifaceted problem)
- Mobile homes included in vehicle count? Where are they counted in the data?
- Resources on HUD/Section 8 housing
 - What is being done, what is available
 - Guidelines for landlords
 - Do you need a business license to be a landlord—if so include information on resources during this process
- Communication within local government? Are the units working together for a solution or are we spending twice the money in attempting to solve the problems in multiple departments that are not communicating with each other?
- How corporations/larger employers are helping with working poor/first-time homebuyers? And how can they help?
- How old is data? A lot has happened since 2000 (if using 2000 census data)
- Data about subsidized housing, section 8, etc.
- How do students skew the data? Does data provided exclude 18-25 year olds?
- Jobs—Can't pay bills without jobs

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- How to educate potential homebuyers that don't realized they can afford to own
 - Information about predatory lending (who, what, impacts)
 - How has the greenbelt affected property values?
 - Education on taxes
 - What is the homeless population? How is it counted? How often is it updated?
→HED website
 - Work with government to determine incentives for builders, tax freezes, etc.
 - Why do we spend money on surveys and get no results?
 - Making housing accessible to disabled—easier to do in the beginning rather than retrofitting. Need to educate builders
 - Cost impact of infrastructure (e.g. new sewer lines)
 - Cost Benefit Analysis on green space, 75-foot buffers, etc.
 - Impact on tax base/land values
- * Resources on banking information from other communities that have addressed those issues (professor at Emory knowledgeable of these types of problems)

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WHO ELSE NEEDS TO BE HERE **?

- Planning department
- Tax assessor's office
- HED
 - Matt Murphy
- Salvation Army
- Catholic Social Services
- UGA's SED
 - Jorge Atiles
- Mortgage Bankers
 - Meyeux Vashi (Athens First)
 - Jeanie Cheek (Wells Fargo)
 - Lynn Beale (Stonegate Mortgage)
- Aging Council
- Realtors
 - Yasmine Payne (Prudential Blanton Properties)
- Transit system
 - Al Johnson
- Transportation and Public Works
- Credit Union
 - Clarke Community Federal
 - "low-income" credit union
- Larger landlords
 - Richard Hathaway
 - Paul Stanzy
 - Rocky Moore
- Building contractors
 - Sean Hogan
- Pastors
- Housing Counseling
 - Sandra Cunningham
- Mobile home builders/Manufactured homes
- Georgia Fatherhood Program
 - Carl Britain (also works with low-income housing)
- Habitat for Humanity
 - Spencer Frye
- Police Officers
 - Lt. Brinkley
- Taxi service
- Bike Athens (leadership)
- Commissioners
 - George Maxwell
- Code Enforcement (Community Protection Department)

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