

Facilitation

For creating Committee Recommendations

- 1. Your facilitator has volunteered to help assure that your time is well spent and productive.**
- 2. The facilitator will remain neutral to the agenda and be non-judgmental about discussion**
- 3. Facilitation will help assure that everyone has an opportunity to participate and contribute. To help this process the group is encouraged to honor the “rule of three”, whereby the last speaker waits until two more people have spoken before speaking again.**
- 4. Differences of opinion are to be expected and help create a better product. We are looking for everyone’s ideas-there are no wrong answers. The facilitator’s job is to help participants find common ground.**
- 5. All of us are well served if we leave our ego at the door and bring our passion for breaking the cycle of poverty.**
- 6. The entire group is responsible for enforcing these rules.**

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WORKSHEET GUIDELINES

- 1. Each worksheet should contain only one recommendation.**
- 2. The statements on the form may be completed in any order and it is not necessary to complete every bullet.**
- 3. A committee recommendation worksheet can be updated throughout the next three meetings as final committee recommendations are developed.**
- 4. If necessary, work on recommendations is encouraged to continue between large group monthly meetings.**
- 5. Please provide a contact person for each uncompleted committee recommendation so that PPA staff can help provide support and follow-up between meetings.**
- 6. Once a committee believes that it has developed a strong committee recommendation and has provided sufficient detail, it should be turned in to the Committee Chair or e-mailed to schristopher@fanning.uga.edu.**

If you have any questions you can contact Jim Geiser or Delene Porter at 706-542-1108.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WORKSHEET

Fill in as many blanks as possible. Fields with an * are required in case we need to contact you for clarification. Thanks for your interest and input!

Name*: _____

Phone*: _____ E-Mail*: _____

I. List the Learning(s) that this recommendation is addressing

- **WRITE THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION** (limit focus to one subject or action item, more than one recommendation may be needed to address a particular learning):**

- **Identify any research, or other kinds of information that was used to craft this recommendation. (add additional sheets as necessary)**

- **Identify additional research or information that could help clarify this committee recommendation. List potential sources if possible.**

- **Indicate people or groups that we need to talk to help clarify this committee recommendation. List any recommended locations.**

- **What kind of action or resources would be necessary to implement the recommendation?**

- **Indicate what forces and influences are likely to occur that will support or oppose implementation.**
Forces that support (please list):

Forces that oppose (please list):

****As information is received and/or clarified, these potential recommendations may change or be discarded.**

Housing and Transportation Committee

Learnings as published in Poverty in Athens: What We Have Learned posted on www.prosperousathens.org

1. There are many barriers to affordable housing for people with low incomes in Athens-Clarke County.

- Existing affordable housing is being lost as neighborhoods are re-developed with higher-priced houses and apartment complexes.
- New affordable housing is difficult to develop due to rising property values, “Not In My Back Yard” attitudes and shrinking federal housing funds.
- Working families are having difficulty finding homes they can afford to buy (\$80,000 to \$115,000). To be considered affordable, housing costs should be no more than 30% of income. For an \$80,000 home in Athens, an individual would need an annual income of \$24,000 to afford monthly homeowner costs. Approximately 17,250 households in Athens could not afford to buy such a home.
- Working families can’t afford rising rental costs, and rental assistance programs are strained. Nearly 13,000 renter households in Athens (56% of those who rent) pay more than 30% of their income on rent.
- Housing agencies and government programs lack the funding, support and coordination to meet the affordable housing needs of people in Athens.

2. There is not enough affordable housing and support services for people with specialized housing needs.

- Athens lacks enough affordable housing that can accommodate and/or support the needs of senior citizens, people with mental illness and/or drug addictions, people with disabilities, people getting out of jail, undocumented workers and homeless people.

3. The lack of affordable, reliable transportation creates real barriers to escaping poverty in Athens.

- Without reliable transportation, it is very difficult to find and retain a steady job, go to school activities, get necessary health care, etc.
- The Athens public transit system is under-funded, leading to a lack of service to many areas of the county, inconvenient timing and layout of routes and limited hours. This means that many people can’t rely on the bus to get to work, doctors’ appointments, school events or grocery shopping.
- According to the American Automobile Association, it costs on average \$7,834 per year to own and operate a car. A family of 4 living at the federal poverty level only earns \$20,000 per year, so owning a car could take up to 40% of their income.

RECURRING THEMES AND CHALLENGES

Learnings as published in Poverty in Athens: What We Have Learned posted on www.prosperousathens.org

- 1. The notion that there exists a welfare system that “pays people not to work” is a myth. Welfare reform has required that low income families with dependent children must be transitioning to employment in order to receive benefits.**
 - The total number of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families cases in Clarke County has decreased by 40% over the past two years.
- 2. High levels of poverty are a burden to those who live in poverty and work to undermine the economy of the entire community.**
- 3. Our institutions and systems have failed to develop collaborative strategies that adequately address the challenges of poverty.**
 - There is a culture of poverty in Athens that passes from generation to generation.
 - There is little innovation in developing new programs, opportunities and collaborations to break the cycle of poverty.
- 4. A good education is one of the major factors in helping to overcome poverty.**
 - An incomplete education—lack of high school diploma, GED, literacy in English, workforce skills, etc.—is a serious challenge to decreasing poverty in Athens.
 - Persons who drop out of school have few job options in Athens-Clarke County.
- 5. Athens has an unskilled workforce that is a barrier to economic development.**
- 6. There is a lack of effective coordination and collaboration among faith-based organizations, non-profits, schools, universities and government agencies.**
 - There are serious problems getting information to the public about existing assistance programs.
 - There is a lack of specialized support for immigrant populations.
 - There are gaps in services.
- 7. Effective strategies to address racism and class issues are lacking.**
 - In Athens-Clarke County the consequences of poverty fall mostly on African Americans and, increasingly, on our growing Latino population.
 - There is a hesitancy, by all races, to have honest dialogue about the impact of race and class as they relate to poverty.
- 8. There are disincentives built into various systems that make it difficult to break the poverty cycle.**

Housing and Transportation Committee

Unedited Learnings as posted on www.prosperousathens.org

Top Six “Learnings”:

- Gentrification, redevelopment and rising property values in older in-town neighborhoods are creating a barrier to affordable housing. Long time residents in these neighborhoods see their property taxes continue to increase while their income does not, and dramatic increases in land value also produce an almost irresistible pressure to sell.
- Serious deficiencies exist in getting information out to the public about existing assistance programs and where to apply for this assistance.
- Working families—those above the poverty level—can’t find homes they can afford to buy (\$80,000 to \$115,000) and the money people get from renting to UGA students pushes the cost of three and four bedroom rentals out of reach.
- Lack of affordable, reliable transportation is a real barrier to escaping poverty, because:
 - Without it, it is impossible to find and retain a steady job;
 - The costs of owning and operating an automobile are prohibitive for those near or below the poverty level;
 - Taxi service is not a viable transportation option for those near or below the poverty level;
 - There are significant deficiencies in the transit system:
 - Many areas and public facilities aren’t served by the system
 - The layout and timing of routes make the system an inefficient way to get around (e.g., too many transfers to get where you want to go)
 - System is not user friendly
- There is not enough supported housing for those with mental illness/drug addictions, disabilities, formerly incarcerated, aging and other special populations.
- NIMBYism—no one wants affordable housing next to them. This creates real difficulties when trying to address the issue.

Affordable Housing Availability Sub-committee

- There are programs for low-income families but working families making \$35,000 or so who could afford a \$70,000 to \$115,000 home cannot find them in Athens. 3 and 4 bedroom rentals are also overpriced because of the amount landlords can get per bedroom from UGA students.
- Gentrification of older, in-town neighborhoods is pushing low-income people out. As property values rise long term residents cannot afford the taxes on their homes.
- When people who live in public housing go off welfare and get jobs the cost of their housing increases. For families with children this increase can make the housing unaffordable. This situation does not encourage people to find work.
- Many older people cannot afford to keep up their homes. There is a need for volunteers and financial resources to help these people with maintenance.
- There are people in the community that work and could afford house payments but cannot get financing. There is a need for a financing mechanism to help these people.
- There are beneficial programs to help those in need of affordable housing in Athens-Clarke County but many people do not know about the programs or where to go to get help. There is a real need for better communication and publicity about these programs.

- Athens-Clarke County is starting the process to update the comprehensive plan and there needs to be full consideration of the affordable housing issue during this process.
- There is not enough coordination and communication between Athens-Clarke County Departments on issues related to affordable housing.

Housing Issues for Special Populations Sub-committee

- Great need still exists for supporting housing for formerly incarcerated, mentally ill, drug addicted.
- Need more visitability (better access for the disabled to new and remodeled structures).
- Seniors need help paying taxes and fixing up houses
- Poor and undocumented don't qualify for public housing
- Need more creative, supportive community. More collaboration in how we address these issues.
- Need livable spaces/ own their own homes. Gardens, not sterile apartments.

What Is Being Done Elsewhere?

- Visitable (structures built to accommodate those with special needs)/easy to do and doesn't cost that much more.
 - Construction takes into account special needs like wheel chairs, strollers, walkers, etc.
 - At least one entrance at ground level
 - Doors on lower level at least 32 inches wide
 - Bath with chair – “Privacy”
 - Rosanne Davis—says cost is less than \$500.
 - <http://www.concretechange.org> is a good website for information on construction guidelines and cost estimates for barrier free design in new homes.
 - Three cities—Atlanta, one in Iowa and one out west do it.
- Need program for the elderly and disabled to get property taxes paid.
 - Similar to programs that help with home repair.
- Other needed information
 - How much housing for people that are low income and disabled
 - HED population according to age

People Transitioning from Homelessness

- Emergency, 30 days, 60 unmet
 - Probably low number, women and children.
- Transitional to renter, homeownership
 - Unmet need 90
- Mental health, development, disability
 - Unmet need 90
- 475 homeless, 85 unsheltered—(low estimate)
- Incarceration/mental health disproportionate
 - * great need exists / why?

Without Documentation & Low Income

- No documentation/no bank/no social security number
- No credit to buy house
- Victims of fraud—vulnerable
- Trailer=car (no equity building up)
- Don't change title/sign with afraid of person
- Trailers are in shambles—pre 1980's
- No where to go if the landlord pulls the rug out

- Where are homeless allowed—give them their own piece of land
- Gardens—feel freer
- In apartments it's restrictive, prefer trailers
- People of Hope – Athens
- If people can afford to buy trailer park they should get first dibs (up north it is done this way)
- Example of people coming together to avoid fraud—work through leaders.
- Mexican/from ranches/borrow money among themselves/don't trust police, establishment/no roots, in flux
- Need financial education for high school students
- Need for education.

Housing for the formerly incarcerated

- Need more information and research on this issue

General Comments and Additional Needs

- Why are people staying in tent city?
 - Victimized
 - Population swells with weather
 - People carry food there
 - Lot of mental illness
 - No hostels like in Europe –Hostels are a workable idea for Athens
- Seniors with low incomes are seeking alternatives to nursing homes – change zoning? Come together, appropriate size together. Can the zoning be amended to permit older people to live together?
- How is the homeless population counted?
- People need support network/family structure
 - Churches can help
 - Churches need to reach out to those that have needs (across denominations)

Housing Costs Sub-committee - (*I think Heather has the other notes from this committee – L.H.*)

- Gentrification, redevelopment and rising land values are a barrier to affordable housing.
- Rental assistance is strained
- There are deficiencies in getting information out.
- Perceptions of bad schools keeps some from living in Athens
- People don't make enough to afford rent or mortgage payments in Athens
- Only 60 families in Clarke County are on traditional welfare (TANF)

Transportation Sub-committee

Lack of affordable, reliable transportation is a real barrier to escaping poverty, because:

- Without it, it is impossible to find and retain a steady job;
- The costs of owning and operating an automobile are prohibitive for those near or below the poverty level;
- Taxi service is not a viable transportation option for those near or below the poverty level;
- There are significant deficiencies in the transit system:
 - Many areas and public facilities aren't served by the system
 - The layout and timing of routes make the system an inefficient way to get around (e.g., too many transfers to get where you want to go)
 - System is not user friendly

Taxi service

- Police regulate taxis for safety, but the companies can set whatever fares they want

- Fares are zone-based, and prohibitively expensive for those near the poverty level
- Despite regulations, there are instances where the drivers won't take certain people or go to certain neighborhoods
- Next steps:
 - Research other kinds of taxi services to see if one of them would be financially viable and better serve the needs of low-income residents
 - Research alternatives to taxi service, such as ride sharing programs, volunteer drivers, employment-based car sharing.

Transit

- Athens Transit is stymied by lack of funds.
- It often takes too long to get from Point A to Point B for the Bus to be useful – this is one reason people don't ride it more
- We have requested and are awaiting a map showing Transit routes overlaid with housing, services, schools, employers, to help us determine where there are gaps.
- There may be better models for setting routes and schedules

Costs of car ownership

The costs of owning and operating a car are prohibitive for people with low incomes.

- According to estimates by AAA, a family of four at the federal poverty level would spend 40% of its income on a car.
- This prevents low income families from saving or building equity.
- Also, the prevalence of title loan shops in low-income neighborhoods is a problem.
- Workable alternatives to the automobile are critical.
- Business owners should be concerned because the quality of transportation affects the reliability of the workforce
- Transportation costs should be considered as part of the cost of housing, because housing can't be truly considered affordable if its location requires exorbitant spending on transportation to work, school, services, etc.