

Learnings  
Partners for a Prosperous Athens Economy Sub-committee  
July 24, 2006 Discussion Notes

Entrepreneurship Sub-sub-committee

1. Sustainable community development, defined as much by social and environmental outcomes as by economic returns, needs to guide a “Buy Local,” self-reliant, and community-controlled economic development plan for Athens.
2. Training kids and adults in business skills and hope needs to be a priority.
3. The definition of “Economic Development” needs to be expanded to emphasize small businesses, nonprofits, and other types of economic engines over large industry.
4. Information on existing small business development resources needs to be made more known and the institutional barriers to starting a small business need to be removed (i.e. create more access to capital, look at zoning and small-business-friendly designation, etc.).
5. More information needs to be gathered on what makes a business successful in Athens.

Living Wage Sub-sub-committee

1. UGA sets local standard for wages and drives them down. This has been anecdotal so far, but our analysis of UGA’s wages (still in progress) supports this as fact. “Temporary” workers are a crucial part of the UGA wage picture. Job classifications are key. Benefits for these workers needed. Auxiliary services need to be examined too.
2. Living wage estimates are determined by local factors like housing, child care, transportation, health care etc. Local estimates range from \$10.50/hr plus benefits to \$14/hr without benefits.
3. ACC’s large private employers are important too.
4. Point of Fact: state law prohibits local living wage legislation. Thus, what we’re talking about is private and public employers’ policies (not a push for any kind of local legislation).
5. Benefits- to the community as a whole- of paying living wages relate to the work of every PPA Sub-committee.
6. Wages in existing jobs are important alongside considerations of new jobs coming in as a result of economic development, i.e. Bringing in a company like Novartis is important, but wages paid in various jobs today by existing employers, especially large employers (like UGA, hospitals, ACC, poultry plants, etc.) are important to consider too. Synergy of efforts on all these levels is important.

Culture of Poverty Sub-sub-committee

1. There is a real culture of poverty in Athens which exists because the burdens of poverty are systemic and pervasive.
2. People in poverty frequently demonstrate a pervasive “radically present oriented outlook” which does not promote education or the skills necessary to achieve

education. (What % of Athens children age 16-18 are neither in school nor employed?)

3. For those in the culture of poverty, education is key. For children and adults who want to effect change, a lack of access to resources to learn and, as importantly, individuals who model and positively reinforce the behaviors necessary for success in society. These behaviors include reliability; diligence; work; sacrifice; self-improvement; service to friends, family, and community; and sense of purpose.
4. For others, poverty results from lack of money. These individuals have suffered from lack of access and opportunity and need a “hand up, not a hand out.”
5. Effective and successful organizations in Athens need more recognition, greater community and governmental support and funding priority. Efforts should be organized and coordinated.

#### Traditional Economic Development Sub-sub-committee

1. ACC’s economy is not sufficiently diverse- we are too dependent on UGA.
2. The community neither controls developable property nor speculative buildings that might encourage new businesses locating here.
3. Athens Technical College has strong student demand and adequate faculty but lacks buildings for specialized training for the biotechnology industry..
4. Regional economic development efforts are sporadic and reactive rather than proactive, as are economic development efforts in ACC proper..
5. Life sciences are an appropriate target market for ACC economic development efforts.
6. Water resources limit certain economic development opportunities.
7. The negative perception of ACC’s public education system does not help economic development efforts.

\*There are concerns that the Economy Sub-committee’s work that does not focus on traditional Economic Development (i.e. living wage, entrepreneurship, etc.) will not be taken seriously by the broader PPA. Concerns are noted here to ensure that they are not lost.