

Partners for a Prosperous Athens Housing & Transportation Committee
Meeting Notes
August 28, 2006

I. General discussion

A. Information Needs:

- Need information on existing housing conditions.
- Transportation route study overlain with housing/jobs/education/services
- Transportation funding regulations

B. Priorities:

Note: important to recognize that the priorities aren't going to meet all the needs – these would just be initial priorities.

- Rate of homeownership in Athens is too low – homeownership is how you build capital, promote a stable family, neighborhood and environment.
- Reduce use of ER for fundamental basic healthcare
- Focus housing solutions where there is greatest need but no existing service
- People with disabilities have a serious need for accessible affordable housing. This housing shouldn't segregate them but integrate them into the community as a whole.
- Barriers to affordable housing such as gentrification need to be addressed.
- The role of planning and zoning in transportation access has to be addressed.
- Reduce the property tax burden on low-income senior citizens to help them stay in their homes.
- Community Foundation to fund housing.

C. Suggestions:

- Community conversations need to be included when making recommendations
- Are we really reaching the entire business community? Suggestion to mail things to every registered business in Athens. Maybe in the annual mailing from the taxing authority. Also consider that some kinds of businesses have different hours and can't participate at night.
- Suggestion to approach UGA Marketing Department for help in communicating about the existing housing programs.
- We need to get the word out about existing services. PSAs, radio, TV, bus ads, Talk Radio 1340.
- Community Day – Spring Cleaning – used to happen. It helps people and also it's a way to get information to them. When they see that we're actually physically helping they are more receptive.
- People who work with people one-on-one can provide information on how best to reach people.
- Include a bus route map at each stop.

- Company vans for transportation of their workers.
- Car-sharing program might work here.

D. Other comments:

For people with disabilities, the Lift is very limited – issues with expense, time, and convenience.

II. Subcommittee Meetings

A. Affordability of Housing Subcommittee

- There is a lack of communication and coordination about resources.
Note: If you have a minute look up Community Connection at <http://www.communityconnection211.com> - I think they might be a piece of the puzzle.
- There is a need for affordable housing for those at moderate incomes.
- We have a need for affordable rentals. Homeownership is not the answer for those at lower incomes and because Athens has a large number at lower incomes we need to have safe, stable, and affordable rental housing available to them.
- Can private developers be encouraged to provide affordable rentals without public subsidies?
- Permanent housing for the homeless. How can they overcome the barriers to getting into a stable place to live? Can deposits be stretched out or reduced?
- We need to make use of the media to get information out to the public.
- Education is important. We need to teach financial literacy at an early age.

B. Availability of Affordable Housing Subcommittee

1. Barriers to Affordable Housing:

- Financing
- Market forces
- Space / land
- NIMBY / accepting our neighbors
- Income

2. Tools for creating / protecting affordable housing:

- Housing Block grants
- Understand NIMBY
- Local Housing Trust Fund
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Collaboration
- Tax Deferral
- Land Trust
- Construction Techniques

3. Information Needs:

- Land Use Plan
- Zoning and Development Standards

- Transit Plan

C. Transportation Subcommittee

- Pedestrian safety
- More buses more frequently
- Transportation that falls through the cracks
- Better coordination between UGA and Athens Transit
- Some buses of different sizes
- Need information on funding options
- What would it take to ensure that people with low incomes have transportation to appropriate health care?
- Taxis
- Public facilities
- Add bus stops downtown for each route or else a downtown shuttle – not everyone can walk from the Multi-Modal Center.
- Shelters at all bus stops.
- Color code bus routes to make them easier to understand.
- Post routes and times at all stops.

D. Affordable Housing for People with Specialized Needs Subcommittee

1. Priorities

- a. Develop a clearing house/comprehensive list of agencies and what they offer for special needs population.
What this would look like: Take Community Connections' information, cross reference the information with all known service providers. Divide by special need and streamline the information to be easily comprehended. "Get all providers on the same page"
- b. Affordable Housing for the Latino population.
What this would look like: Need to develop a strategy based on successful case studies from around the country. Looking for a local option/solution.
- c. Communication Strategy
What this would look like: Develop a comprehensive and on going communication network. For example:
 - Community Days where certain neighborhoods are targeted for clean up and minor repair. To lead by example.
 - Advertise at all government agencies like buses and health services.
 - Public addresses on local radio stations
 - Advertise at all local news media
 - Send notices home with students
 - Religious Organizations
 - Etc.