

**Submitted By:** Economic Development  
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**Project Classification:** Economic Prosperity  
**Project Focus:** Basic Facilities & Infrastructure  
**Project Type:** Other - Industrial and Commercial Product Development

**Previously Submitted and Rejected:** No  
**Continuation Project:** No

**Project Total Cost: \$ 44,289,000**

**Total Operating Cost: \$ -**

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**Project Description:** This project will provide funds for public infrastructure in support of economic development and expansion.

Public infrastructure and right-of-way development programming includes, but is not limited to, stormwater management, utilities, wireless/fiber infrastructure improvements, bridges, roads, streets, railroad construction and improvements, parks and multimodal and multi-use paths (bicycle paths). This project would include the acquisition of Rights of Way and/or Easements for the public infrastructure, design, and construction of the infrastructure. For land acquired by Athens-Clarke County for the project's public infrastructure, the program would include site evaluations including, but not limited to, evaluating and documenting zoning and permitted uses, existing improvements, utilities, easements, restrictive development covenants or deed restrictions, possible liens, title chains, ALTA and topographic surveys, streams, wetlands, cultural resources, and geotechnical investigations and testing only on land acquired through this project for public infrastructure.

**Project Mission Statement/Goals & Objectives:** The mission of the Industrial and Commercial Product Development program is to provide public infrastructure in support of economic development and expansion to be competitive with other Georgia and Southeastern communities. The program will allow the Unified Government to provide public infrastructure to improve the marketability of industrial and commercial sites with the goal of bringing new jobs and capital investment to the county.

These public infrastructure improvements by ACCGOV will also hopefully encourage further development of green conservation industrial parks and commercial developments. Such industrial and commercial property development would be attractive and suitable for prospective business and industry.

The most frequently expressed reason for a company to not locate in Athens-Clarke County is the county's lack of control of available industrial or commercial sites and its lack of "pad ready" sites.

While SPLOST funding will not be used to acquire land where industrial or commercial buildings will be located, it will be used to improve the public infrastructure, on public land, used by industrial and commercial developments in support of economic development and expansion. These public infrastructure improvements will greatly assist in the process of getting sites to become “pad ready”.

With limited inventory of industrial properties in the county, consultants and project managers direct their clients to communities where they can better manage their risks at developed sites that are readily available.

Such public infrastructure improvements are important in locating industry in the county and having the funding in place to do such improvements saves time in the process. This time savings greatly increases the county’s probability of attracting additional industry and commercial activity to the county and gaining the resulting new jobs and capital investment.

A public infrastructure in support of economic development and expansion program would allow for industrial and commercial sites in the county to be better marketed in ways favorable to the timeline required by companies looking to locate in the region.

Any and all land acquired for this project would be used only for public infrastructure. The program would fund the site evaluations including, but not limited to, evaluating and documenting zoning and permitted uses, existing improvements, utilities, easements, restrictive development covenants or deed restrictions, possible liens, title chains, ALTA and topographic surveys, streams, wetlands, cultural resources, and geotechnical investigations and testing only on land acquired by ACCUG through this project for use as public infrastructure.

As companies have become more efficient in their site selection processes, the timelines for selecting new sites have become shorter. Many commercial and industrial site selection projects are conducted on a rapid schedule. Prospective new industries often decline to consider sites that are not verifiably well prepared for development. Athens-Clarke County has repeatedly been eliminated from the shortlist of candidates for major investment opportunities in our region, possibly costing our community thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in industrial investment.

The shortened duration of time to vet sites under consideration can lead site selectors and company decision-makers toward a path of least resistance. Location decisions are qualified based on the amount of readily available information on sites, even prior to a physical site visit.

Lack of county-controlled land set aside for industrial and commercial use, lack of public infrastructure, lack of up-to-date site evaluations and incomplete due diligence packages can lead to missed opportunities and costly development delays. When time is of the essence, our lack of advanced preparation can easily delay a project by months or even years.

This project would provide for major, long-lasting improvements to the public infrastructure benefitting commercial and industrial development in Athens-Clarke County. ACCGOV providing public infrastructure for commercial and industrial use and addressing the risk-to-development factors would allow companies to confidently invest and create more high-quality jobs in Clarke

County.

Alignment with ACCEDD goals: The program will support the goal of the Economic Development department in being the primary point of contact for industries, large commercial developments, site location consultants and state economic development organizations interested in developing, expanding, or locating new or expanded businesses in Athens-Clarke County.

**Projected Useful Life of Project:** NA

**To meet the Project Goals & Objectives, when should this project be completed?** NA

**The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building System compliance:** N/A

**How will this project help meet the Public Safety, Basic Facilities/Infrastructure, and/or Quality of Life needs in Athens-Clarke County?**

The program leverages existing county infrastructure, using excess capacity and expanding the county's public utilities network and revenue generation.

**How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Study, Service Delivery Plan, Envision Athens, etc.?** Alignment with 2018 Comprehensive Plan and Envision Athens Action Agenda: The program will assist in attracting industries and jobs to Athens-Clarke County by using "best practices for attraction and retention of business industry." The Plan supports policies that "address impediments to locating or expanding business and industry" and "provide... services and incentives necessary to attract... businesses." Over 40,000 workers are estimated to commute into the community each day. Increasing the number of jobs will expand Athens-Clarke County's ability to function as the career hub for the region, with workers living both in and outside of the county. The proposed program would provide for evaluation and preparation of property for new industrial development.

Alignment with Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: The program would support Action Item 1: "Develop and implement public information & marketing" for industrial sites and would provide for comprehensive information that facilitates industrial investment.

Alignment with MACORTS Vision Statement: The project will support a "multimodal transportation system that serves the needs of all citizens and provides efficient, safe, and convenient mobility, encourages desirable land use and development, promotes economic development, and minimizes adverse social and environmental impacts."

Alignment with Athens In Motion by further connecting the ACC bike and pedestrian network.

### **Triple Bottom Line Impacts**

**Positive Benefits for the Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County:**

The long-term goal of this project is to create a positive total economic impact that will bring additional capital investment and contribute to a more balanced tax digest while also creating new jobs for Athens-Clarke County citizens.

Attracting commercial and industrial development enables the county to stave off future tax increases and keep residential taxes lower. According to UGA findings in 2006, the cost to provide municipal services to residential development represents a loss while the cost to provide services to commercial/industrial development is opposite. For every \$1.00 in service expenditures for residents, the county receives only \$.86 in revenue. For every \$1.00 in service expenditures for commercial and industrial customers, the county receives \$1.46 in revenue.

Having industrial and commercial property readily available and marketed to prospective businesses would keep our community on the shortlist for active industrial investment projects. Athens-Clarke County has repeatedly lost opportunities to create revenue and jobs when projects choose to locate in other communities. Economic development entities and professionals have repeatedly advised Athens-Clarke County to pursue land acquisition and property development in order to stop losing industrial investment opportunities.

### **Detrimental Impacts to the Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: NA**

#### **Positive Benefits for our Citizens and Visitors:**

This project benefits our citizens by helping attract diverse, quality jobs that are well suited for our existing and future workforce. This project contributes directly to the ability of ACCGOV to reduce unemployment and underemployment, and to attract jobs that will empower citizens to meet their daily needs and live in assured self-sufficiency. Industrial and commercial tax digest growth will also lead to growth in these sectors, which in turn will stave off residential tax increases.

The program benefits prospective industrial and commercial users by providing them greater access to infrastructure. Sites serviced by public infrastructure are attractive to businesses because of the mitigation of risk.

#### **Detrimental Impacts for our Citizens and Visitors: NA**

#### **Environmental Benefits, including but not limited to Positive impacts on existing Infrastructure/Systems:**

Alternative transportation is already servicing the area by Athens Transit System and the area is in the future expansion plans of the Athens Transit System. Multimodal and multi-use paths will also be considered as a part of industrial and commercial developments and their access.

Stormwater management will be designed to meet all local, state, and federal requirements and maintained by the Unified Government. ACC will have the authority to address stormwater improvements and apply the most current and best management practices in an overall Master Plan for development. Such oversight will also allow consideration of regional stormwater ponds for smaller, adjacent parcels.

#### **Detrimental Impacts for the Environment, including but not limited to Negative impacts on existing Infrastructure/Systems: NA**

Positive/Negative Impacts on ACCGOV Departments, Agencies, or other Organizations, if not covered in one of the above questions: NA

## Project Costs

Detailed project capital budget costs (to be funded from SPLOST 2020 only):

| Project Costs (round to thousand)   | Amount               |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:   | \$ 15,000,000        |
| 2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)   | \$ 1,500,000         |
| 3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.                                     | \$ 1,500,000         |
| 4. Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (for a facility):<br>A detailed estimate is preferred – but dependent upon the specific project, utilize at a minimum \$15 to \$20 per square foot. | \$ -                 |
| 5. Construction:  | \$ 17,200,000        |
| 6. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)  | \$ 1,720,000         |
| 7. Acquisition of Capital Equipment:  | \$ -                 |
| 8. Testing:   | \$ 516,000           |
| 9. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)  | \$ 1,397,000         |
| 10. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)   | \$ 3,894,000         |
| 11. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.   | \$ 172,000           |
| 12. Other 1:  | \$                   |
| 13. Other 2:  | \$ -                 |
| <b>Project Subtotal:</b>  | <b>\$ 42,999,000</b> |
| 14. Program Management (3% of Project Subtotal):  | \$ 1,290,000         |
| <b>SPLOST 2020 Project Total:</b>   | <b>\$ 44,289,000</b> |