

If I have learned one thing from serving in the Georgia Department of Labor for over 34 years, Chairing the Athens Housing Authority Board of Commissioners for over 15 yrs or making policies to aid needy families on behalf of the food bank of North East Georgia for the past 12 years, it is that nothing changes the outlook or course of a persons life like having a good job. Meaningful work is the substance that provides the essentials of life for so many within our county. Politicians may sway from fad issue to fad issues but the fact is and will continue to be that until Athens puts the priority of helping citizens obtain the opportunities for a good jobs, our community will never realize its potential greatness in a way that all citizens will enjoy.

In my 2006 mayoral campaign, I laid out specific strategies and steps for economic development to bring the jobs we want and need. I detailed these plans in full-page advertisements, brochures and in speeches. I talked about the need for good jobs in a time when it didn't seem like a priority. Today, the landscape has shifted. The failure to diversify our local economy is leaving many Athens families in fear and destitute.

I still have a plan to get Athens the jobs it needs. I want to share it with you now in hopes we might pursue these needed jobs, be it with this plan or another. The time to act instead of talking about acting has come.

Our current job recruitment activity is dysfunctional. We lack the focus, coordination and allocation of resources and the results say as much. As a county, our economic development strategy appears to be lacking of vision and insight and we are often just waiting for jobs to show up and, even then our track record is less than sterling.

My plan is simple and comes in three parts.

1. Pursue better prospects directly giving them compelling reasons to invest in Athens.

We pursue better prospects by getting a real grasp on which we are as a city and what demographics make up Athens. In recent years we have allowed a way of thinking to infiltrate our common sense and there have been ventures to become like other cities that don't have what we have or be like other cities that we really do not want to be like. This aspiration has led to pursuing economic development as if we are these other cities. We are not unlike most cities of our size and while others may have some enjoyable attributes, we have different citizenry, assets, opportunities and limitations. I am not content with nor will I support promoting Athens-Clarke County as anything other than Athens-Clarke County Ga. We don't have to try to be anyone but Athens-Clarke County. We just need to be true to who we are and what we have to offer.

We don't need to go after employers that don't want to be in Athens-Clarke County. We need to go after employers that want to and will do business in Athens -Clarke County.

We have created a remarkable environment to educate people. Why not leverage this asset? We should be knocking on the doors of every type of school looking for an educational friendly place to expand. We have a thriving population of creative people. We need to be banging down the doors of the countless magazines, telecommunications and other content dependent industries to show the assets we have right here in such a wonderful place to live.

And while I know that we have tried staking our claim in biotech, we are hardly the first to do so. With our limited resources, we need to be focusing in the segments where we are a world contender. We are not North Carolina's research triangle. We are not a world player in all of biotech. However, there is a part of biotech in which we are a world contender.

We have world-class veterinarian and agricultural schools right here. We have a leading animal health manufacturer right here. We have numerous federal and state animal health concerns right here. We may be a low contender in all of biotech but we are a world contender in animal health. It is time we focus on who we really are and what we really do better than everyone else.

## 2. Build better relationships with those that can refer investment to Athens.

No amount of denial can undo the fact that relationships with those that could be a benefit to the Athens-Clarke County job situation have eroded in past years. We have slid from a community that hosted state economic development tours to a town in which we rarely get a nod from the state economic developers and often find ourselves outside, looking in when it comes to community economic development assistance for our state department.

Our greatest asset and resources in finding businesses that will supply good jobs to Athens-Clarke County is to work with those businesses that already do so. Our local businesses continue to find our local government adding more obstacles to providing jobs instead of encouraging economic development. After years of fruitless negotiating, state economic development entities have begun to treat Athens-Clarke County as if we have a giant "closed" sign hung at the county line.

I have worked within State economic and labor concerns for three decades. I can and will work to repair these relationships. I am proud of Athens-Clarke County fierce independence but I will not confuse political differences with the State in a way that prevents our citizens from getting the jobs we need.

### 3. Remove barriers to getting the investment and jobs Athenians want.

It is a sad day in Athens-Clarke County when a business featured in our mayor's campaign literature faces being shut down because county entities cannot sort out use of a parking lot. It is a sad day when our own housing authority cannot get its permits through the planning department in a timely manner. It is a sad day when people that can and want to bring good jobs to Athens-Clarke County find themselves turned away by nonsensical bureaucracy, incompetence and cumbersome and changing policy.

Our attitude must change. Some of Athens-Clarke County citizens may not need to be concerned with their own jobs but we all must be concerned with the effect jobs have on our local economy. I am not saying we dismantle needed safeguards that protect our people and environment, which is the default accusation that often follows the decree that we review the system. What I am saying is that it is obvious the system of slowing and stalling business is hurting many of our citizens and it is time we evaluate the effectiveness and results of how our county reviews and polices business activities.

I am not running for the mayor of some other city, I am not running for mayor of a few neighborhoods or a few people. I am running for mayor of Athens-Clarke County and my interest is for all the people of Athens. I have a vision of a town that appreciates and plans for all our people. It is a town that is distinctly Athens-Clarke County and its virtues come from inclusiveness and shared benefit.

I can help lead us towards that goal but I will need your help. We can get there. Together we can, together we will.

Charlie M. Maddox, Candidate for Mayor, Athens-Clarke County 2010