



March 6, 2025

Subject: Stop the Exploitation of Inner East Athens Neighborhood

Dear Mayor Girtz and Commissioners,

I write to you today with great urgency and a firm stance on behalf of the Inner East Athens Neighborhood Association, Inc., a 501(c)(4) organization registered with the State of Georgia. Over five years ago, members of the East Athens Community united with a shared goal: to establish a voice for our neighborhood, end the continuous cycle of exploitation, and bring recognition to an area that has long been ignored and taken advantage of.

Through our dedication and collaboration with Samantha Trust and the Planning Department, we became a registered neighborhood, defining the borders of Inner East Athens with pride and purpose. Our voices were finally acknowledged—only to now see our neighborhood being manipulated and exploited by ACC staff and consultants.

Last week, I received an email from Melinda Lord, HCD Director, regarding an "Inner East Athens Revitalization" meeting, which included a map redefining our neighborhood to incorporate the Oconee Greenway, Chicopee Dudley, North Avenue, and other areas that are neither blighted nor distressed. This was an outrageous and deceitful move, one that disregards the hard work our community has put into establishing our own boundaries.

HCD intends to submit a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) application to apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for Inner East Athens and the Hancock Corridor. However, the expansion of Inner East Athens to include more urbanized areas surrounding the Classic Center, the River, Rails and Trails, and North Avenue makes it clear that yet again, funds meant to alleviate poverty in the true Inner East Athens are being redirected elsewhere. This is an all-too-familiar cycle: money is extracted from the struggles of our community and funneled into developments that benefit others, leaving us behind. This is not revitalization; this is economic theft.

To add further insult to injury, a presentation was given at the Department of Community Affairs regarding the Peter and Vine Street properties, where decisions and plans were made without any input from the very community that will be affected. The exclusion of our voices from discussions about our own neighborhood is unacceptable and a direct act of systemic oppression.

This is not just a policy issue—it is an issue of economic trauma, exploitation, and social injustice. AI-generated analysis of these actions provided me with terms such as "Reverse Robin Hood Effect," "Plutocracy in Action," and "Economic Trauma." These accurately reflect the repeated history of taking from our vulnerable community and using it to benefit wealthier, urbanized areas. Our neighborhood is not a tool for gentrification, nor a stepping stone for economic gains at the expense of our residents.



This practice perpetuates intergenerational trauma and fuels deep-seated distrust in our local government.

We have fought before, and we are fully prepared to fight again—and use a legal option if necessary. Let me be clear: We demand that the Athens-Clarke County Government immediately cease the unauthorized use of our neighborhood's name, redefining our boundaries, and stop exploiting our community for financial gain. We demand transparency, inclusion, and equity in decision-making that affects Inner East Athens.

Our community is not a pawn. Our voices will not be silenced. We expect immediate corrective action, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Cshanyse Allen, DNP, APRN, MSN, RN
President, Inner East Athens Neighborhood Association, Inc.

cc: Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC



For the purpose of -

- Receiving notices of, and having a VOICE in any proposed developments within or affecting our community.
- Applying for government funding for community mandated improvements and programs.
- Promoting a safe community environment meant for all residents.