

## **Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement**

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION** for Building a Path to Equity in Athens for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

**Submitted** December 4th, 2024 to Athens Clarke County Mayor and Commission

### **Resolution to Acknowledge the Continuous Gaps in Equitable Resource Distribution to BIPOC Communities and Reaffirm Commitment to Promote Housing Security, Economic Empowerment, and Youth Safety to Marginalized Communities in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia**

**WHEREAS**, Athens-Clarke County has a poverty rate of approximately 31.7%, which is significantly higher than the national average, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities, including Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), as well as minority businesses, youth and single-parent households;

**WHEREAS**, on July 7, 2020 Athens-Clarke County resolved that Black Lives Matter with a commitment that extended intense efforts to address systemic racism and demonstrate the importance of Black lives in our community and allocated \$6,000,000 to address inequities and inequality in Athens;

**WHEREAS**, on March 11, 2021 the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law and established the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Program (SLFRF). This program was intended to provide support to State, territorial, local, and Tribal governments in responding to the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19. Athens-Clarke County received approximately \$57.6 million in federal funding for SLFRF programs. Treasury encouraged recipients to use SLFRF - funded projects to advance shared interest and promote equitable delivery of government benefits and opportunities to underserved communities as outlined in **Executive Order 13985, On Advancing Racial Equity and Support of Underserved Communities through the Federal Government**;

**WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2023 Mayor and Commission was presented, by MGT Consulting Group, an overview, results, findings, and recommendations of a disparity study. This study identified purchasing statistical disparities in Athens-Clarke County's utilization of Minority/Women Business Enterprise firms compared to the relevant geographic marketplace;

**WHEREAS**, access to stable, affordable housing is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring equitable opportunities for health, education, and economic mobility in Athens-Clarke County;

**WHEREAS**, Black-owned and minority-owned businesses are underrepresented in the local economy, facing systemic challenges in accessing capital, technical resources, and economic opportunities that could strengthen community wealth and resilience especially in East and Downtown Athens;

**WHEREAS**, the safety and well-being of Athens-Clarke County's youth are critical to the long-term success of the community, as they face disproportionate risks of exposure to gang violence, lack of educational resources, and limited pathways to employment;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the Athens-Clarke County government commits to advancing targeted policies and initiatives that:

### **1. Housing Security**

- a. Prioritize the development and preservation of affordable housing, with a focus on neighborhoods experiencing the highest poverty rates.
- b. Increase funding for rental assistance programs, including emergency aid to prevent evictions and homelessness.
- c. Enforce equitable zoning and housing development policies to prevent displacement due to gentrification, ensuring residents can remain in their communities.
- d. Fund minority nonprofits to develop transitional housing and supportive services for residents experiencing homelessness.

## **2. Economic Empowerment for Black-Owned and Minority-Owned Businesses**

- a. Establish a revolving loan fund and microgrant programs specifically for Black-owned and minority-owned businesses in Athens-Clarke County.
- b. Fund a Minority Business Accelerator Program that provides mentorship, business development training, and access to local government procurement opportunities.
- c. Partner with the University of Georgia and local organizations to expand access to educational resources, market insights, and technical support for underrepresented entrepreneurs.

## **3. Youth Safety and Development**

- a. Invest in youth-focused initiatives, including after-school programs, summer employment opportunities, and skill-building workshops, targeted at neighborhoods with the highest youth poverty rates.
- b. Fund the creation of safe, inclusive recreational facilities and cultural spaces where youth can engage in positive activities and build community connections.
- c. Collaborate with schools, nonprofits, and local leaders to implement restorative justice practices and violence prevention programs, ensuring equitable treatment and support for at-risk youth.

## **4. Oversight and Community Collaboration**

- a. Establish or provide continued support for a Housing, Economic Development, and Youth Empowerment Oversight Committee composed of community members, nonprofit leaders, local business owners, and youth representatives to guide and evaluate these initiatives.
- b. Partner with state and federal agencies, private sector stakeholders, and philanthropic organizations to secure additional funding and resources for Athens-Clarke County.
- c. Ensure all programs and policies are data-driven, regularly evaluated, and adjusted to maximize their impact on reducing poverty and inequity.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, the Athens-Clarke County government will dedicate a portion of its annual budget to these initiatives, seeking to create sustainable, long-term improvements in housing, economic empowerment, and youth safety for its most vulnerable residents.