



**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY Regular Board Meeting MEETING AGENDA**  
**MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026 - 10:00 AM**  
**736 PARK NORTH BOULEVARD, SUITE 120 ♦ CLARKSTON, GEORGIA 30021**  
**(404) 296-6489 ♦ [WWW.CLARKSTONGA.GOV](http://WWW.CLARKSTONGA.GOV)**

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**Note:** The Board of Directors may go into Closed/Executive Session to deliberate any item on this agenda as authorized by the Georgia Open Meetings Act, Georgia Government Code Chapter O.C.G.A. S 50-14-1.

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**I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

**II. ROLL CALL**

**III. APPROVAL OF THE 01/12/2026, AGENDA**

**IV. APPROVAL OF THE 09/08/2025, MEETING MINUTES**

- a) 09/08/2025 Meeting Minutes

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Any member of the public may address the Board during the time allotted for public comment. Each attendee will be allowed 3 minutes for comments at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The public comment period will be limited to 40 minutes, and it is not a time for dialogue. If your public comment contains a series of questions, please submit those to the Planning & Economic Development Director in writing. This will facilitate follow-up by the council or staff. The DDA desires to allow an opportunity for public comment; however, the business of the DDA must proceed in an orderly, timely manner.

**VI. PRESENTATIONS**

- a) Review, discussion, and consideration of action on the draft Phase 2 Strategic Planning Services Proposal. — Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research

**VII. OLD BUSINESS**

- a) **Strategic Visioning for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority**
- b) Review, discussion, and adoption of the mission statement, vision statement, and report for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority. — Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

- a)** Election of officers
- b)** Review and Acceptance of Board Member Resignation Letters
- c)** Review and Adoption of the 2026 DDA Meeting Schedule

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

MINUTES OF A REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLARKSTON, GEORGIA  
HELD BY TELECONFERENCE, ZOOM AUDIO/VIDEO  
IN SAID CITY ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

On Monday, September 8, 2025 at 10:00 AM, the Downtown Development Authority of Clarkston, Georgia met in a Regular Board Meeting in-person and by teleconference, Zoom Audio/Video in said City. Mayor Beverly Burks called the meeting to order. The following members of the City Council were present: Vice Mayor Debra Johnson and Councilmembers Sharifa Adde; Yterenickia Bell; Jamie Carroll; Susan Hood; and Mark Perkins. Absent: None. The following City staff were present: ChaQuias Miller-Thornton (City Manager); Tomika R. Mitchell (City Clerk); Yolanda McGhee (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer); Christine Hudson (Police Chief); Richard Edwards (Planning and Economic Development Director); and Laura Moore (City Attorney).

NOTE: Items appearing in these minutes are in the order they were discussed, not necessarily in the order they appeared on the agenda.

**I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Director Garcia called the meeting to order at 900

**II. ROLL CALL**

The following board members were present: Chairperson Johnny Garcia, Vice chairperson Rezwan Amad, Treasurer Nebiyu Ermiyas, Secretary Adria Marshall, Director Beverly Burks and Director Akbar Lassi.

**III. APPROVAL OF THE 9/8/2025, AGENDA**

Adria M. motioned to add to the Proposal for the Passport to Clarkston Digital Flipbook Presentation to Old Business item B. Motion seconded by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M motioned to add a joint work session to discuss city real estate matters with Attorney Kyle Williams to New Business as item 7B. Motion was second by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M motioned to add a discussion of Amending the day and meeting time of the DDA Regular Scheduled Meetings to New Business as item 7C. The motion was seconded by Rezwan A. The aye votes were: 4, with nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M. motioned to approve the 9/82025 Agenda. The motion was seconded by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF THE 8/11/2025, MEETING MINUTES**

##### **a) 8/11/25 Meeting Minutes**

Motion to approve the 8/11/25 meeting minutes was made by Rezwan A. Motion seconded by Nebiyu E . The aye votes were:4 , with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Any member of the public may address the Board during the time allotted for public comment. Each attendee will be allowed 3 minutes for comments at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The public comment period will be limited to 40 minutes, and it is not a time for dialogue. If your public comment contains a series of questions, please submit those to the Planning & Economic Development Director in writing. This will facilitate follow-up by the council or staff. The DDA desires to allow an opportunity for public comment; however, the business of the DDA must proceed in an orderly, timely manner.

Chairperson Garcia opened the floor for public comments. No comments were offered.

#### **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **a) Update on Business Survey Findings**

Staff reported that the number of survey responses had increased from approximately ten at the last meeting to twenty, following additional outreach efforts. With the larger dataset, several themes became clearer.

Some responses highlighted concerns about homelessness and crime. Board members acknowledged that while these may be based on perception, they nevertheless influence public opinion and should be addressed. Staff was directed to coordinate with the Police Department to compile downtown-specific statistics on homelessness and crime for presentation at a future meeting.

Survey responses also pointed to needs in business growth and support, including financial resources, attracting new clients, and improving advertising. Several members noted a disconnect between businesses and institutions such as the local college and encouraged closer partnerships to leverage opportunities.

The permitting and licensing process was discussed extensively. Many respondents marked their experience as “neutral,” which members interpreted as hesitancy to openly critique City operations. Staff explained that while the City has streamlined licensing, delays at DeKalb County Fire plan review remain the primary bottleneck. Members expressed concern that these delays, while not the City’s fault, are often perceived by business owners as City-related.

Staff announced that City Council had recently approved new permitting software, scheduled for launch in November, which will allow online business license applications. The Board welcomed this step but emphasized the importance of maintaining in-person assistance for Clarkston’s diverse community. Staff confirmed that a public computer

and staff support would be provided at City Hall. Members recommended that the DDA and City collaborate to host training sessions in November and December to guide business owners through the new platform.

The Board also discussed improving communication regarding zoning changes. Members suggested creating a system to confirm receipt of official notices. Several members also supported a concierge-style model, in which a designated staff member would help business owners through licensing and permitting. Staff noted that the new software would also reduce duplicative paperwork, such as repeated ID submissions.

The discussion returned several times to the issue of efficiency. Staff shared that the City is considering bringing fire inspections and plan reviews in-house, which could reduce delays and strengthen Clarkston's reputation as business-friendly. Members also acknowledged that while survey respondents valued beautification and events, many placed higher priority on direct support services and funding opportunities.

No motion was made under this item. Staff will return at the next meeting with crime and homelessness data, proposed training session dates, recommendations for improved communication, and updates on the feasibility of in-house inspections.

**b) Presentation: Proposal for the Passport to Clarkston Digital Flipbook**

Melanie of Bespoke Design and Development presented the updated Passport to Clarkston digital coupon book concept. The proposal included the creation of an interactive flipbook to highlight local businesses with free basic listings and optional paid premium upgrades.

The Board agreed that all Clarkston businesses should receive a free basic listing for the first year to maximize participation and engagement. Premium options would allow businesses to feature offers, purchase larger listings, or update promotions more frequently, with revenues collected directly by the DDA.

Key points of discussion included frequency of updates, accessibility, branding, responsibilities, and rollout planning. Bespoke confirmed that while free listings would be updated annually, premium tiers could be structured to allow quarterly or monthly updates, with featured promotions refreshed more frequently as needed. To ensure equitable participation, intake forms will be available in multiple languages, hard copies will be provided, and staff will assist businesses with submission. The Board emphasized that the platform must maintain human assistance for those who struggle with online forms.

The branding of the project was carefully considered. While members appreciated the "Passport" concept as a nod to Clarkston's diversity, several noted it may cause confusion. The Board agreed to retain the creative passport-style imagery but to include the terms "coupon" or "discount" prominently in the final title for clarity.

Responsibilities were clearly assigned. Bespoke will design, set up, and technically

manage the flipbook, host the intake platform, and provide ongoing updates. The DDA will manage business outreach, handle collection of revenues from premium listings, and coordinate marketing. Staff will work with Bespoke to establish intake questions, manage communications, and oversee rollout events. Counsel will prepare a contract or memorandum of understanding specifying scope of work, payment responsibilities, and disclaimers clarifying that businesses are solely responsible for honoring their listed offers.

Rollout strategy: The Board adopted a phased approach. The first phase will pilot the platform using businesses owned by DDA board members, allowing the system to be tested internally. The second phase will launch publicly at the City's Trunk-or-Treat event in October, with a promotional station and QR codes for attendees to access the coupon passport. The strategy will include:

- Testing of intake forms by Board members and staff within one week.
- Creation of multilingual promotional materials.
- Partnership with nonprofits, places of worship, and community groups to distribute the coupon passport.
- Integration with the City's Constant Contact newsletters, website, and social media for announcements.
- A defined update schedule (initially quarterly, with potential monthly premium options).
- A press release to accompany the official launch.

The Board recognized the project as a leading initiative that highlights the DDA's commitment to supporting local businesses. A motion to approve the concept and direct staff and Bespoke to proceed under the framework discussed was made by Beverly Burks, seconded by Nebiyu Ermiyas, and passed unanimously (6-0)

**c) Continued Discussion: Digital Coupon Book Project**

Although the agenda listed this item as a continued discussion, the Board did not hold further discussion. Instead, a presentation was given by Bespoke Design and Development on the proposal for the Passport to Clarkston digital flipbook. The presentation outlined the concept, scope of work, and responsibilities of both Bespoke and the DDA. Following the presentation, the Board deliberated, assigned responsibilities, and approved a motion directing staff and Bespoke to proceed with the rollout strategy as presented.

**d) Continued Discussion: Policy Procedure Manual**

Chairperson Garcia noted that there were no substantive updates since the last meeting. Staff confirmed that draft materials had been provided to the attorney for review. The matter remains ongoing and will be revisited once revisions are complete.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Evaluation and Adoption of Mission and Vision Statement — Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research**

Board reviewed drafts from Georgia Tech's Economic Development Research program.

Discussion focused on ensuring compliance with statutory requirements by explicitly referencing business and economic development. Members also expressed concern with the repetition of the word “opportunities” in the draft mission.

A motion to adopt the draft vision statement was made by Director Rezwan, seconded by Director Beverly, and passed unanimously. (6-0)

Motion to Rescind: Following further discussion, a motion to rescind the prior motion adopting the draft vision statement was made by Director Rezwan, seconded by Director Beverly, and passed unanimously. (6-0)

Staff was directed to work with Georgia Tech and the City Attorney to revise the mission and vision statements for presentation at the next meeting.

**b) Joint work session to discuss city real estate matters**

Attorney Kyle Williams explained the DDA’s powers with respect to City-owned properties, including ownership, leasing, issuing bonds, and development partnerships. The Board discussed the importance of coordination with the City Council.

The Board and staff tentatively agreed to hold a joint work session with City Council on September 30, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., prior to the Council’s regular work session.

**c) Discussion of amending the day and meeting time of the D.D.A Regular Scheduled Meetings**

The Board discussed whether meeting times should be adjusted to encourage greater public participation. Members noted that public attendance is often limited regardless of timing, but agreed that Monday mornings may not be ideal for business owners.

Counsel and staff advised that attendance is usually issue-driven.

After deliberation, the Board agreed to maintain its regular schedule of the second Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Open house sessions will be held quarterly rather than monthly. Staff was directed to increase meeting promotion through the City’s website, newsletters, and social media.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 11:00 Motion made by Director Beverly. Motion seconded by Director Rezwan. The motion passed unanimously (6-0)

# STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES

**DRAFT** PROPOSAL

CITY OF CLARKSTON  
DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY



# 1. SCOPE OF WORK

## Introduction

The Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR) within the Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI2) at Georgia Tech is pleased to present this **proposal to the City of Clarkston Downtown Development Authority for Phase 2 Economic Development Strategic Planning Services**. This proposal request was initiated by the City of Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and is intended to provide a general overview of the tasks involved. Georgia Tech has provided assistance to support economic development efforts in Georgia for decades, including research, facilitation, technical, and management expertise. As a designated EDA University Center, EI2 provides these services via its headquarters in Atlanta and a network of regional offices located throughout Georgia.

The CEDR team has extensive experience developing comprehensive strategic assessments and economic development plans for communities across the state. This includes gathering extensive input from stakeholders, performing detailed analysis of community demographics and various data patterns, reviewing the economic and political landscape, economic development organizational structures, and facilitating multi-level leadership networks on a regional basis. Below is the proposed approach for the project, along with biographical information for each member of the project team, a timeline, and a budget.

## Work Plan

As a public university, Georgia Tech strongly believes that inclusivity in planning and economic development efforts extends as broad a reach as possible, and brings consensus to communities as they work together, particularly during times of ebb and flow. As the foundation in any strategic planning effort, the visioning process must be intentional with committed partners at the table in order to bring the most benefit to the community.

Georgia Tech uses two guiding principles throughout the planning process. The first principle is that in-depth research is used to gain the greatest understanding possible of the challenges and opportunities facing the local community. The second principle is that stakeholders are engaged throughout the entire process, and that a broad range of perspectives are needed to adequately assess the community's opportunities and challenges, and ultimately the DDA's vision and priorities for their organizational future.

## **TASK 1. PROJECT UPDATE MEETINGS**

### **TASK 1.1. PROJECT KICKOFF**

This process will begin with a kickoff meeting that will review the Strategic Visioning process with the DDA, review the necessary documents for Task 2, discuss any additional stakeholders required in the process, and establish desired dates for the monthly update meeting and the DDA Priority Setting meeting.

### **TASK 1.2 MONTHLY UPDATE MEETINGS**

During the planning process, CEDR proposes to meet once a month with city staff and other stakeholders as needed to provide project updates. These meetings will help ensure the efficient exchange of information, meeting scheduling, coordination of stakeholder interviews, and other logistical support that may be needed during this process.

## **TASK 2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

### **TASK 2.1. DDA SURVEY REVIEW**

CEDR will review results from the local business survey issued by the DDA earlier this year. Results from the survey will help inform DDA priorities and interview guide preparation, included in Task 2.2.

### **TASK 2.2. SWOT ANALYSIS**

Interviews provide important insights during the planning process. The purpose of stakeholder interviews is to better understand Clarkston's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to its future development potential. By collecting the perceptions of community and business leaders and those who are best aware of their industry's business climate and needs, Clarkston will be able to generate a deeper understanding of how those who conduct business in the city perceive its role locally and regionally and identify any areas for improvement. CEDR proposes to conduct one-on-one, confidential interviews with the DDA Board Members and other key community stakeholders from both the City of Clarkston and from the surrounding area. CEDR will develop the interview guide and obtain consensus on the list of interviewees with the city's point of contact. CEDR staff will work with the city's point of contact to arrange for the scheduling of interviews.

### **TASK 2.3 DDA PRIORITIES SETTING**

After Task 2.1 and 2.2 are completed, CEDR will review the results with the Clarkston DDA Board as part of a priorities-setting meeting. This meeting will build off the work completed in Phase One and will focus on establishing DDA priorities, as well as detailed goals and objectives.

### **TASK 2.4 CITY COUNCIL AND DDA MEETING FACILITATION**

Once the Clarkston DDA has draft priorities, goals, and objectives, CEDR will facilitate a meeting between the DDA Board and City Council to review work to date and ensure alignment on goals and priorities.

## **TASK 3. ANALYSIS**

### **TASK 3.1. REVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**

As a first step in understanding the existing economic development climate in Clarkston and Dekalb County, CEDR proposes a review of the economic and political climate for doing business in the area, as well as the potential for future growth including commercial, residential, and tourism development opportunities. In terms of economic development service and support, the CEDR team will review the current organizational structure of economic development services provided in the region and outline any strategic steps that may be needed to best fund the city's efforts and help to prepare for future growth opportunities. The CEDR team will also conduct a downtown building inventory, tracking occupancy and vacancies, and retail gap analysis to help inform future growth and investment in the downtown, including highest and best use opportunities.

### **TASK 3.2. RETAIL MARKET ANALYSIS**

CEDR will partner with the DDA to conduct a comprehensive study of the retail market in the downtown area. This task aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of the retail market, identify key trends and challenges, and provide recommendations and best practice examples for future commercial development. CEDR will include both primary and secondary research methods including surveys and discussions with local businesses, analysis of publicly available data, and market reports to gain a broader understanding of the retail industry trends and challenges specific to downtown Clarkston. The retail market analysis will contain the top tapestry segments that clearly identify the variety of consumer profiles most likely to spend in the market area.

## **TASK 4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLBOX**

### **TASK 4.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLBOX**

To help encourage redevelopment and job creation, CEDR will work with the DDA to explore potential local economic development tools and incentives and develop guidelines for local implementation. The task will be broken into three major areas: (1) Review of incentive policies, application processes, and fees for incentives in comparable communities, (2) Synthesis and comparison of findings to include policy examples from other municipalities, (3) Development of incentive recommendations that work best for Clarkston.

## **TASK 5. FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN**

### **TASK 5.1. FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN**

At the conclusion of tasks 1-4, the DDA will have validated data on which to base its goals. CEDR will work with the DDA to tie the market data into actionable items to incorporate into a five-year plan of work. CEDR will also identify potential public and private funding sources that could be leveraged to support the program of work.

## **TASK 6. FINAL REPORT AND PRESENTATION**

### **TASK 6.1. DRAFT REPORT**

Tasks 1-5 will be integrated into a draft report for city staff and the DDA for review. The client, and their partners will have two weeks from draft report delivery to provide requested edits and other comments.

## TASK 6.2 FINAL REPORT AND PRESENTATION

CEDR will deliver a final report to the City of Clarkston DDA 2-3 weeks after final edits are received, dependent on the level of edits requested.

The final project report will be presented to the Clarkston Mayor & City Council once final edits and changes are made to the draft report. This will allow open discussion about plan findings and allow for public questions and comments at an open meeting. Citizen support for new initiatives will be important, and ensuring their concerns are addressed will be necessary for the formal adoption of any recommendations.

## 2. PROJECT TEAM

The Georgia Institute of Technology has provided research, management, and technical assistance to support economic development in Georgia for decades. Today, these services are provided by the Enterprise Innovation Institute and its statewide network of regional offices. Under EI2's umbrella of services to support the state, the CEDR group extends their nationally-renowned experts in economic analysis and planning to communities and local governments. **Grace Barrett, AICP will serve as the Principal Investigator for this project.**

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### **GRACE BARRETT, AICP**

Grace Barrett is a Project Manager with Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sup>2</sup>) in the Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR). Grace is an urban planner specializing in housing and community development.

While at CEDR, Grace has helped expand the teams housing work, blending data analysis and meaningful community engagement into action-oriented plans to jumpstart implementation. Outside of housing work, Grace is assisting with a statewide Artificial Intelligence Strategic Plan, and a downtown strategic assessment for a small community in Georgia.

Before joining CEDR, Grace worked as an urban planner in the private sector, managing neighborhood plans, and small redevelopment projects, with a focus on guiding community driven positive change in disinvested communities.

Grace graduated from The University of Georgia, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Geography. She also holds a Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) and a Master of Real Estate Development (MRED) from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

### **Betsy McGriff**

Betsy McGriff serves as a Project Manager with Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sup>2</sup>) in the Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR). Prior to joining CEDR, Betsy worked in the public, private, and utility sectors in a variety of economic and community development roles. Betsy is an expert in rural development with deep relationships throughout Georgia.

Recently, Betsy has championed CEDR's housing work, securing \$100,000 in Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding to develop a Future Impact Simulation model to forecast housing demand following major economic development announcements, and \$400,000 in Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) funding to pilot the Certified Economic Development Ready Communities (CEDR-C™) designation in Coastal Georgia.

During her time as the Economic Development Director for Dawson County, Betsy successfully applied for several grants including funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission to initiate the county's first economic development strategic plan and from Georgia's Rural Center to develop a county-wide comprehensive trail plan.

While serving the University of Georgia's Archway Partnership, Betsy assisted communities with projects on a range of community development issues including workforce and education, tourism, infrastructure, downtown development, and marketing and branding. Betsy has served as an elected official of the Town of Register where her administration saw the enactment of the Town's first comprehensive zoning ordinance, a transition of municipal finances to a uniform chart of accounts, and a renegotiation of the SPLOST allocation.

Betsy is a Fellow of the Appalachian Leadership Institute, an active member of the Georgia Economic Developers Association, and serves on the board of Habitat for Humanity of North Central Georgia serving Cherokee, Dawson, Forsyth, and North Fulton counties. Betsy holds a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry and a Master of Business Administration from Georgia Southern University.

### **EMILY LASSER, AICP**

Emily Lasser is an Associate Project Manager at the Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR), a unit of Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sup>2</sup>). Emily is a planner that specializes in community and economic development. She is passionate about mapping and visualizing data in a meaningful way that can be easily understood by all. Through her use of data analysis, mapping, community engagement, and storytelling, Emily strives to create equitable, sustainable places that reflect the needs of the community. Prior to joining Georgia Tech, Emily worked as a Land Planning Analyst at Kimley-Horn where she worked on various land use and transportation projects across the metro Atlanta region.

Emily is an active member of the American Planning Association (APA)/Georgia Planning Association (GPA) and currently serves as the Chair on the Emerging Planners of Georgia (EPG) Board. She also holds an American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification. Emily holds a Bachelor's degree in Urban Studies from Wayne State University and a Master's degree from the University of Michigan in Urban and Regional Planning.

### 3. TIMELINE & BUDGET

#### Timeline

The project is expected to take 8 months to complete after official contract initiation.

#### Budget

The total estimated cost (personal services, fringe benefits, overhead, and M&S) to complete the work outlined in this proposal is \$27,558. Georgia Tech proposes to utilize funding from the Community Engaged Research Group (CER) to help offset part of the cost to the community. The funding from CER is \$15,000, resulting in a **total cost to the community of \$12,558**. Because this project benefits the public sector, we have made every effort to keep costs to a minimum. Georgia Tech will use its public sector overhead rate, which is substantially less than the rate applied to private-sector contracts.

# Strategic Visioning for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority



Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute  
Center for Economic  
Development Research

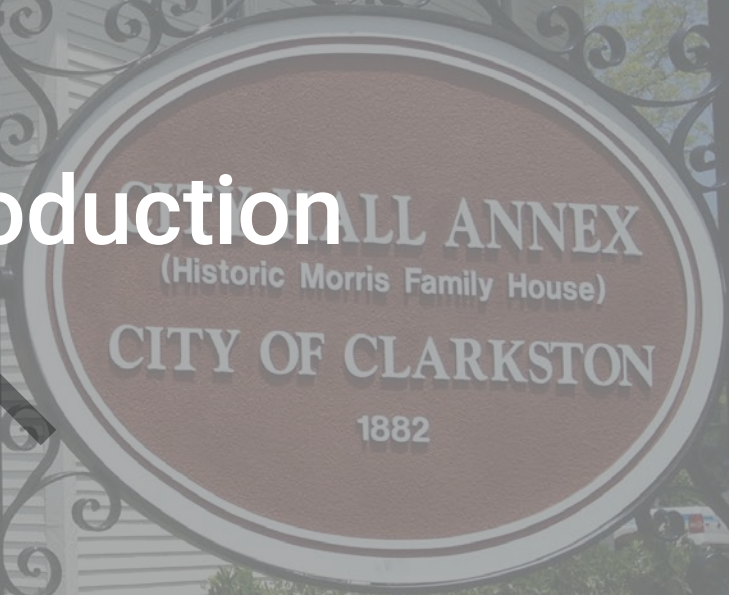
October 2025

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# Background and Introduction



## Background and Introduction

### Center for Economic Development Research

The Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI2) is Georgia Tech's chief business outreach and economic development organization. Since its inception in 1960, its core mission is to help business, industry, entrepreneurs, and economic developers across Georgia grow and remain competitive. EI2 continues Georgia Tech's sixty-year legacy of commitment to community economic development by providing research and technical assistance to support economic development efforts in communities in Georgia and around the world.

CEDR's economic development team are experts with decades of experience in advising economic development and community leaders on how to stay competitive in an ever-changing global economy. CEDR's staff includes:

- Downtown Development Experts
- Economic Development Finance Professionals
- City Planners & Economists
- Housing, Retail, Office, & Industrial Market Analysts

The expertise of the CEDR team is concentrated in the areas of strategic planning, organizational development, labor market and workforce analysis, facilitation, research, and economic and fiscal impact analyses. All faculty have a depth of experience performing applied research for the economic development community. When needed, staff can supplement their skills by calling on Georgia Tech academic faculty to assist in specific research projects. Through their research, CEDR helps clients understand the opportunities and challenges in fostering local and regional economic development.



Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute  
**Center for Economic  
Development Research**

The Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR) is an applied economic development unit of EI<sup>2</sup>. CEDR assists local elected officials, economic developers, policy makers, and community and state leaders who seek innovative tools and methods to leverage their local advantage and quality of life for their residents by attracting, maintaining, and growing business and industry within their areas.

## The Economic Development Research Program (EDRP)

Georgia Tech has played a role in Georgia's economic development for decades. Between 1985 and 2000, the Economic Development Research Program (EDRP) provided affordable research services to communities throughout the state. The goal of this research was to find new industries that could profitably use the resources of Georgia communities. During that period, EDRP relied on state funding to support most of the research along with limited funding from communities requesting the research.

In 2012, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI2) a five-year grant as an EDA University Center to leverage the university's assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support high growth entrepreneurship and improve community capacity to achieve and sustain economic growth. With this funding, EI2 reintroduced EDRP as a competitive process to provide affordable economic development consulting services to communities throughout Georgia.

The program's goal is to enhance the development opportunities in counties and communities throughout Georgia by pinpointing significant investment possibilities based on a particular area's comparative advantage. The program also strives to assist policy decision-making and to help governmental organizations carry out their missions through in-depth research. Each EDRP project request that EI2 receives is evaluated using the following criteria:

- Probability of Success: What is the likelihood that actions resulting from the project will be successful?
- Requestor Involvement: Has the requestor indicated a willingness to become actively involved in the project during the study phase and in the follow-up and implementation phases?
- Magnitude of Impact: What is the expected impact in terms of capital investment, jobs created, jobs preserved, or some other measure that can be quantified?
- Innovation: Does the project idea show innovative thinking on how to enhance economic development?

Although EDRP continues to rely upon the funding from the EDA University Center grant to carry out projects, a nominal funding commitment from each community applying for a research project is important, as it helps extend project resources so more can be done, and it makes the community a committed partner in the project. Economic development is by nature and necessity a team endeavor. The combined skills and energies of Georgia Tech researchers, state and local officials, and resource development specialists will complement existing efforts to foster a healthier economy and to better the quality of life for all of Georgia. Visit the [EDRP website](#) for more details about the program.

The Barnesville Economic Development Strategic Assessment was funded in partnership with the Enterprise Innovation Institute's EDA University Center EDRP program.



The mission of the **Economic Development Research Program (EDRP)** is to assist local communities by providing affordable economic development and policy research to enhance their competitive positions.

## Project Overview

Georgia Tech is pleased to share this report with the City of Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) that summarizes the strategic visioning and planning services completed by the Downtown Development Board and its partners.

The City of Clarkston's newly formed Downtown Development Authority initiated a Strategic Visioning process to discuss priorities, how to work effectively for the city, establish a working vision and mission statement, and establish next steps. The goal of this strategic visioning work is for the DDA to use this visioning process as the groundwork for future strategic planning efforts.

The Strategic Visioning process consisted of three main tasks:

- Review of previous plans
- Three visioning sessions
- Final report

The final report includes results from the previous plan review and the visioning sessions with the DDA board members and other stakeholders, in addition to short and long-term initiatives the DDA can implement to support Clarkston's development.

## History

The current Clarkston Downtown Development Authority was established after the Clarkston Development Authority dissolved in 2021. The goal of creating a new authority was to create a standard Development Authority that every municipality in Georgia has the right to create. The current DDA boundary is in Figure 1

## Purpose of a Downtown Development Authority

DDAs play an important role in community and economic development. Authorized by the state and activated by the local community, DDAs can be used as the financial vehicle to facilitate projects on behalf of the local government. Georgia's Downtown Development Authority Law allows municipalities to activate a downtown development authority to support growth and redevelopment of central business districts.

For DDAs to remain active, they must file appropriate paperwork annually with the State of Georgia. Inactivity from DDAs can serve as a barrier to business attraction in a city's downtown and commercial corridors.

In Georgia, DDAs are authorized to exercise financial flexibility to support economic development. Examples of tools they can use include:

- Property tax incentives
- Revenue bonds and notes
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Ad valorem tax incentives
- Own/lease and sell property

## Previous Plans

Georgia Tech reviewed several previous plans and studies for Clarkston to understand what priorities have been established through other planning efforts, and how the DDA can support implementation of initiatives important to the city. A summary of the plans reviewed is included in Table 1. The top Clarkston 2040 Plan Priority Policies aligned particularly well with activities the DDA can support. Several of the top 10 policy priorities focus on downtown or commercial development and establishing a sense of place. The action items in the plan include:

- Encourage mixed-use developments in the downtown core and annexed nodes
- Develop a robust network of parks connected by sidewalks, trails and bike facilities
- Promote more restaurants, pop-ups, food trucks and other entrepreneurial activities in the downtown core
- Develop foster, and promote arts, culture and tourism activities
- Develop a civic space within the downtown core

The DDA has the opportunity to support the implementation of all the above action items and future downtown action items developed in subsequent plans.

Figure 1: Current DDA Boundary

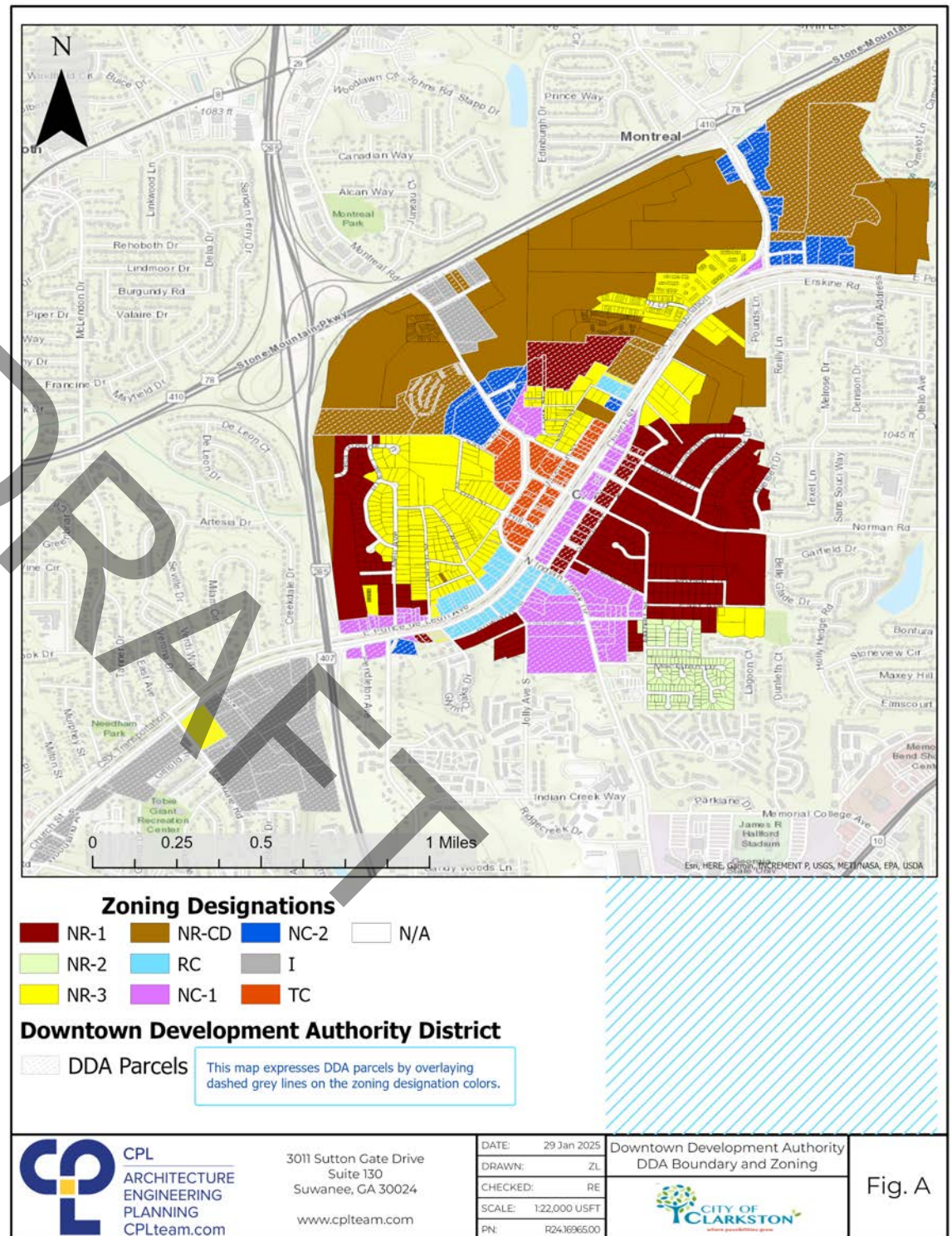


Table 1: Previous Plan Review

Study	Date	Purpose	Responsible Party
Clarkston 2040 Update	2021	Guide growth and development through 2040, focus on housing, economic development, transportation.	City of Clarkston, ARC, Clarkston 2040 Steering Committee
Clarkston Greenway Report	2024	Establish safe, equitable trail system, improve mobility, health, and connectivity.	City of Clarkston, ARC, Project Advisory Group, Community Ambassadors
DeKalb 2050 Comprehensive Transportation Plan	2022	Identify high-priority projects like bike/pedestrian connections and complete streets in cities like Clarkston	Supporting ARC, MARTA, local jurisdictions including Clarkston
DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan- Executive Summary	2022	Reflect needs of diverse communities like Clarkston, with special attention to immigrant, refugee, and low-income populations.	Supported by ARC, consultation teams (ex. Kimley Horn, etc), input from cities like Clarkston, stakeholder groups
DeKalb 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan	2022	Promote redevelopment, housing diversity, economic opportunity, and environmental conservation. Inform zoning and land use decisions for Clarkston and other municipalities	Collaborators: ARC, Decide DeKalb, Planning Commission, consultant teams  Local input: City of Clarkston

Section Two

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## Visioning Sessions

# Visioning Session Number One: Getting to Know You

## Background

At the first session with the Clarkston Downtown Development Authority, Georgia Tech introduced the visioning process, its purpose, and project outcomes. The goal of the first session was to gain a better understanding of its members and the aspirations they have for the DDA. Specific topics discussed include current strengths and challenges for Clarkston, the goals they want to achieve, and opportunities they see for the DDA to support the development of Clarkston.

During the meeting, DDA board members participated in an online survey via Mentimeter for Georgia Tech to better the perceptions of Downtown Clarkston, how economic development efforts are currently handled, and how the DDA can support economic development. Highlights from this survey include:

- Recent economic development planning efforts have been encouraging, and stakeholders are hopeful about the future of downtown.
- The DDA can serve as a bridge between public and private entities.
- Promoting Clarkston and making its downtown a destination is a priority.

## Visioning Session Summary

A more detailed summary is included on the following pages.

### Grading Downtown Clarkston

Figure 2: How Would You Grade Downtown Clarkston?

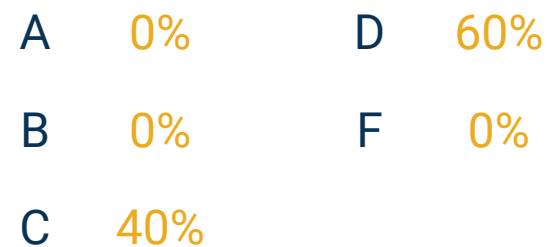
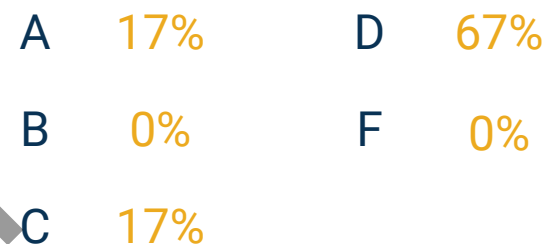


Figure 3: How Would Visitors Grade Downtown Clarkston?



For the first exercise, DDA Board Members were asked to grade downtown Clarkston from their perspective. Results are shown in Figure 2, and highlight that most members feel there is room for improvement downtown.

Figure 3 summarizes how participants think visitors would grade downtown Clarkston today. Compared to their own view, some felt that visitors would give downtown an A, but most felt that visitors would also see downtown as needing improvement.

Figure 4: Downtown Clarkston: Today

### Why is Downtown Clarkston Important?

Feedback on the importance of downtown highlighted that it serves as the city's economic driver and a community gathering spot. Downtown can also elevate awareness of the city and serve as a home for a variety of businesses, serving the city's diverse population. There is also an opportunity for downtown to serve as a revenue generator for the city.

### Downtown Clarkston Today and In the Future

Most felt that currently downtown feels undefined and uninspiring. Undefined, because of a lack of gateway and other signage that delineates the downtown boundary, and uninspiring, due to a lack of vision and comprehensive strategy to guide design and development (Figure 4).

There were also positive feelings about downtown, specifically a sense of hopefulness about the role the DDA can play in improving downtown the area, and as well as the upcoming planning work that will also have an impact on downtown.

In the future, board members would like to see a family-friendly downtown that is home to thriving small businesses that cater to the diverse community and activate downtown throughout the entire day (Figure 5).

Mixed-use developments were also something board members would like to see, so that more housing is incorporated downtown.



Figure 5: Downtown Clarkston: Future



**Downtown Clarkston Strengths and Weaknesses**

Clarkston has several strengths, including its location, existing restaurants, population density, and development opportunities. Clarkston is well located, both to highways (78 & 285), major roads (East Ponce De Leon Avenue & Memorial), and trails/green space (Stone Mountain Path & Friendship Forest), as well as being well situated within Metro Atlanta. Downtown’s proximity to the Stone Mountain Path was seen by participants as a particular strength, as it provides the opportunity to attract pedestrians and cyclists to downtown (Figure 6).

The current diverse offerings of existing restaurants are a strength and can be leveraged to showcase the diversity of the city. Clarkston is a small city with a high population density, creating an opportunity for high turnout at events. Finally, participants shared that development opportunities, especially increasing housing density downtown, are a strength for the city.

Weaknesses included a lack of curb appeal, comfortable public space, and signage, leading to a feeling that downtown is disjointed and not inviting to visitors (Figure 7).

**How Can The DDA Help**

DDA Board members felt they could help make Clarkston a better place by engaging with businesses and residents to locate and support downtown, and serving as the bridge between public and private entities. They also felt that the DDA can promote downtown and support planning impactful events, making downtown a destination. Lastly, the DDA could guide both new and existing small business owners. Partners the DDA can leverage include:

- Decide Dekalb Development Authority
- Dekalb Chamber of Commerce
- Small Business Association
- City of Clarkston
- Local Business Association
- Georgia Piedmont Economic Development
- Other DDA’s

Figure 6: Downtown Clarkston Strengths



Figure 7: Downtown Clarkston Weaknesses



# Visioning Session Number Two: Who Do You Want to Be?

## Visioning Session Summary

The second visioning session focused on what they want their future to look like and their role in the future development of Clarkston. Several external stakeholders attended this meeting, providing their expertise on how the DDA can have a positive impact on Clarkston.

The goal of this meeting was to brainstorm both opportunities for the DDA to participate in and spearhead that will improve the city, and key terms to include in the DDA's vision and mission statements.

Opportunities were broken up into three categories: People, Place, and Plan opportunities, and participants provided feedback on each category. People opportunities are ways to engage people in a way that supports business. Place opportunities asked about ways to improve places and make them areas where people want to be. Respondents also provided specific properties that could be good redevelopment projects. Plan opportunities asked how planning efforts can support improvements, and how the DDA can interact with both regional and local planning efforts.

### People Opportunities

People opportunities focused on events that highlight the diversity and culture of Clarkston. Specific ideas for events include:

- Music and cultural events
- Restaurant week
- Seasonal (holiday) events
- Bike festival
- Retail markets
- Arts festival

## Plan Opportunities

Feedback on plan opportunities included ways that the DDA can interact with local leaders, city staff, and businesses, and how they can learn best practices from more established DDAs.

To engage with local businesses,

Establishing quarterly meetings with local leaders and workshops with City Council, the Historic Preservation Commission, and Planning & Zoning to ensure priorities are aligned.

There are several upcoming planning opportunities that DDA Board Members can participate in, including the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and Comprehensive Plan updates. Participating in these plans will provide an opportunity for board members to ensure these plans' goals for Clarkston align with the DDA's goals and how the DDA can be a supportive implementation partner.

Field trips to other DDAs were seen by participants as an important opportunity.

Learning from peers, through DDA field trips, was seen as an important opportunity by participants. Topics to discuss with other DDAs include:

- Existing priorities
- Existing programs
- Organization success
- Organization challenges
- Funding mechanisms

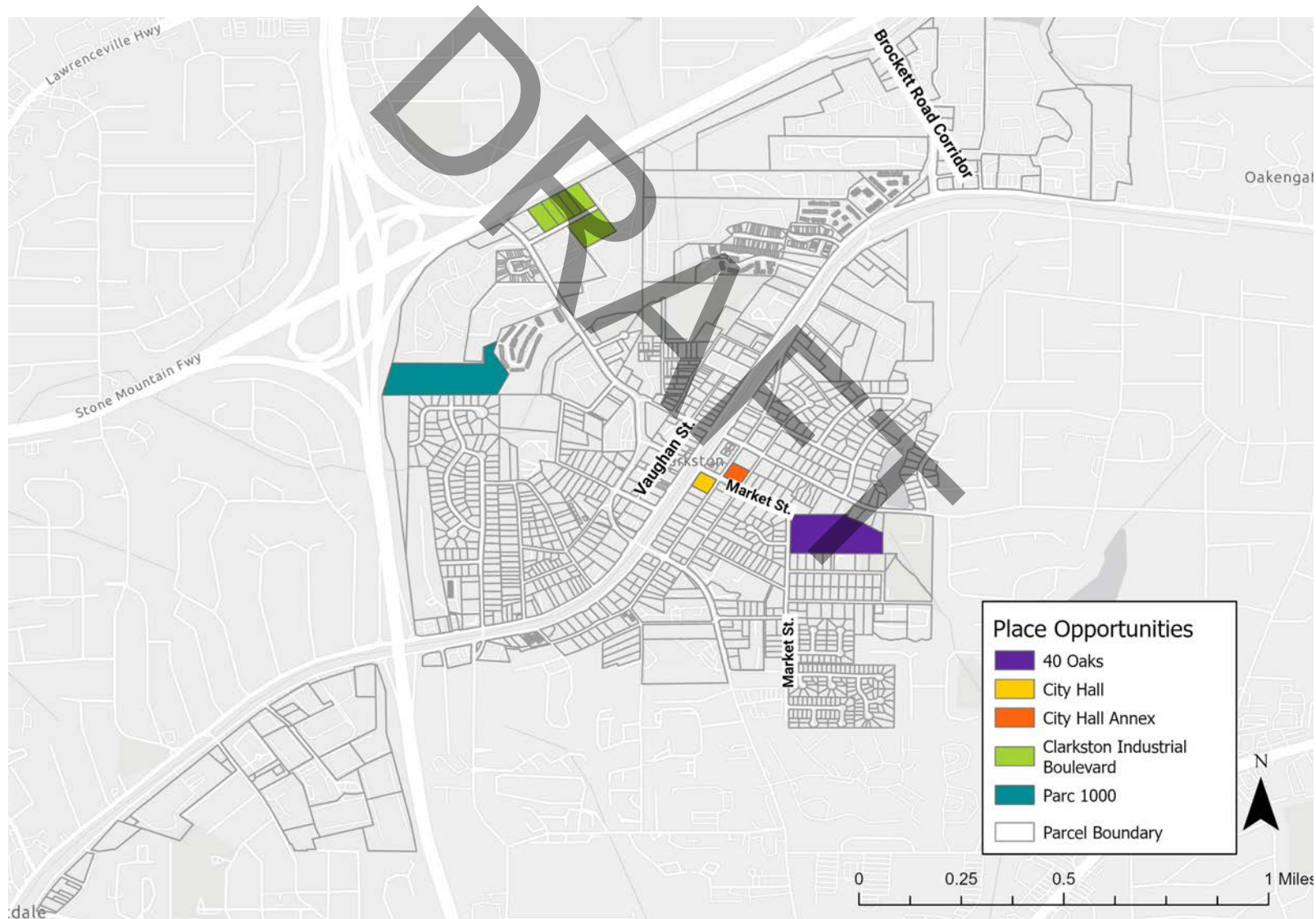
Potential DDA's to visit include:

- Decatur
- Lawrenceville
- Norcross

### Place Opportunities

The place opportunities shared by board members are shown in Figure 8. Market Street was shared most frequently as a place of opportunity, where the DDA can focus its improvement efforts. The Vaughn and Brockett corridors were also mentioned. Some potential properties the DDA saw as an opportunity include the old City Hall building.

Figure 8: Place Opportunities



# Visioning Session Number Three: How Do You Get There?

## Visioning Session Summary

The final visioning session focused on finalizing the vision and mission statement for the Downtown Development Authority. Most of the meeting time was allocated to discussing potential action steps to include in the final mission statement that will communicate the action steps the DDA plans to take to achieve its vision.

Based on feedback from session two, the mission statement includes action items grouped into people, place, and plan opportunities.

Lastly, next steps and potential activities for the DDA to implement were discussed.

### Draft Vision Statements

Several draft vision statements were presented to the group, with iterative feedback provided until the group decided on a final vision. The draft vision statements discussed are included below.

#### 1. Clarkston: A Welcoming City for All

Celebrating our vibrant diversity, Clarkston is a family-friendly, inclusive community where sustainability, and kindness support economic growth and cultural connection.

#### 2. Clarkston: A Place for Everyone

Family-friendly, business-ready, and built on kindness and connection.

#### 3. Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

To build a vibrant, inclusive city where diverse businesses thrive, and community and culture drive sustainable growth.

#### 4. Clarkston: Growing Business, Honoring Community

We support and grow local businesses through inclusive development, cultural celebration, and sustainable investment—ensuring long-term success for entrepreneurs and families alike.

### Final Working Vision Statement

#### Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

### Draft Mission Statement

The Clarkston Downtown Development Authority is committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient downtown by embracing the unique culture and diversity of our community. We champion People Opportunities through dynamic events that celebrate Clarkston's rich heritage and multicultural identity. We invest in Place Opportunities by enhancing the physical environment that reflect the pride and potential of our city. We advance Plan Opportunities by cultivating strategic partnerships with other DDAs, engaging regularly with city officials, and actively participating in local and regional planning efforts to ensure sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

### Final Working Mission Statement

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

## Session Three

Once stakeholders completed workshopping the vision and mission statements, Georgia Tech reviewed the initial next steps and potential activities that the DDA can undertake. Representatives from Georgia Tech facilitated a discussion about the next steps and potential activities included below.

Additional information about next steps and potential activities is included in section four.

### Next Steps

- Finalize the vision and mission statements
- Schedule a workshop session with other city partners to establish consensus on prioritized activities and executions
- Compile and report out business survey results
- Participate in the upcoming LCI and Comprehensive Plan updates
- Schedule site visits with neighboring DDA's
- Develop a five year work plan

### Potential Activities

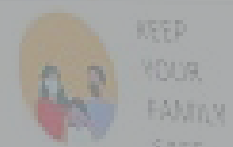
- Gateway Signage
- Develop a starting a business guide
- Schedule reoccurring touch points with existing businesses
- Property inventory and mapping
- Evaluate the need for potential programs such as signage or facade improvement grants
- Events - who, what, when, where and how

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# Final Working Vision and Mission

FRIENDSHIP FOREST  
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY  
CITY OF CLARKSTON, GA

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## Working Vision

### Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

To build a vibrant, inclusive city where diverse businesses thrive through inclusive development, cultural celebration, and sustainable investment.

## Working Mission

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

Section Four



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# Next Steps

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# Next Steps

## Next Steps

### Finalize Mission and Vision

For the DDA to support businesses and economic development efforts of the City of Clarkston, the authority should first focus on finalizing its mission and vision statements to set the direction for the organization.

Once the mission and vision have been finalized, the DDA should schedule a workshop session with other city partners to share the final mission and vision and to establish consensus on prioritized objectives and action items. City partners to host a workshop that includes:

- City Council
- Department of City Planning
- Historic Preservation Commission

Early meetings with city partners can help ensure the DDA and the city are aligned on goals and priorities, increasing the likelihood of successful project implementation.

Continuing to hold open houses to engage the community on the purpose and future of the DDA should be prioritized.

### Business Survey Results

Earlier this summer, the DDA created a survey for local businesses. Summarizing the survey results and having major takeaways on hand for the workshop session with city partners to help establish priorities.

The survey results should also be shared with local businesses at a future open house.

### Participation in Upcoming Planning Projects

Several planning projects are anticipated to start in Clarkston over the next year. Two important planning efforts include the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and the Comprehensive Plan Update. The DDA Board Members

should participate in these efforts to ensure DDA priorities are included in these plans.

### DDA Field Trips

An excellent way for the Clarkston DDA to learn the best ways to be an effective organization for the city. Scheduling visits with more established DDAs can provide an opportunity for board members to learn about their programs and successes, and what they would do differently.

### Develop a Five-Year Work Plan

Leveraging the momentum from the visioning process, the DDA can create a detailed five-year work plan that outlines the goals of the organization and prioritized strategies to achieve the goals.

Table 2: Example Goals and Strategies

Plan Component	Purpose	Plan Example
Goals	Sets the long-term direction for a community's economic development.	G1. Champion People Opportunities
Objectives	Broken into manageable steps (SMART)	O1.1. Increase the number DDA hosted/co-hosted/sponsored events.
Strategies	Specific actions to achieve the objectives. A clear path for implementation.	S1.1.1 Host a Clarkston Restaurant week highlighting the City's diverse cuisines. Provide attendees with participation guides and cards to track attendance.

**Potential Opportunities +  
Case Studies**

# Opportunities and Case Studies

## Opportunities

This section shares potential policies and programs the Clarkston DDA could implement to support economic development and placemaking initiatives in the city.

### Placemaking

Clarkston can use existing assets to create a more vibrant, walkable downtown that reflects its global community and local pride.

Through engagement with the [PATH Foundation](#) and an [AARP Livability Assessment](#), the city can evaluate the need for public comfort features – including optimal bench spacing for rest and social interaction, clear and multilingual signage, accessible bike repair stations, and well-placed waste receptacles for both humans and pets. These efforts aim to create a more inclusive, people-centered downtown that supports both everyday use and special events. Market and Rowland streets provide a great location to place gateway signage, pointing people to nearby developments.

Figure 9: Market and Rowland Street



Source: Georgia Tech

**Center of Gravity:** The emotional and visual anchor of your downtown. This is the place people tag on Instagram, gather naturally, or associate with the town’s identity. Build connections outward from this spot – visually, physically, and programmatically.

### Best Practice: Statesboro Art Park

The [Statesboro Art Park](#) transformed a vacant railroad right-of-way into a lively gathering space, featuring walkways, flower-inspired landscaping, and interactive installations like a community sundial and a six-foot-tall “BORO” sign. The vibrant outdoor space showcases a rotating installation of contemporary public art.

Figure 10: Statesboro Art Park



Source: City of Statesboro

**Pop-Up Placemaking:** Temporary installations can test ideas, activate space, and build momentum. Use planters, picnic tables, shade sails, and murals to define space; host events to kick off the space and monitor usage. Rotating programming by time of day and audience can help broaden engagement and reach different audiences.

## Section Five

### Community Events

While the DDA is new and still establishing its priorities, the DDA could support existing community events. By aligning with familiar and well-attended gatherings, the DDA can introduce its initiatives, gather feedback, and promote downtown goals without the overhead of organizing standalone events. Additionally, these partnerships demonstrate a commitment to supporting local culture and commerce, reinforcing the DDA's role as a collaborative and responsive leader in downtown revitalization.

The DDA could also partner with local businesses and other city departments to create new events designed to engage target populations and promote downtown businesses and venues. Some examples include:

**Wellness Walk:** Host monthly "wellness walks" featuring health-related businesses (chiropractors, pharmacies, smoothie shops, fitness facilities, etc) to encourage public space engagement while highlighting local businesses.

**Bike Month (May):** Partner with other cities along the Path during National Bike Month. Programming could include bike repair clinics, beginner bike rides for children, or a weekend event with vendors.

### Digital Engagement

The [Georgia Main Street](#) Program offers marketing and storytelling technical assistance, helping cities develop balanced social media strategies and creative content plans. [Main Street America](#) catalogs resources on social media storytelling. Suggested overarching themes for Clarkston might include connected, kind, fabric, vibrant, and inclusive.

Some tips on digital engagement include:

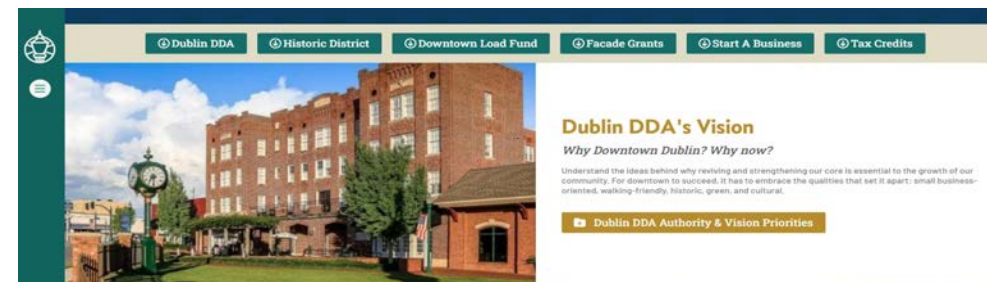
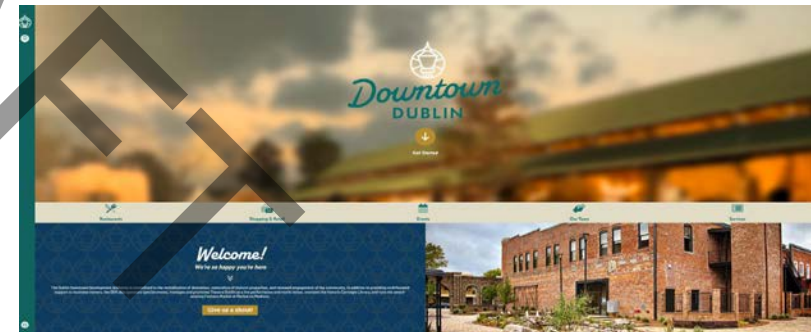
- Branding – Create an identity that echoes the DDA's vision and represents the community character.
- Events Calendar – Keeps the residents and visitors informed of upcoming events, festivals, and meetings.

- Business Directory - Highlight local businesses with photos, contact info, and links. Include categories (e.g., dining, retail, services) and filters for ease of use.
- Interactive Maps - Show parking, public art, green spaces, and walkable routes. Use tools like Google Maps or GIS-based platforms.
- Visioning Documents – Share the downtown master plans, visioning study, and placemaking goals. Include downloadable PDFs with summaries for public transparency.
- Local Business Portal – Provide a direct link for businesses to connect with the DDA to drive engagement, ensure resource utilization, and create a proactive approach.

#### Best Practice: Dublin DDA

Downtown Dublin: A vibrant image-rich web presence with easy navigation for residents, visitors, and business owners. The DDA vision and priorities are clearly visible.

Figure 11: Dublin DDA Website



Source: Dublin DDA

### Small Business Support

The DDA could establish a small business guide to provide information for potential business owners on important items, including regulatory information, any financial assistance, and available supportive services.

### Creative Incentives

To design the most effective incentive packages for Downtown Clarkston, we recommend conducting two key assessments:

- Business Survey Analysis – Utilize the results of the recent survey to determine current business needs, challenges, and growth opportunities.
- Commercial Building Windshield Survey – Evaluate the physical condition, occupancy status, and redevelopment potential of existing commercial properties.

Together, these tools will provide a data-driven foundation for tailoring incentives that support business retention, attract new investment, and guide strategic revitalization efforts.

### Best Practice: Kennesaw Downtown Development Authority (KDDA) Flex Grant Program

The Flex Grant Program is a targeted initiative designed to support small businesses within the downtown district by providing grants ranging from \$500 to \$2,500. This reimbursable, matching grant program empowers businesses to enhance productivity, improve infrastructure, expand operations, and invest in technology and marketing. Eligible projects include equipment purchases, façade improvements, software upgrades, and placemaking activities—all aligned with the broader goal of strengthening the downtown economy. The Flex Grant Program Guidelines and Application form are included in the Appendix.

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# Appendix



Kennesaw Downtown Development  
Authority Main Street on the Move Flex  
Grant Application

### Contact Information

Business DBA Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Name (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

### Grant Request

Project Description:

Total Project Budget: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested Grant Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Percent of Total Budget: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Project Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*As a separate attachment, please include supplementary materials outlined in the grant guidelines (cost estimates, drawings, schematics, goal statement, etc.).*

### Acknowledgement

*By signing below, I affirm that the information provided in this grant application is both truthful and accurate. I understand that all text and photos submitted in this application may be used by the KDDA during grant announcement/award and in press related materials pertaining to the grant recipients.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## KDDA Main Street on the Move Flex Grant Program Guidelines

### Purpose:

The KDDA will award grants ranging from \$500 - \$2500 to small businesses in Downtown Kennesaw for projects that will enhance productivity, expand or improve business processes, improve service delivery, support business expansion, or improve business facilities/infrastructure. Grant amounts are discretionary and will be awarded based on need and potential impact.

### Eligibility:

- Businesses applying for this grant program must be located within the KDDA boundaries, hold a valid City of Kennesaw Business License, have no outstanding code enforcement violations, and must have generated revenue as of October 1, 2024.
- The grant is reimbursable and requires a minimum 50% match. Applicants must submit valid expense receipts for the approved project to receive payment. Once awarded, a request for reimbursement should be submitted to the KDDA prior to the end of the fiscal year (September 30). Applicants should submit a Source of Funds Statement along with the project budget.
- Examples of eligible projects include (but are not limited to):
  - Purchase of new equipment to expand/improve business processes or increase production
  - Purchase of software or technology products to improve business efficiency/ processes
  - Capital expenses related to facility renovation/expansion (includes signage)
  - Technical assistance (consultant fees, etc) for the development of new or alternative revenue streams, expanded marketing opportunities, brand development or other business needs
  - Capital expenses related to façade improvement
  - Capital expenses related to major equipment purchases necessary for production or service delivery
  - Marketing support for new downtown businesses (open less than 2 years)
  - Costs associated with participation in the Fusus camera program with Kennesaw Police Department
  - Expansion of performing arts or placemaking programming within the downtown area
- Applicants cannot be an employee or board member of the KDDA, or be an immediate family member of an employee or board member. Immediate family is defined as an employee's spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandchild, and grandparent, and includes any of these persons of a step, in-law, foster, or adoptive relationship to the employee. Applicants cannot be a federal, state, or municipal employee, or elected/appointed official.
- Only for-profit businesses are eligible; non-profits are not eligible.

### Grant Repayment

- KDDA reserves the right to require that grant funds be repaid to the KDDA by the business owner if the business relocates outside of the City of Kennesaw's Central Business District within 3 years of grant award. Repayment guidelines will be included in the grant award agreement.

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Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute  
Center for Economic  
Development Research

October 2025

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**Re: 12/08/25 Downtown Development Authority Regular Meeting**

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**From** Johnny Garcia <johnnygarciadc@gmail.com>

**Date** Fri 12/5/2025 1:05 PM

**To** Jacob Bouie <jbouie@cityofclarkston.com>

**Cc** R A <rezwanshareef@gmail.com>; Adria <adria@ecoslay.com>; Akber Lassi <akberlassi@bellsouth.net>; Beverly Burks <bburks@cityofclarkston.com>; bunacoffeemusic <nebermiyas@gmail.com>; Richard Edwards <redwards@cityofclarkston.com>; Kyle Williams <kwilliams@williamsteusink.com>; ChaQuias Miller Thornton <cmthornton@cityofclarkston.com>

Dear DDA, City Staff, City Manger,

I have decided to step down from my position with the DDA at this time due to unforeseen circumstances.

I am just not able to give the DDA and City the attention necessary at these critical times in this amazing DDA and City journey, and therefore have decided that this is the best decision at this time.

I whole heartedly intend to provide continued support in the community and to the City and DDA as this continue to progress. I am also open to returning in future if there is a need and I am able.

Thank you for all of your hard work, time and dedication throughout the last 2 years.

I will not be in attendance this month and will work to transition with the help of staff.

Respectfully,

Dr. Garcia  
DDA Chair

On Fri, Dec 5, 2025, 9:00 AM Jacob Bouie <[jbouie@cityofclarkston.com](mailto:jbouie@cityofclarkston.com)> wrote:

Greetings Board Members,

I hope each of you has had a great thanksgiving.

This email serves as a reminder that we are scheduled for our December 8, 2025, regular meeting.

Please review the [December 8, 2025 DDA Agenda Packet](#) ahead of the meeting, and confirm your attendance at your earliest convenience.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to staff.

Have a safe and wonderful weekend.

Kindest,



## Jacob Bouie

**Economic Development Coordinator**

*City of Clarkston*

 O: 404-296-6489 | M: 470-292-9569

 [jbouie@cityofclarkston.com](mailto:jbouie@cityofclarkston.com)

 [www.clarkstonga.gov](http://www.clarkstonga.gov)

 736 Park North Blvd., Suite 120, Clarkston, GA 30021

## DDA Resignation

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**From** bunacoffeemusic <nebermiyas@gmail.com>

**Date** Mon 12/15/2025 12:49 PM

**To** Jacob Bouie <jbouie@cityofclarkston.com>

Dear Members,

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation from my DDA position.

During my time, I gained valuable experience, for which I am grateful. Because of work load and travel, I no longer serve DDA effectively.

Thank you.



**2026 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) MEETINGS SCHEDULE**  
**736 PARK NORTH BLVD., STE. 120, CLARKSTON, GA 30021**  
**(404) 296-6489 \* [WWW.CLARKSTONGA.GOV](http://WWW.CLARKSTONGA.GOV)**

**ALL REGULAR DDAMEETINGS ARE HELD AT 10:00 A.M. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

MEETING DATES	MEETING TYPE & NOTES
January 12, 2026	Regular Meeting
February 9, 2026	Regular Meeting
March 9, 2026	Regular Meeting
April 6, 2026	Regular Meeting
May 11, 2026	Regular Meeting
June 8, 2026	Regular Meeting
July 6, 2026	Regular Meeting
August 10, 2026	Regular Meeting
September 14, 2026	Regular Meeting <i>(Due to Labor Day)</i>
October 19, 2026	Regular Meeting <i>(Due to Indigenous Day)</i>
November 9, 2026	Regular Meeting
December 14, 2026	Regular Meeting