

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 26, 2017

TO: Blaine H. Williams, ACC Manager
Robert Hiss, ACC Assistant Manager
Jestin Johnson, ACC Assistant Manager

FROM: Matt Justus, Budget Analyst

SUBJECT: 2016 Comparison of Tax Mill Levies, Exemptions, and Taxes

This report compares Athens-Clarke County property taxes to those of nearby cities and counties and to similar sized communities throughout the state. Comparisons are made based on an owner-occupied home valued at \$175,000, which is the average value of a home in Athens-Clarke County.

Table A (local cities/counties) and Table B (non-local cities/counties) report the 2016 millage rates for school, city, and county taxes for cities in local counties and in Georgia counties of comparable size. Standard exemptions and the resulting tax calculation on a \$175,000 home are also provided. Exemptions for senior citizens vary by county and are not considered in the calculations.

The homestead exemption amount plays a significant role in the calculation of taxes on a home valued at \$175,000. In Table A (local cities/counties), Athens-Clarke County has the third highest combined millage rate (33.95) but is the second lowest in actual taxes for the six local area counties and cities. This is a result of the Athens-Clarke County \$10,000 local homestead exemption. All other local counties have the state minimum \$2,000 homestead exemption. A home valued at \$175,000 in Athens-Clarke County paid property taxes of \$2,037 in 2016, \$199 less than the average tax bill (\$2,236) of the six local counties and cities.

In Table B (non-local cities/counties), Athens-Clarke County has the lowest millage rate (33.95) and is the lowest in actual taxes in the seven city and county comparison. Homestead exemptions range from a low of \$2,000 (Hall) to a high of \$13,500 (Columbus-Muscogee). The \$2,037 property tax bill in Athens-Clarke County is \$386 below the average of \$2,423 for the seven comparison cities.

For 2016, the State reduced its millage rate from 0.05 to 0.00, eliminating its property tax levy.

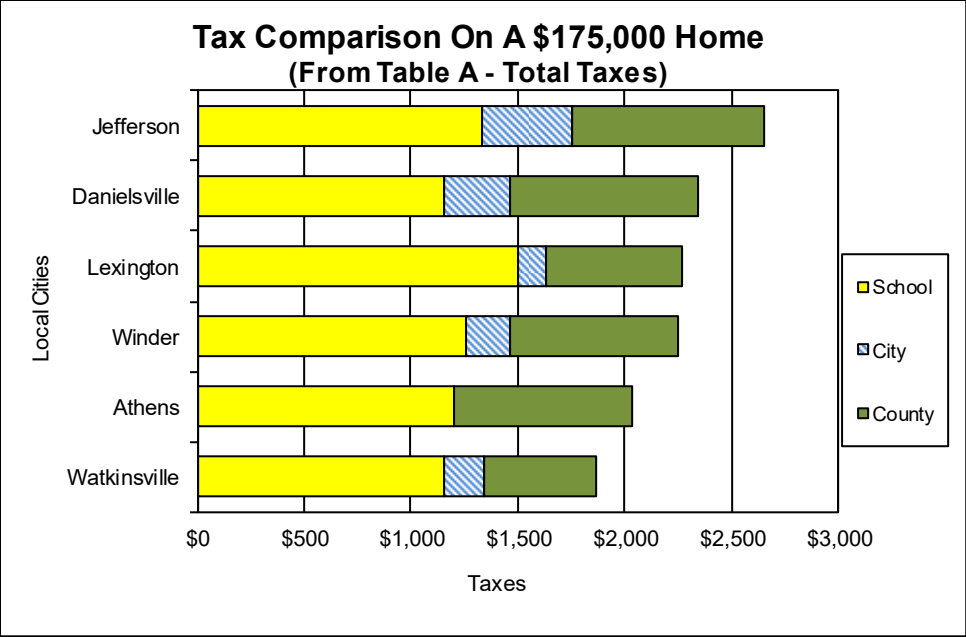
Please contact me at 613-3208 if we can provide additional information related to this review.

cc David Boyd, Finance Director
Chris Caldwell, Assistant Finance Director
Tim Taylor, Budget Administrator
Jeff Montgomery, Public Information Officer
Toni Meadow, Tax Commissioner

TABLE A
LOCAL CITIES & COUNTIES (2016)

	<u>Athens- Clarke</u>	<u>Danielsville Madison</u>	<u>Jefferson Jackson</u>	<u>Lexington Oglethorpe</u>	<u>Winder Barrow</u>	<u>Watkinsville Oconee</u>
MILLAGE RATES BY COUNTY:						
School & Bond	20.000	16.990	19.454	21.912	18.500	17.000
City	0.000	4.500	6.185	2.000	3.000	2.791
County & Bond	13.950	12.980	13.250	9.385	11.539	7.656
Total	33.950	34.470	38.889	33.297	33.039	27.447
ASSESSED VALUE CALCULATION:						
Market Value	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000
Assessed (40%)	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
STANDARD HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS: (a)						
School	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
City	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
County	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
TAX CALCULATION ON A \$175,000 HOME:						
School	1,200.00	1,155.32	1,330.56	1,495.99	1,258.00	1,156.00
City	0.00	306.00	420.58	136.00	204.00	189.79
County	837.00	882.64	901.00	638.18	784.65	520.61
Total	\$2,037.00	\$2,343.96	\$2,652.14	\$2,270.17	\$2,246.65	\$1,866.40
Average	\$2,236.05					

(a) Standard Exemption and Millage Rates - Excludes Senior Citizen adjustments which vary with age and income. Standard exemptions do not apply to the portion of the millage rate (County, School, and City) levied to retire bonded indebtedness, unless specifically stated.



The graph above compares the combined taxes for the local cities and counties from Table A. Athens-Clarke County ranks second lowest in combined taxes for a \$175,000 home for 2016. The graph below considers only city and county taxes. When only these taxes are considered, Athens-Clarke County is in the mid-range for local governments nearby.

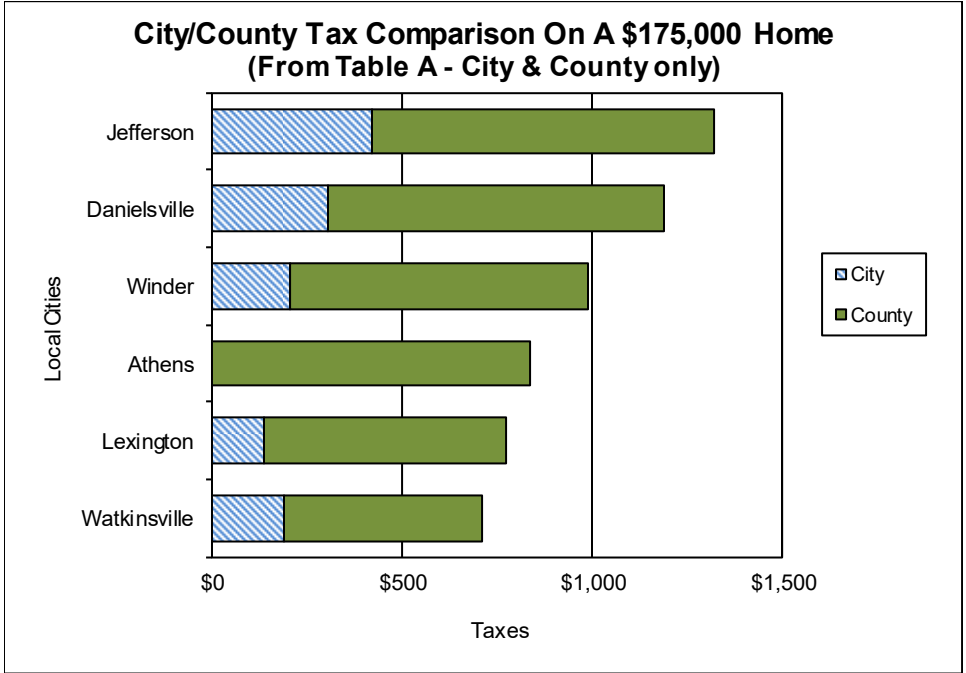
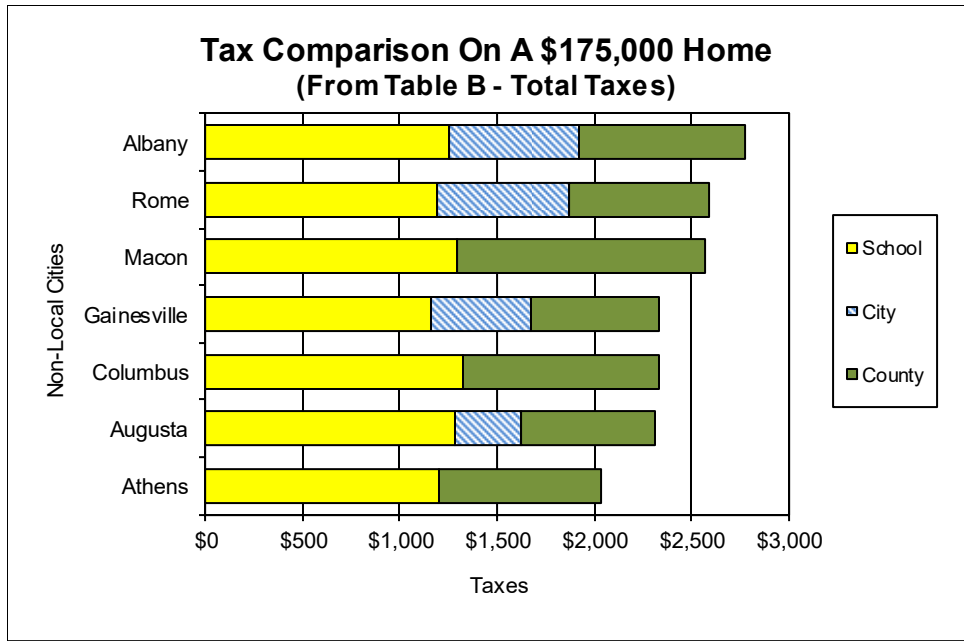


TABLE B
NON LOCAL COUNTIES OF COMPARABLE SIZE (2016)

	<u>Athens- Clarke</u>	<u>Macon Bibb</u>	<u>Columbus Muscogee</u>	<u>Albany Dougherty</u>	<u>Augusta Richmond</u>	<u>Rome Floyd</u>	<u>Gainesville Hall</u>
MILLAGE RATES BY COUNTY:							
School & Bond	20.000	19.945	23.370	18.445	19.754	17.450	17.130 (b)
City	0.000	0.000	0.000	9.808	5.216 (a)	10.086	7.450 (b)
County & Bond	<u>13.950</u>	<u>19.652</u>	<u>17.880</u>	<u>12.577</u>	<u>10.575</u>	<u>11.100</u>	<u>9.796</u>
Total	33.950	39.597	41.250	40.830	35.545	38.636	34.376
ASSESSED VALUE CALCULATION:							
Market Value	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$175,000
Assessed (40%)	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
STANDARD HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS: (b)							
School	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$13,500	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
City	\$0	\$5,000	\$13,500	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
County	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$13,500	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$2,000
TAX CALCULATION ON A \$175,000 HOME:							
School	1,200.00	1,296.43	1,320.41	1,254.26	1,284.01	1,186.60	1,164.84
City	0.00	0.00	0.00	666.94	339.04	685.85	506.60
County	<u>837.00</u>	<u>1,277.38</u>	<u>1,010.22</u>	<u>855.24</u>	<u>687.38</u>	<u>721.50</u>	<u>666.13</u>
Total	\$2,037.00	\$2,573.81	\$2,330.63	\$2,776.44	\$2,310.43	\$2,593.95	\$2,337.57
Average	\$2,422.83						

- (a) Augusta-Richmond is a unified government. They do however, maintain an Urban Service District which occupies the original city jurisdiction. This Urban Service District assesses an additional tax for services in the district.
- (b) The City of Gainesville taxes on 100% valuation. The mill levy has been adjusted to reflect a 40% valuation to compare with other counties.
- (c) Standard Exemption and Millage Rates - Excludes Senior Citizen adjustments which vary with age and income. Standard exemptions do not apply to the portion of the millage rate (County, School, and City) levied to retire bonded indebtedness, unless specifically stated.



The graph above compares the combined taxes for similar sized cities and counties from Table B, including school taxes. Athens-Clarke County ranks lowest in combined taxes for a \$175,000 home in 2016. The graph below considers only city and county taxes, no school taxes. When only these taxes are considered, Athens-Clarke County is again the lowest in actual taxes for 2016.

