



**UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY
GEORGIA**

**GREENSPACE ACQUISITION PROGRAM
POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

SPONSORING AGENCIES

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY LEISURE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR
ATHENS LAND TRUST**

**Approved by Mayor and Commission
April 4, 2006**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Program Outline	1- 5
Site Nomination Form	6-7
Individual Site Evaluation Form	8-9
Site Evaluation Summary Sheet	10-11
Parcel Update Sheet Examples	12-13

Athens-Clarke County Greenspace Acquisition Program

I. Purpose:

The citizens of Athens-Clarke County recognize the importance of preserving and protecting the natural environment, which is an irreplaceable resource for the desired quality of life for present and future generations of the community. To meet this need, the citizens of Athens-Clarke County have requested funding from the local governing body which has agreed to implement the “Greenspace Acquisition Program”.

II. Definition

“Greenspace” for this program is defined as follows: “Permanently protected land and water, or interest therein, including agricultural and forestry land, that is in its undeveloped, natural state or that has been developed only to the extent consistent with, or is restored to be consistent with, one or more listed goals for natural resource protection or informal recreation.”

III. Background:

Currently there are two land acquisition programs active within ACC Unified Government Departments – The Georgia Greenspace Initiative and the Athens-Clarke County Greenway Network Plan. The Policies and Procedures for the Greenspace Acquisition Program have combined these two plans. The Greenspace program, as outlined herein, will serve as the governing program. Greenspace is more than property along the rivers (Greenways), it encompasses all types of land in Athens-Clarke County.

“Greenway” properties and facilities are a significant component of the Athens-Clarke County Greenspace Program. The primary distinction between properties designated as Greenspace and those designated as Greenways are: (1) other than those lands dedicated to wildlife habitat, greenway facilities typically possess an informal recreation and education quality and/or programmed facilities (e.g. paved trails, parking areas, interpretive exhibits); and (2) greenway properties generally rely on connectivity to other properties or designations to establish some or all of their value, greenspace properties may stand alone.

The Greenspace Acquisition Program is a critical component in ACC’s ongoing efforts to develop a comprehensive, county-wide “green” infrastructure. The vision and goals of this program also integrate with and enhance elements of all Athens-Clarke County’s Planning Documents including but not limited to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Future Land Use Plan, Leisure Services Master Plan, Transportation Corridor Master Plan, Corridor Management Program, Rails-to-Trails Program, and the Madison Athens Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS). MACORTS documents such as the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and Bicycle Master Plan are also included.

IV. Land Protection Goals:

The Greenspace Acquisition Program brings together the goals established for the Greenspace and Greenway programs. Properties considered for acquisition will be evaluated and considered based on the following goals (not in priority order):

1. Connection of existing or planned areas contributing to the following stated goals:
2. Flood protection;
3. Protection of cultural sites, heritage corridors, and archeological and historic resources;
4. Protection of prime agricultural and forestry lands;
5. Protection of riparian buffers and other areas that serve as natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species;
6. Provide opportunities for both self-directed and interpretative programs leading to a greater understanding of the natural environment, cultural heritage, and preservation/conservation efforts;
7. Provision of recreation in the form of boating, hiking, camping, fishing, running, jogging, biking, walking or similar outdoor activities; and
8. Reduction of erosion through protection of steep slopes, areas with erodible soils, and stream banks;
9. Scenic protection;
10. Water quality protection for rivers, streams, and lakes;
11. Wetlands protection.

V. Acquisition Priority Standards

Land Protection Goals are used to determine if property should first, be acquired and second, determine what Level within the Acquisition Priority Standards the parcel is placed. Levels will be determined based on the following criteria:

Level 1:

A. Stand alone consideration: Acquisition is critical to meeting the goals of a large segment of the program and/or is strategically located for program continuity with respect to adjacent program parcels.

B. Meets 6 or more Land Protection Goals.

Level 2:

Meets 3 – 5 Land Protection Goals.

Level 3:

Meets 2 or fewer Land Protection Goals.

VI. Evaluation Criteria Categories

The user group (see Section VIII for member listing) will use the following characteristics to evaluate each parcel within a level to determine its relative importance for acquisition. The characteristics are in no priority order:

A. Conservation & Preservation	B. Transportation	C. Education & Recreation	D. Other Considerations
1. Biodiversity 2. Development Buffer 3. Extent of Existing Human Disturbance 4. Greenspace Connectivity 5. Habitat preservation / buffer 6. Pollution abatement 7. Protection of Endangered Species 8. Surface Water Quality Protection 9. Wetland Protection 10. Wildlife Travelway	1. Community Resource Connectivity 2. Population Center Connectivity 3. Trail Connectivity	1. Educational Opportunities/Resources 2. Historical, archaeological, and/or Cultural significance, Scenic & Aesthetic Value 3. Public access on site 4. Public Accessibility through the site 5. Recreational Opportunities/Resources 6. Scientific Interest 7. Traffic, noise, and/or crime reduction	1. Consistency with ACC Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2. Cost of maintaining property once acquired 3. Donation potential 4. Estimated cost of acquisition 5. Funding opportunities 6. Likelihood of loss to private development 7. Sale potential

VII. Parcel Identification/Nomination/Evaluation/Acquisition Process:

Parcels for consideration follow the process as outlined below:

1. Parcel Identification

Parcels for consideration may be identified from either:

- a. An approved Athens-Clarke County Plan such as the Greenway Network Plan, Community Greenspace Plan, Athens-Clarke County Land Use Plan, Sandy Creek Greenway Buffer Project, MLK/GEMA Project, etc. The user group can automatically review parcels that meet the Greenway Acquisition Project criteria and are an ACC Commission approved project.
- b. ACC staff, user group, or advisory committee nominations
- c. Public input nominations

2. Nominations

Newly identified parcels will be nominated using the following procedure:

- a. Obtain a Nomination form from one of the publicized locations such as but not limited to ACC Departments, ACC Website, and support organizations.
- b. Complete the Greenspace Acquisition Program Site Nomination form and turn into the ACC Planning Department.
- c. ACC Planning staff reviews the form for completeness and appropriateness. Planning staff will determine preliminary Level placement to help review appropriateness. If Staff determines the parcel appropriate and the form complete, the nomination form will be forwarded to the ACC Manager’s office.
- d. The ACC Manager’s Office will review each nomination submitted from the Planning department, and upon the Manager’s authorization, forward the nomination form to the user group for formal evaluation and acquisition level placement.

3. Evaluation/Recommendation

- a. The user group evaluates and places the parcel into the proper acquisition priority level in the Parcel Acquisition list.

- b. The Parcel Aquisition List additions presented to the Greenspace Acquisition Project Advisory Committee (see Section IX for member listing) and the Manager's Office for feedback.
- c. User group submits additions to the acquisition parcel list to the Mayor and Commission for acquisition approval or in lieu of formal Mayor and Commission action; the Manager's Office will issue a Notice of Proposed Administrative Action notifying the Mayor and Commission of probable acquisition activities.

4. Acquisition Activities

- a. Land negotiations begin.
- b. Property is acquired.
- c. The acquisition parcel list is periodically updated using the process above.
- d. Opportunity Purchases:

The status of a specific parcel (identified on the authorized acquisition parcel list or not) may change, thus making immediate acquisition efforts essential. Examples of changes in status include development pressure, landowner's interest in donating all or part of the parcel, grant or other alternative funding opportunities, or the parcel's significance to other ACC initiatives. Opportunity purchases will be forwarded to the Manager's Office for Administrative Action.

Due to the sensitive nature of land acquisition, Athens-Clarke County reserves the right to conduct negotiations and necessary Mayor and Commission approvals under the Executive Session procedures as deemed appropriate by the Manager's Office.

VIII. User Group

User group members are responsible for maintaining/facilitating communication with and between representative members/staff. The user group shall consist of:

- ACC Planning Department (1 Member)
- ACC Leisure Services Department (1 Member)
- ACC Environmental Coordinator (1 Member)
- Athens Land Trust (1 Member – Primary) with
Oconee Rivers Land Trust (Alternate)
- Georgia Policy Institute (1 Member - Primary) with
Sandy Creek Nature Center, Inc. and
Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission (Alternates)

A simple majority of three voting members present shall constitute a quorum, which then can conduct the business of the group.

ACC SPLOST Program Management (non-voting member)

IX. Funding Sources

The current funding sources include allocated SPLOST 2005 Funds as previously approved by Mayor and Commission.

In addition, the program will actively seek alternative funding sources to expand opportunities to acquire additional properties. Additional funding sources may include but is not limited to:

1. Private Donations
2. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)
3. Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GaDNR)
4. United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
5. Georgia Land Conservation Loan Program (GEFA-LCLP)
6. National Parks Service Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
7. The Corps of Engineers
8. ACC General Fund

The goals and objectives of the Athens-Clarke County Greenspace Program meet the objectives of the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) administered by GaDNR

X. Public Information Outreach Plan

For the Program to obtain maximum exposure, the program will actively promote and seek opportunities to educate and inform the citizens.

Possible opportunities may include:

1. Athens-Clarke County dedicated cable channel 7 (ACC-TV) – run local advertisement with program description and contact information.
2. Local newspaper support – contact the Athens Banner-Herald to run feature story with program description and contact information with periodic follow up stories.
3. Athens-Clarke County official web site – list program description and contact information. Additional web page links to the SPLOST website for project updates and success stories.
4. Search for outside opportunities to outline program to sponsoring agencies and other interested parties.

For Staff Use Only

ACC Planning Staff shall initially review the application for completeness and appropriateness.

Land Protection Goals	Does parcel meet stated goal? (Yes/No/Possibly)	
Connection of existing or planned areas contributing to the following stated goals:		
Flood protection;		
Protection of cultural sites, heritage corridors, and archeological and historic resources;		
Protection of prime agricultural and forestry lands;		
Protection of riparian buffers and other areas that serve as natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species;		
Provide opportunities for both self-directed and interpretative programs leading to a greater understanding of the natural environment, cultural heritage, and preservation/conservation efforts;		
Provision of recreation in the form of boating, hiking, camping, fishing, running, jogging, biking, walking or similar outdoor activities;		
Reduction of erosion through protection of steep slopes, areas with erodible soils, and stream banks;		
Scenic protection;		
Water quality protection for rivers, streams, and lakes;		
Wetlands protection;		
Number of Goals achieved out of total goals stated		11

Level Placement Guide Preliminary Level Placement by Staff _____

Level 1A: Stand Alone Consideration:

Level 1B: Meets 6 or more goals

Level 2: Meets 3-5 goals

Level 3: Meets 2 of fewer goals

Reviewer's Comments: _____

Staff recommendation to forward parcel nomination to Manager's Office for Program Consideration.

Circle recommendation: Yes No

Reviewer's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Athens-Clarke County Manager's Consideration

After reviewing the parcel nomination form, this parcel should be considered a Nominee for the Greenspace Acquisition Program and forwarded to the User Group for full evaluation.

Manager's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Athens-Clarke County Greenspace Acquisition Program Site Evaluation Form

Owner: _____

Tax Map Number: _____

Site Description: _____

For User Group Member Use Only

Instructions: The reviewer shall grade each goal and consideration based on the accompanying definition with a High, Medium, Low grade (H/M/L). Scores are: High=1 point, Medium=0.5 points, Low=0 points to determine the total number of achieved goals and considerations for the property.

Group A: Conservation and Preservation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Biodiversity	Area is a highly productive area for flora or fauna (Ex: nesting grounds, large mast crops, etc.).		
Development Buffer	Ability of the site to provide buffer from development.		
Extent of Existing Human Disturbance	Range from a little or no disturbance to a great deal of disturbance.		
Greenspace Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to existing/potential Greenspace or Greenway buffer properties.		
Habitat Preservation/Buffer	Preserves or buffers habitat critical to piedmont flora and fauna.		
Likelihood of loss to private development.	How likely the property is to be developed in the next 5 years?		
Pollution Abatement	Ability to help reduce air, light, noise, etc. pollution.		
Protection of Endangered Species	Preserves habitat or buffers necessary to the survival of endangered species.		
Surface Water Quality Protection	Provides area for natural filtration, sheet flow during storm events and buffer for standing water.		
Wetland Protection	Provides buffer for wetland areas and large flood plain systems.		
Wildlife Travelway	Provides critical natural cover that is used as a wildlife travelway between supporting habitats or destinations.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			11

Group B: Transportation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Community Resource Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to community resources.		
Population Center Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to population centers.		
Trail Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to existing/potential trails.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			3

Group C: Education and Recreation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Educational Opportunities/Resources	Self-directed and Interpretative Program Potential		
Historical, archaeological, and/or Cultural significance	Range from significant resources to little or no resources.		
Public access on site	Public will have access to a significant portion of the property.		
Public access to the site	Level of public access to the property.		
Public accessibility through the site	The public will be able to pass through the property via a public access corridor.		
Recreational Opportunities/Resources	Self-directed and organized events and activities.		
Scenic & Esthetic Value	Ability of property to provide scenic or esthetic value to the community.		
Scientific Interest	Research Potential		
Traffic, noise, and/or crime reduction	Range of potential for community improvement.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			9

Group D: Other Considerations

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Consistency with ACC Comprehensive Land Use Plan	Degree of consistency with existing plan.		
Consistency with ACC Leisure Services Comprehensive Plan	Degree of consistency with existing plan.		
Cost of maintaining property once acquired.	Level of ongoing maintenance. Ranked from low maintenance to high maintenance needs.		
Donation potential	Willingness of the owner to donate or provide an easement.		
Estimated cost of acquisition	Range from low cost to high cost.		
Funding opportunities	Possibility of obtaining funding from sources other than ACC.		
Sale potential	Willingness of the owner to sell the property.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			7

Designated Acquisition Level _____ Number achieved out possible total / 30

Reviewer's Remarks: _____

Reviewer's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Athens-Clarke County Greenspace Acquisition Program Site Evaluation Form Summary Sheet

Owner: _____

Tax Map Number: _____

Site Description: _____

Instructions: The user group Chairperson shall record the average of the scores of the user group quorum to determine the number of stated goals and considerations that the nominated parcel meets.

Group A: Conservation and Preservation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Biodiversity	Area is a highly productive area for flora or fauna (Ex: nesting grounds, large mast crops, etc.).		
Development Buffer	Ability of the site to provide buffer from development.		
Extent of Existing Human Disturbance	Range from a little or no disturbance to a great deal of disturbance.		
Greenspace Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to existing/potential Greenspace or Greenway buffer properties.		
Habitat Preservation/Buffer	Preserves or buffers habitat critical to piedmont flora and fauna.		
Likelihood of loss to private development.	How likely the property is to be developed in the next 5 years?		
Pollution Abatement	Ability to help reduce air, light, noise, etc. pollution.		
Protection of Endangered Species	Preserves habitat or buffers necessary to the survival of endangered species.		
Surface Water Quality Protection	Provides area for natural filtration, sheet flow during storm events and buffer for standing water.		
Wetland Protection	Provides buffer for wetland areas and large flood plain systems.		
Wildlife Travelway	Provides critical natural cover that is used as a wildlife travelway between supporting habitats or destinations.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			11

Group B: Transportation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Community Resource Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to community resources.		
Population Center Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to population centers.		
Trail Connectivity	Connects or helps connect to existing/potential trails.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			3

Group C: Education and Recreation

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Educational Opportunities/Resources	Self-directed and Interpretative Program Potential		
Historical, archaeological, and/or Cultural significance	Range from significant resources to little or no resources.		
Public access on site	Public will have access to a significant portion of the property.		
Public access to the site	Level of public access to the property.		
Public accessibility through the site	The public will be able to pass through the property via a public access corridor.		
Recreational Opportunities/Resources	Self-directed and organized events and activities.		
Scenic & Esthetic Value	Ability of property to provide scenic or esthetic value to the community.		
Scientific Interest	Research Potential		
Traffic, noise, and/or crime reduction	Range of potential for community improvement.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			9

Group D: Other Considerations

GOALS & CONSIDERATIONS	DEFINITION	SCORE	H/ M/ L
Consistency with ACC Comprehensive Land Use Plan	Degree of consistency with existing plan.		
Consistency with ACC Leisure Services Comprehensive Plan	Degree of consistency with existing plan.		
Cost of maintaining property once acquired.	Level of ongoing maintenance. Ranked from low maintenance to high maintenance needs.		
Donation potential	Willingness of the owner to donate or provide an easement.		
Estimated cost of acquisition	Range from low cost to high cost.		
Funding opportunities	Possibility of obtaining funding from sources other than ACC.		
Sale potential	Willingness of the owner to sell the property.		
Number achieved out of subtotal			7

Designated Acquisition Level _____ Number achieved out possible total ___ / 30

Remarks: _____

Chairperson's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____



GREENSPACE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

APPROVED PARCEL ACQUISITION LIST

Revised: Enter Date

Parcel Information	Property Owner	Tax Map & Parcel Number	Number of Land Protection Goals Achieved	Number of Evaluation Criteria Category Goals Achieved	Remarks
LEVEL 1					
Group A					
Parcel 1					
Parcel 2					
Parcel 3					
Parcel 4					
Parcel 5					
Group B					
Parcel 1					
Parcel 2					
Parcel 3					
Parcel 4					
Parcel 5					
LEVEL 2					
Parcel 1					
Parcel 2					
Parcel 3					
Parcel 4					
Parcel 5					
LEVEL 3					
Parcel 1					
Parcel 2					
Parcel 3					
Parcel 4					
Parcel 5					

Fields will be populated and updated as parcels are nominated and evaluated.

