



May 15, 2018

Dear Ms. Benham & Board members of Athens Land Trust,

I am writing in strong support of the West Broad Rising Initiative & long-overdue renovation of the West Broad School campus. I urge the Clarke County School District to engage in this partnership with Athens Land Trust & the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County to move this proposal forward to fruition as proposed by Athens Land Trust.

The guaranteed continuation of the market & garden programs and the addition of a long list of many more community-oriented activities at the West Broad property will stimulate even greater pride & community growth in the neighborhood. This community served as the center of African American life in Athens for most of the past century, and the complete revival of the West Broad School to serve & celebrate this community will result in nothing short of a renaissance.

The rehabilitation of the historic property will enable this history to be told into perpetuity, while its proposed use at a community resource center will address a long list of repeatedly identified present needs including youth development, job training, entrepreneurial resources, and a wide range of social activities to enable a truly intergenerational community center that will transform this facility into the standard-bearer for creative placemaking in Athens and beyond. The location of such diverse activities in a singular facility will allow for crucial interaction & collaboration & greatly multiply the community-building effects of this project.

The West Broad Rising proposal represents the critical next step toward moving forward with multiple engagement, study, & planning processes that have taken place over the years. It would demonstrate to the greater Athens community that this community can follow through in implementing programs to meet the declared needs of our citizens. These studies will no longer gather dust on the shelf, but will be brought to life in a singular project of unprecedented collaboration, scope, & vision in our community.

I am particularly excited about this project and the facility it proposes for the Young Urban Builders program. As the elected representative for this area, I will attest that one of the most dire needs in this neighborhood is for affordable home repair assistance from skilled & trustworthy tradespeople. The YUF program meets that need while providing at-risk youth with invaluable job skills training, a creative outlet, community engagement opportunity, & a bit of income. Many of these YUF will undoubtedly become the community leaders of tomorrow to build the brighter future we all envision for our home, Athens.

The long-standing reputation of the Athens Land Trust as an organization of integrity, capacity, & success offers a guarantee of success while the three-way partnership that the project proposes will hopefully pave the way for further ACC & CCSD interaction to better serve youth & neighborhoods throughout Athens. Please open your minds, examine the criteria & capabilities, & embrace the future of West Broad Rising.

Sincerely,

Melissa Link

MELISSA LINK
DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONER
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