



# INNOVATION SHOWCASE

Mayor Kelly Girtz  
Athens-Cark County, GA

WINTER  
2025

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**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY  
GEORGIA: LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AND SCHOOL DISTRICT YOUTH  
SPORTS PARTNERSHIP**



# THE LAY OF THE LAND...

- **SINCE THE CITY AND COUNTY UNIFIED IN 1990, THERE HAS BEEN UNDER-DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH SPORTS ACTIVITIES, BOTH BY THE LOCAL GOV'T AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, WITH BOTH ENTITIES AT SOME POINT SUGGESTING TO THE OTHER "THIS IS YOUR JOB"**
- **MANY SPORTS WERE OFFERED IN SOME NEIGHBORHOODS OR SCHOOLS, BUT NOT OTHERS**
- **THIS IS ESPECIALLY VEXING, GIVEN A YOUTH POVERTY RATE OF OVER 30%**
- **IT ALSO MADE THE COMMUNITY LESS DESIRABLE THAN NEIGHBORING JURISDICTIONS THAT FEATURED MORE ROBUST PROGRAMMING**
- **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT'S HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTORS ALSO OBSERVED THAT WITHOUT CONSISTENT FEEDER PROGRAMS, STUDENTS ENTERED H.S. UNPREPARED FOR MANY SPORTS**

# THE PROPOSAL:

- **THE CLARKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND ATHENS-CLARKE CO. FORMED A 50/50 FUNDING PARTNERSHIP TO OFFER SPORTS AT EVERY ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT (17 SCHOOLS) IN '23-24**
- **THE FIRST YEAR FEATURED FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL, SOCCER, VOLLEYBALL AND CHEERLEADING, AND A STARTUP GRANT FOR SUPPLIES FROM UGA'S ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION**

| ACTIVITY                   | ATTENDANCE | ACTIVITY                       | ATTENDANCE            |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Basketball                 | 400        | Soccer                         | 400                   |
| Basketball<br>Cheerleading | 200        | Track                          | 60                    |
| Football                   | 400        | Volleyball                     | 40                    |
| Football<br>Cheerleading   | 250        | <b>TOTAL<br/>PARTICIPATION</b> | <b>1,750 students</b> |

# **MOVING FORWARD...**

- **IN '24-25 ACTIVITIES WERE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE CROSS COUNTRY, TRACK, SWIMMING AND WRESTLING**
- **GIVEN THAT WE ARE USING EXISTING FACILITIES, AND MOST COACHES ARE DISTRICT EMPLOYEES SERVING EXTRA DUTY, TOTAL COSTS ARE ONLY ABOUT \$220,000/YEAR - - SIGNIFICANTLY LESS THAN IF WE PROVIDED THESE PROGRAMS THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT**
- **WE USED ARPA FUNDS TO FORWARD-FUND CONTINUED PROGRAMMING THROUGH THE END OF 2026**

# THE BOTTOM LINE

- **THERE IS NOTHING SWEETER THAN A HIGH SCHOOL GYM FULL OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AND FAMILIES CELEBRATING A VICTORY**

