

The Classic Center Authority Board of Directors
Annual Board Retreat Notes
September 18-19, 2025

Board Members Present: Jennifer Zwirn, Tres Small, Jennifer Messer, Jack Crowley
Absent: Dexter Haynes
Staff: Paul Cramer, Philip Verrastro
General Public/ Media: None



CCA Authority Retreat Notes – 2025

- Vision Statement suggested EDIT:
 - o From: To be an acknowledged and recognized Southeastern United States leader in hospitality and entertainment known for providing remarkable experiences, impressive service, and unique workforce development to support a growing hospitality and entertainment district
 - o **To:** To be an acknowledged and recognized leader in hospitality and entertainment known for providing remarkable experiences, impressive service, and unique workforce development to support hospitality and entertainment
- Brand Statement suggested EDIT:
 - o From: The Classic Center provides unparalleled service and exceptional experiences that leave our guests feeling impressed all while bolstering the economic, entertainment, and cultural well-being of Athens through workforce development and artistic stewardship

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- **To:** The Classic Center provides unparalleled service and exceptional experiences that leave our guests feeling impressed while bolstering the economic, entertainment, and cultural well-being of Athens through artistic stewardship and workforce development
- Discussion of Board Members, Jennifer and Jack, rolling off in 2026. Consider possibly interested ACC citizens that might wish to apply
- Discussion on what the next significant project is, aside from the Arena District, for the Authority
- Future Fundraising opportunities for the CCCF and the CCA to consider supporting long-term capital
- Work with Paul and staff to further discuss an overall legislative agenda for the CCA for 2026
- Discussion about selling earplugs vs. giving them away. Perhaps giveaway cheap ones, and sell better ones at concessions(?)
- At Board suggestion, Philip to prospect and pursue leads to pass along to the sales team for exhibition tennis and/or Pickleball matches (former pro tennis players) for The Akins Ford Arena
- Board is excited to diversify from the amount of country music going to the Arena but understand the market trends
- Board recognizes the need to secure, obtain and save more funding for ongoing and future capital and wants to work to create more plans
- Arens District Vision (our version) EDIT:
 - From: Create a vibrant, mixed-use district that not only enhances and supports The Classic Center and Akins Ford Arena, but also draws in locals and visitors alike, including college students, families, and business travelers to maximize the district's economic impact for Athens-Clarke County
 - **To:** Create a vibrant, mixed-use district that enhances and supports The Classic Center and Akins Ford Arena, drawing in locals and visitors alike, including college students, families, and business travelers that connects downtown and ties to the river to maximize the district's economic impact for Athens-Clarke County
- Also, on page 1 of this "vision" document created in-house, as it mentions hotels- it should be edited to read a **minimum** of 300 additional hotel rooms, not restricting the need to 300.

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- TAD discussion- suggest we pursue to get the Core (student housing developer) properties in the DT area included in the TAD. For example, the soon-to-be redeveloped Graduate Hotel property should also be included in the TAD (if it is not).
- It is time now to focus on the next SPLOST and the direction we need to pursue
- TSPLOST- it is too late to impact the list for 2026 but as details come out, we need to understand what is in the “Downtown Connectivity Improvements” that has been recommended for inclusion. We should start to focus on the next TSPLOST, once we see the final 2026 list, and the big picture needs remaining we then later anticipate for downtown.
- Board supported ensuring STR is not overall compromised, but that we focus on keeping it viable and healthy via supporting neighborhood protections and improving the regulatory processes around it to keep it from chaos. Katherine and Paul to spearhead.
- Suggest working on a new Master Plan for the campus area that is above or beyond the “District” work that is also happening
- Athens Welcome Center discussions: Board generally supports requesting transparency (no accusations) of their financials and considering an approach based on capping their the HTMT allocation (not increasing as the main HTMT increases). To be further discussed.
- CEO Approved FY26 Goals:
 - 1) Lead, inspire and advance plans to add two (2) critical needs
 - a. 400-500 more parking spaces to the campus
 - b. 400-500 more hotel rooms to the east end of downtown/our campus area
 - 2) Meet or exceed established CCA/AFA budgets and achieve 10% retained earnings, while stretching to try to reach a 12% plateau
 - 3) Focus on capital planning and critical needs for the campus in both a short and a long-term approach:
 - a. Ballroom (and area) renovations, storage solutions, development plans for building C, digital signage, and Theatre operational needs
 - b. Strategize and prepare a plan for the next SPLOST, anticipated to begin in 2030
 - 4) Prioritize a legislative focus with local and state entities/stakeholders
 - a. Maintain Athens as a top destination market for planners/events within our competitive set

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- b. Improve air, rail, trail and highway access to Athens and our campus
 - c. Seek funding for key infrastructure needed to advance campus/area development
- 5) Advance the work of the Arena District Committee that will provide new revenue and increase the guest experience on our campus