

August 27, 2008

The National Trust for Historic Preservation  
785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-2117

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Director/CEO of the Athens Downtown Development Authority, and the Downtown Athens Business Association, it is with tremendous pride that I submit this letter in support of Athens, Georgia's nomination for the National Trust's Dozen Distinctive Designations. If you truly are looking for a dynamic downtown, cultural diversity, attractive architecture, and a gorgeous Southern town with roots three generations deep, we've got all of that and much, *much*, more in Athens, Georgia.

Our new promotional tag for Downtown Athens is, "It's all here." It truly is. Downtown Athens is the home to over 900 businesses-- an eclectic mix of gourmet dining, tattoo parlors, law offices, all night diners, book stores, fine jewelry, high-end fashion, and funky boutiques. I once heard Athens described as, "a Southern belle with a nose ring." Nowhere is that description more apt than in our bustling and beloved Downtown. The people watching on College Square is second to none. Blue mohawks casually mix with navy blue pinstripes and all feel welcome in our historic Downtown that also serves as our community's family room.

The Heart of the Classic City, Downtown Athens, pulses from morning through night with a successful mixture of over 70 specialty retailers, 60 popular eateries, and 50 taverns and nightspots that play gracious host to our world-famous music scene and entertainment district. True to our name, Athens nurtures an eclectic culture of art, music, commerce, technology, and higher learning.

Every spring magnolias bloom to the whirl of racing bicycles at the annual Twilight Criterium. This is a premier cycling event that attracts the best cyclists in the world! Cyclists, working in teams, pedal furiously for 60 laps around a 1-kilometer street track, setting up their top sprinters for a mad dash for the finish line on the last lap.

Each summer, AthFest showcases the Athens area music and artistic community. Over 60,000 attend the annual festival and rock out to hundreds of bands on the streets and in the clubs over five action-packed days. Local artists set up a market and kids play at KidsFest. AthFest is a true celebration of local creativity, one of the many factors that make Athens a great place to live and to visit year round. Catch a local show in one of our many Downtown venues. The Classic Center, the 40 Watt, the Georgia Theatre, and the Melting Point, just to name a few of the dozens of great places to enjoy world-class live entertainment.

How 'bout them Dawgs, you ask? For six Saturdays every autumn, Downtown Athens is the beating heart of Bulldawg Nation, when over 100,000 faithful fans descend upon our fair city to "Call the Dawgs." Our streets are awash in red and black as fans chant, "Glory Glory to Ol' Georgia," and enjoy UGA football, the finest football tradition in the SEC.

There doesn't have to be a special event to make Downtown Athens a special place to be. As you may know, Downtown Athens was one of the pioneers of the National Trust's widely successful, Main Street approach. Over thirty years later, the revitalization and preservation of Downtown Athens continues. We are proud of our rich cultural heritage and that pride shines throughout our National Historic Register and locally designated Downtown historic district. Graceful architecture hangs on the streets that line Downtown like cherished family portraits, reminding us where we've been and how far we've come.

Biased though I may be, I challenge you to find a more vibrant, dynamic, and interesting downtown anywhere! Looking for a Distinctive Destination? How could you *not* choose Athens, Georgia?

Proud Athenian,



Kathryn Lookofsky, MPA, CMSM,  
Director/CEO