

on the
table.®

Your voice matters.



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Athens2040.com

Athens 2040
PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

Your Voice Matters

In Athens we know big ideas can spring from small conversations and people invest in what they help create. When we come together as a community to listen to and learn from each other, we have the power to impact both neighborhoods and lives.

That's what Athens 2040 On the Table is all about.



Athens 2040

Athens 2040 is the Comprehensive Plan update process. A Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that details the City's long-term vision and goals, and outlines the steps necessary to achieve them. The plan provides a framework for addressing issues and opportunities pertaining to growth and development. This On The Table process will occur in conjunction with the Athens 2040 planning process and will help inform the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

About On The Table

Thank you for hosting a conversation as part of Athens 2040 On the Table. Between **April 26 – June 6, 2021**, you'll be part of an exciting, city-wide initiative to discuss what's great about our community and ways to make it even better. These conversations can be hosted virtually or in person.

Who?

On the Table invites residents and business owners in Athens to come together to talk, collaborate, become more involved, and be more committed to our community. You can gather around the table or virtually with friends, neighbors, colleagues, and maybe even a few people you are meeting for the first time to talk about the issues, big and small, that impact our lives in the City.

Where?

Conversations can be hosted anywhere. They can be hosted in person in homes, restaurants, places of worship, schools, libraries, offices, parks, and other community locations. Or they can be hosted online through Zoom, GoToMeeting, Facebook, etc. Anywhere you can gather in person or virtually and talk with a group of people.

Why?

When we talk about our experiences and listen to others, we connect and learn about what matters to all of us. The issues we face today aren't often solved with quick fixes. On the contrary, progress will result when residents, organizations, businesses, and government work together. This On the Table initiative is part of the larger Athens 2040 process that will update the City's Comprehensive Plan. It is an opportunity for you to have meaningful conversations on your own time in a smaller, more intimate setting with people you feel comfortable with. What happens next is up to you.



Let's Get Started

1. Register To Host

When you register to host, you join a community of people who are leading important conversations across Athens. It only takes a few minutes to register today at Athens2040.com

2. Plan Your Conversation

Consider whether you want a theme for your discussion; perhaps there is a particular topic related to Athens that you'd like to explore. These topics should correspond with Comprehensive Plan elements such as transportation, community character, growth/development, housing, economy, public services and open space. Review the suggested general conversation prompts on page 7 and topic conversation prompts on pages 8–9. Decide which questions, if any, you would like to use.

3. Invite Your Guests

The invite list is up to you. Here are a few pointers:

- Start with a few people you know—friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors—then expand your circle.
- Ask your guests to bring a friend or invite people from your network who don't already know each other. Introduce new voices to others.
- Consider expanding your reach by co-hosting your table with a local church or nonprofit.
- Six to twelve guests per table is ideal for everyone at the table to have a chance to speak and be heard. If you want to host a larger gathering, consider breaking into smaller groups and allowing time for each group to discuss and report back to everyone.

- You might want to use free online tools like Eventbrite or Facebook Events to manage your RSVPs, connect with your guests, and share information about your event and GoToMeeting, Zoom, Facebook or other services to host your meeting online.
- Consider asking your guests to think about this question before they attend: "What will we do to create a stronger community?"

4. Promote Your Conversation

Download the Athens2040 logos on Athens2040.com and use them on social media, text messages, or emails to your invited guests. Before, during, and after your conversation, you and your guests can share ideas, plans, and connections you make using the hashtag [#Athens2040](https://Athens2040.com).



The Table is Set. Now What?

Lets
Talk.

1. Prompt Conversation

To help get your conversation started, we've provided a list of sample conversation starters. These conversation prompts are intentionally left very open ended.

The purpose is to encourage your guests to think creatively and reflect on possibilities, rather than fixate on already-identified challenges.

2. Encourage Idea Sharing

Consider the conversation as a journey. Every guest's ideas and stories are important. On the Table conversations should provide an opportunity for all participants to reflect on what we value most, consider choices and tradeoffs, and explore new ideas.

3. Start to Plan Positive Steps Forward

The Athens 2040 Team will use what emerges from On the Table conversations to inspire collaboration and move the Athens 2040 process forward.

DO

- Ask guests to sign-in
- Encourage everyone to participate. You may want to ask guests to introduce themselves or consider beginning the conversation with time earmarked for an ice-breaker activity.
- Invite guests to follow-up and expand on ideas.
- Take tons of photos and videos and share them, along with stories, using the hashtag **#Athens2040** on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.
- Get in touch with Lakeisha Johnson at ljohnson@athensal.us if you have any questions.

DON'T

- Micromanage the conversation; let it flow freely.
- Be judgmental or dismissive of any person's comments or ideas.
- Promote arguments or unproductive debate.
- Make campaign speeches or promote political agendas.
- Be afraid to ask if you have questions.

General Conversation Starters

To help start your conversation, we've compiled a list of sample conversation prompts. There's no need to start with the first question or to take them in order.

1. What brought you to the table?
2. What would you say if you were bragging about this area? What do we do well? How can we use those things to strengthen our community?
3. What are your hopes for Athens now and in the long-term?
4. What are the top issues facing Athens? What are the best ways to work on these issues?
5. Let's choose an issue facing our community or neighborhood and discuss how the Comprehensive Plan could solve it. Remember that the Comprehensive Plan can address elements such as transportation, community character, growth/development, housing, economy, public services and open space.
6. Who, not at this table, is critical to making positive changes within Athens? How can we connect with them to create change?
7. How can we use these conversations to bring colleagues, friends, and neighbors together to lead change and create a more generous, vibrant, and engaged region? How can we participate in the Athens 2040 process to make the change happen? What should we do next?



Be Social

- Smile. Take photos or record video clips to chronicle the experience.
- Share your photos, videos, and stories before, throughout, and after your event using the hashtag **#Athens2040** on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.
- Follow the City of Athens Facebook Page [@AthensAlabama](https://www.facebook.com/AthensAlabama) for news and updates.

Topic Conversation Starters

If you want to have a conversation around specific topics, we've compiled a list of sample conversation prompts around some of the elements that are typically addressed in a Comprehensive Plan. There's no need to start with the first question or to take them in order.



TRANSPORTATION

1. How do you travel around Athens? Do you drive, use public transportation, walk, bike?
2. What are strengths and weaknesses of public transportation in Athens?
3. How could the transportation network be improved in Athens?
4. Discuss any issues with roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes and how they could be improved.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

1. What are defining features of the character of Athens?
2. What do you like about the character of Athens?
3. Are there improvements that could be made to the character of Athens?
4. How important is it that the Comprehensive Plan preserve the character of Athens?

GROWTH/DEVELOPMENT

1. Discuss what you think of growth in Athens.
2. What types of development would you like to see in Athens?
3. What areas should grow and what areas should be maintained?
4. Discuss good and bad examples of development in Athens.

HOUSING

1. What types of housing would you like to see in Athens?
2. What types of housing do you not want to see in Athens?
3. How important do you think it is to provide a mix of housing types?
4. Is Athens meeting the housing needs for everyone?

ECONOMY / EMPLOYMENT

1. What do you think of the economy in Athens?
2. What types of businesses would you like to see in Athens?
3. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of Athens economy.
4. Are there industries in Athens that you would like to see expanded?

EQUITY

1. What does equity mean to you?
2. Do you think that Athens is an equitable city?
3. Is equity an important concern to you?
4. What improvements could be made to make the City more equitable?

OPEN SPACE / NATURAL AREAS

1. Are open spaces/parks/natural areas important to you?
2. What are strengths and weaknesses of parks/open space in Athens?
3. Are there natural areas of Athens that should be preserved?
4. Are there areas in Athens that are lacking in parks/open space?



Wrapping Up

After Your Conversation

It's never been more important in our City for people to come together. Sharing – and listening – to our neighbors is an important first step toward creating a shared vision for the future of our City.

Send Your Guests the Survey Link

To ensure each participant receives the [survey link](#), be sure to have your guests complete the sign-in sheet with their name and email address. At the end of your conversation, take a picture of the sign-in sheet and upload on the project website at: Athens2040.com

Share What Happened

We'd like to know the outcomes of your discussion and showcase conversations during the Athens 2040 process. Share your success stories, challenges, and ideas with us:

- Post a comment on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) using **#Athens2040**
- Email Lakeisha Johnson at ljohnson@athensal.us
- Upload your meeting notes at: Athens2040.com

Note: All meeting notes will be made public via the Athens 2040 website, but we won't be publishing what any particular participant said.

Thank Your Guests

A day or two after your discussion is over, thank your guests for attending your conversation and send them the [survey link](#) and information for future input opportunities listed on the website.

Thank you for participating in On the Table. Your conversation is just the beginning.



Host Notes

Use this page to jot down a few ideas you want to share from your table.

What are the most important topics discussed at your table?

What are some of your group's big ideas?

Notes:



Snap a pic!

Upload at Athens2040.com
Share on social media [#Athens2040](https://Athens2040.com)

Follow the Athens 2040 Project at:

 @AthensAlabama

 #Athens2040

 #Athens2040

For more information:

Visit Athens2040.com



About Athens 2040

Athens 2040 is the City's Comprehensive Plan update process. You are invited to join the discussion about the City's goals for the future. We look forward to engaging with you in a meaningful and exciting conversation about the future. Stay tuned for more ways to participate!