



## Office of the Mayor

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### **Publix plans to open in eastern Athens**

Publix and other future retailers plan to locate at the southeast corner of U.S. 72 and Mooresville Road.

On Thursday, Dec. 19, the Athens City Council approved an economic development project related to the retail investment.

The City of Athens 2040 Comprehensive Plan notes the city experiences significant grocery store sales leakage to surrounding municipalities and such leakage is exacerbated in the eastern area. The project will allow Athens to create a new commercial hub within the city.

“This development and the recent announcement of Food City locating in western Athens will help fill gaps and address the loss of sales tax dollars to other cities,” Mayor Ronnie Marks said.

This will be the third Publix in Athens. Mayor Marks said a developer approached Athens about 18 months ago because Publix wanted to open another location in the eastern part of the city.

The Publix development will result in the creation of approximately 115 new jobs and generate annual sales of approximately \$22 million. Athens will pay in arrears the sales tax generated, minus certain costs, for 10 years or until it reimburses the company \$5.6 million – whichever comes first.

As part of the project, the City of Athens will seek Community Development Block Grant and Appalachian Regional Commission Grant funds through ADECA to help pay for right-of-way improvements on both Mooresville Road and U.S. 72. In addition, the development will include internal roadways that will be dedicated to Athens. The City will allocate \$1 million toward the internal roadways upon their completion.

Councilwoman Dana Henry said the improvements that will occur on U.S. 72, as a result of the project, are needed, and mentioned an accident that occurred in that area this morning.

Council President James Lucas agreed and added the project will benefit Athens through road improvements and keeping sales taxes in the city.