



Press Release: For Immediate Release

City of Athens Celebrates Historic Investment in Athens Armory

Athens, Ohio: October 16, 2023 — A downtown Athens revitalization project designed to foster small business and economic development growth was celebrated with a groundbreaking ceremony earlier today. The City of Athens, in partnership with JobsOhio, Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Southeast Economic Development (OhioSE), the Athens City Community Improvement Corporation, the Athens County Economic Development Council, and the City of Athens, announced the historic investment of nearly \$4,500,000 to redevelop the Athens Armory.

Built in 1915, the Athens Armory anchors the north end of Court Street in uptown Athens and was sold to the city in 1997. The historic building will be redeveloped into much-needed co-working and small office space, as well as event space and corporate offices for The Athens County Foundation. The investment is part of a larger plan to redevelop the Stimson Avenue corridor in Athens.

“Breaking ground on the Athens Armory revitalization project is another critical step in our vision to attract more investment to southeast Ohio,” said Governor Mike DeWine. “This new space will help to shape the future of the Athens area and the surrounding Appalachian region, bringing new opportunities for small businesses and providing jobs for hardworking Ohioans.”

The 15,000-square-foot building will be fully renovated. BlueDot, a co-working space, will occupy at least 11,300 square feet of the new facility.

The project received funding support from the Appalachian Community Grant Program (\$2 million), the City of Athens’ ARPA fund (\$500,000), the City of Athens’ General Revenue Fund (\$400,000), and the Ohio Capital Bill (\$600,000).

“The revitalization of the Athens Armory will bring a new, modernized space for the local community to gather and work, sparking future economic development in the community,” said Lt. Governor Jon Husted. “This project brings additional capacity for investment in the heart of Athens that can attract entrepreneurs and create a more dynamic Uptown.”

The project was also supported by a JobsOhio Vibrant Community grant of \$976,815. The JobsOhio Vibrant Community Program offers competitive grants for development projects that help transform areas within a distressed community. Eligible projects include mixed-use projects, real estate development projects, and operated shared spaces, that meet the JobsOhio project criteria.

“The rehabilitation of the Athens Armory is a catalytic project for the community and a result of collaborative partnership within the region and across the state,” said J.P. Nauseef, JobsOhio president and CEO. “As the anchor of the Stimson Avenue Corridor Revitalization project, the Armory will create a vibrant space through its community offerings and provide a place for small businesses to call home.”

The rehabilitation of the Armory will be a catalytic project for the community, creating a co-working space that aligns with the Athens Remote Worker Strategy, providing much-needed community event space for private and public use, offering wrap-around services for community nonprofits and entrepreneurs, and creating local jobs.

“After 12 years of dreaming, planning, and pulling together various sources of funding, I’m thrilled to finally see this iconic building finally come back to economic and civic life,” said Athens Mayor Steve Patterson. “I very much appreciate all of the state, regional, and local partnerships that came together to see this vision come to fruition.”

The building’s first floor will house the co-working space, which includes private offices and desks as well as flex spaces. A strong revenue driver for the building, the second floor will be an event space for musical performances, conferences, workshops, weddings, and other public and private events. The Athens County Foundation will be housed on the third floor.

“The ACEDC is excited to see the City’s vision for the Armory come to life in a way that supports other key economic development initiatives including remote work efforts, entrepreneurial support, and downtown revitalization – all while meeting the demand for more community and event space,” said Mollie Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Athens County Economic Development Council.

The City of Athens participated in OhioSE’s Prepared Communities Program in 2022. Through engaging local communities, listening to their challenges, and providing resources and economic development tools, the program, facilitated by Bricker Graydon, aims to equip each community with a strategic action set that addresses those unique needs. Leaders in Athens saw the opportunity as a path forward as the region began to recover from the pandemic.

“The revitalization of the Athens Armory will be transformational in the support of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the Athens area by providing flexible workspace to work remotely and grow,” said Katy Farber, vice president of OhioSE. “This project aligns well with the work the City of Athens did in the Prepared Communities program supported by OhioSE and is strong evidence that planning and preparation can lead to catalytic change in a community.”

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The Athens County Economic Development Council (ACEDC) is committed to increasing economic opportunity in Athens County by encouraging entrepreneurship, recruiting new businesses, and helping existing businesses grow and expand. The ACEDC manages the day-to-day operations of Athens County Port Authority’s programming and initiatives. www.athenscountyohedc.com

Ohio Southeast Economic Development (OhioSE) is the JobsOhio Network Partner for southern, eastern, and southeastern Ohio, providing economic development work and resources in 25 rural counties; they are the newest and geographically the largest of the six regions across the state. OhioSE partners closely with regional development districts, local economic development offices, state

agencies, and other entities to expand, retain, and attract businesses in the counties they serve. Learn more at OhioSE.com.

JobsOhio is a private nonprofit economic development corporation designed to drive job creation and new capital investment in Ohio through business attraction, retention and expansion. The organization also works to seed talent production in its targeted industries and to attract talent to Ohio through [Find Your Ohio](#). JobsOhio works with six regional partners across Ohio: [Dayton Development Coalition](#), [Ohio Southeast Economic Development](#), [One Columbus](#), [REDI Cincinnati](#), [Regional Growth Partnership](#) and [Team NEO](#). Learn more at www.jobsohio.com. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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