

HEATHER BENHAM

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Athens Land Trust, 2013 – 2024

Finance & Budget Management * Fundraising & Donor Relations * Board & Leadership Development * Program Development * Advocacy * Community Relations

CORE COMPETENCIES

- **Executive Leadership:** Recruit and lead a diverse staff of 25 to successfully meet organizational goals by executing innovative community development strategies.
- **Policy Advocate:** Successfully collaborated with bipartisan state representatives to implement a low-income homeowner property tax assessment freeze, securing an 80% voter approval. Work with federal, state, and local elected officials to tailor programming to meet the needs of those most likely to be excluded.
- **Organizational Growth:** Guided organization from a staff of 3 to 25, while raising the annual operating budget from \$100,000 to \$3.5 million and the annual capital projects budget from \$100,000 to \$2 million.
- **Program design:** Led the creation of a neighborhood advisory board structure, gaining recognition and a visit from the Secretary of Energy for innovative energy-efficiency initiatives and attracting funding from both private foundations and government grants.
- **Fundraising Expertise:** Secured over \$5 million in American Rescue Plan funds, \$7 million in locally designated capital funds, and administers 15-20 federal grants annually. Increased donor giving by ten-fold. Private foundation funding relationships with Kresge, the Kendeda Fund, Mary Reynolds Babcock, Ray Anderson Foundation, etc.
- **Program Innovation:** Pioneered paid training programs for young adults in construction and agriculture, addressing community needs and creating tangible impact.
- **Portfolio Growth & Stability:** Expanded the affordable housing portfolio from 1 single-family home to 65 single-family homes and 106 affordable rental units, with 46 units in the pipeline. No home in the portfolio has ever gone through foreclosure.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Established partnerships with organizations like local housing authority for title clearing activities and worked with local banks to create innovative lending solutions. Work in collaboration with diverse board structure to amplify resident-articulated needs so that policies and plans are structured to address those needs.

EDUCATION

University of Georgia

- School of Law, Juris Doctorate, May 2003
- College of Environment & Design, Masters in Historic Preservation, May 2003
- Thesis topic: *An Examination of the History of Affordable Housing through the Community Land Trust*

Hendrix College

- Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in English, May 1999

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

- State Bar of Georgia, 2004 – Current
- Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), Team member, 2016 - Current
- Inclusionary Zoning Working Group, Mayor appointee, 2021-2022
- Alps Road Elementary Local School Governance Team member, 2017 – 2021
- FreshLo – Kresge Cohort Gathering, Planning Committee, 2020
- West Broad Community Initiative, 2014 – 2018
- Steering Committee – OneAthens, Mayor appointee, 2006 – 2015

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

International

- Community Agriculture, Center for CLT Innovation, March 2023
- Beyond Housing, Center for Community Land Trust Innovation, December 2021

National

- Lincoln Land Institute, November 2022
- The Regenerative Economy, Southface Institute, March 2021
- American Public Health Conference, Kresge Foundation, November 2019
- Land Trust Alliance, National Conference, October 2017
- Grounded Solutions, National Conference, September 2016
- National Community Land Trust, National Conference, October 2015
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture, National Conference, March 2013
- National Community Land Trust, National Conference, September 2012
- National Community Land Trust, National Conference, October 2011

State

- Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Annual Conference, 2023
- Memphis State of Housing, October 2022
- Georgia Law, Red Clay Conference, February 2016