



# Aiken Municipal Development Commission

P.O. Box 1177, Aiken SC, 29802

December 16, 2020

Mayor Rick N. Osbon and City Council  
City of Aiken, South Carolina  
214 Park Avenue SW  
Aiken, SC 29801

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council:

I am writing today about opportunities presented by the recent \$600 million settlement agreement between the State of South Carolina and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) regarding the removal of plutonium from the Savannah River Site (SRS). The Aiken Municipal Development Commission has prepared a series of recommendations, including numerous projects and funding. During the AMDC's Dec. 15, 2020 regular meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to approve and forward these priorities to City Council, and to recommend that Council consider adopting them.

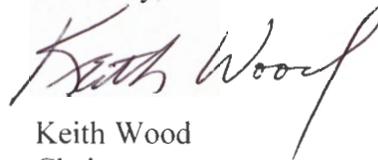
As the S.C. General Assembly and Gov. Henry McMaster embark on the state budget process, including allocation of the referenced settlement proceeds, we believe the \$95.4 million in priorities we've included, and described more fully in the attached summary, represent sound investments in the infrastructure, economic development and general resilience of Aiken County and the City of Aiken. Additionally, many of the projects outlined in our request already have a 50% allocation from other funding sources which highlights a significant return on investment for our region. To be clear, the AMDC is only seeking to receive a small portion of the overall funding requested to support the mission's City Council has assigned us. The lion's share would be allocated to support the full funding of priorities that have been jointly developed by the City, Aiken County, the University of South Carolina Aiken and other stakeholders. The priorities we have distilled in our recommendation are based on discussions with City and County leaders and are bolstered by the recently released Economic Development Master Plan developed for the City by a team from the industry-leading firm of AECOM. The data included in the draft AECOM document strongly indicate the actions we recommend will make a materially positive difference for this community.

The settlement is a result of the failure of the U.S. government to fulfill its obligations to our communities in return for a good faith effort to accept plutonium from across the country. As the AMDC has stated in prior correspondence directed to local and state leaders, our body strongly believes the three counties that bear the burden of the decision to delay removal of the plutonium from SRS should receive all the monies less legal fees (approximately \$525 million) from the settlement. There is no debate that due to 70 years of SRS operations, Aiken County and the City of Aiken share the greatest impact and risk in South Carolina. Aiken County serves as the home of virtually all the 35 million

gallons of high-level radioactive waste which is a result of the production of nuclear materials such as plutonium. The liquid waste is stored in large carbon steel tanks and serves as the State of South Carolina's #1 environmental risk and will impact our community for decades. Approximately 50% of the SRS workforce resides in Aiken County and 25% in the City of Aiken leading to significant infrastructure, education and environmental needs for Aiken.

Since the funding process is not well defined, our timely request is designed to make great strides in addressing those all-important needs as the debate in the S.C. General Assembly begins in earnest in January 2021. This issue is extremely important for Aiken and could positively impact our community for decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Wood". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Keith Wood  
Chairman

cc: Governor Henry McMaster  
Aiken County Legislative Delegation  
Aiken County Council

# Aiken Municipal Development Commission (AMDC) Key Initiatives to be funded by Pu Settlement Funds

## I. Four strategic and interrelated steps to ignite an innovation ecosystem in Aiken

Aiken's ability to conceive, research, develop and commercialize new technologies and business models is based on an interconnected innovation system including the U.S. Department of Energy, the Savannah River National Laboratory, USC Aiken, the U.S. Army Cyber Command and other regional and local businesses. This leads to a business culture that encourages risk-taking and creates an environment that supports entrepreneurial activity. The economic benefits generated by this system will be substantial for Aiken and for our region.

1. **The U.S. Department of Energy Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative:** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is building the Advance Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC) facility at USC Aiken to provide a modern, accessible research and development environment to integrate and exploit the unique attributes of the national laboratories, commercial entities and educational institutions, to stimulate innovative thinking and to adapt innovative technologies to accomplish DOE missions. Advanced chemistry, alternative reality (simulation/applied gaming), cyber security and additive manufacturing are programmed for the facility. \$50M has been appropriated by the federal government. For an additional investment of **\$10M**, the programming could be expanded to include green manufacturing and bio-manufacturing.
2. **South Carolina National Guard Cyber Security DreamPort:** Like the AMC, the South Carolina National Guard Cyber Security DreamPort is designed to leverage the cyber expertise of the South Carolina National Guard through knowledge transfer to business, industry, local government and educational entities. It is also a "job creation" stimulant. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, information security jobs will increase to 38 percent from 2018 to 2028. This is the South Carolina National Guard's #1 request. Currently, \$15M has been appropriated by the federal government. An additional **\$15M** is needed.
3. **The Aiken Innovation and Impact District:** The AECOM study released in December discussed catalytic investments to establish an innovative district near USC Aiken. This would be an opportunity to foster the clustering of businesses related to advanced manufacturing, software/information technology and take advantage of synergies in the region. The district would be mixed use in nature, providing access to retail, dining, housing and other amenities, in support of new research and production facilities operated by the private sector/universities.

The Aiken Innovation and Impact District would include a partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, the South Carolina National Guard DreamPort, and USC Aiken. The growth and success of the original partners will create opportunities for new public and private partnerships over time. In a rich, collaborative environment, businesses, entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, students and residents alike would be inspired to connect more, engage more and create more. The vision would be to recharge Aiken's economy by attracting technology and innovation-based companies. **\$20M** is needed.

4. **Continuation of the widening of University Parkway:** The scope of this major road project was reduced by a third due to funding, leaving 0.35 miles of the road unimproved. Currently, a \$4.6M grant from the State Infrastructure Bank, \$3M from Aiken County, and \$3M from the City of Aiken will complete only two-thirds of the improvements needed to widen this major road. Completing the final third of the project would provide a major transportation artery and further connectivity for the U.S. Department of Energy Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, South Carolina

National Guard Cyber Security DreamPort and the Innovation and Impact District. An additional **\$5M** is needed.

RECAP:

Project	Approved	Needed
Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative	\$50M	\$10M
National Guard Cyber Security DreamPort	\$15M	\$15M
Innovation and Impact District		\$20M
University Parkway	\$10.6M	\$5M
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$75.6M</b>	<b>\$50M</b>

## II. City Infrastructure needs

### 1. Whiskey Road Corridor

Whiskey Road (from South Boundary Avenue to US 278) – a road labeled by Aiken County and Aiken City officials as the “busiest and most dangerous road in the area” is a critical link between the City of Aiken, the Town of New Ellenton, and ultimately the Savannah River Nuclear Site. Whiskey Road is a main artery heading into Aiken from the Southside that also serves as highly developed commercial area, and there are many levels of improvement needed. This Road carries between 15,000 - 20,000 cars daily. Unfortunately, the Road was never designed to accommodate this type of traffic.

The Whiskey Road Corridor Study completed in 2017 provides a future vision that improves safety, traffic congestion, access management, stormwater drainage and land use. The total cost of the project is \$46.4M. Currently \$9M from Aiken County and \$7M from the City of Aiken has been approved. **\$30.4M** is needed for completion.

Whiskey Road Corridor Improvements	Funded	Additional Requirement
	\$16M	<b>\$30.4M</b>

## III. Target potential areas for redevelopment/investment

The AMDC, and others should work to fund and coordinate the acquisition and assembly of land and/or derelict properties at sufficient scale to be repackaged as available sites for medium-density housing/mixed-use, mixed-income residential and marketed to the development community for either private sector projects or public-private partnerships where appropriate. These funds would also be available to provide incentives for projects that face a funding delta based on the increased cost of property in the central business district through public participation in the projects to include parking solutions, public utility infrastructure, green space uses such as trails, squares and pocket parks, etc. that can reduce the overall project costs while providing a public benefit. Areas of interest include downtown Aiken (Hotel Aiken project), Aiken’s Northside (former Sav-A-Lot site for grocery), East Aiken (East Richland Avenue) and strengthen connection along Route 1 to I-20. Identify potential sites along Route 1 for development. **15 million.**

**Funding RECAP:**

<u>Projects</u>	<u>Needed</u>
Ecosystem	\$50M
Whiskey Road Corridor	\$30.4M
Target potential areas for redevelopment	\$15M
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<b>Total Funding Needs</b>	<b>\$95.40M</b>