

**Friends of Agriculture, Inc**  
PO Box 1327  
Cedartown, GA 30125  
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Polk County Board of Commissioners  
216 Main Street  
Cedartown, GA 30125

Thank you for your response to our request for funding for architectural drawings for the proposed Agriculture Education Center. We would like to take this opportunity to respond.

Your main point revolves around *needs* versus *wants*. This Center fulfils a number of important **needs** in Polk County Georgia. The Business Plan presented to you on several occasions focuses strictly on the *needs* of our community such as economic development, health and nutrition, quality of life, education, large gathering/meeting space and emergency shelter location.

- a. **Economic Development:** We believe you agree that economic development is a **need**. The feasibly study from the University of Georgia clearly stated the economic impact on our county would be substantial. Even without the study, it is clear to those who attend events at other county agricultural centers ~ there is a substantial positive effect on their community. Speaking with commissioners and others leaders, their agricultural centers are 100% utilized by the community and outside organizations bringing substantial revenues into their accounts. We are losing money that could be coming to Polk County.
- b. **Health and Nutrition:** Central Polk County, where the center will be built, is considered as a food dessert by the USDA. As stated in the business plan and supported by local farmers markets and health experts, the large commercial kitchen used to teach cooking and nutrition classes plus the cannery will help those who **need** these services the most. The planned community gardens and indoor farmers markets further enhance these **needs**.
- c. **Quality of Life:** Our rural areas have few activities or facilities to support quality of life issues. Those who live in the county may not have the means to get to recreational and sporting events available in Cedartown, Rockmart and Aragon. The centrally located Agriculture Education Center would meet these **needs** by providing programs designed to fulfill quality of life activities for both our young and older population.
- d. **Education:** Currently there are no programs or a facility to meet the **needs** of adults interested in continuing their education to keep up with the ever changing requirements in agriculture. Our citizens must travel to other counties to get **required** training in order to meet state and federal regulations. Most people still look at farmers as the old guy on a tractor, but today the top paying jobs in agriculture do not reflect this image. Our home-schooled children, among others, will have access to prepare for high-paying careers in agriculture in science, mathematics, engineering, pharmaceuticals, research, mechanical; safety, USDA inspectors, transportation and many more not being filled due to lack of qualified applicants. An educated workforce will bring much needed jobs to Polk County.

- e. **Meeting Space:** Our County is lacking a large indoor meeting and gathering space. Events such as trade shows, business conventions and meetings, job fairs, concerts, agricultural shows, etc. are **needs** that will be available to our citizens. Planned seating of 400 – 600 would greatly expand accessibility and provide funding. Other counties are benefiting from our lack of foresight as these profitable opportunities go elsewhere.
- f. **Emergency Services:** The **need** for an easily accessible emergency location during severe weather events has become critically evident. The proposed facility with its commercial kitchen, showers, dressing rooms, large open space, and smaller class rooms would meet these **needs** after such events and also provide a safe haven before and during dangerous conditions. The covered livestock area can also be used by emergency services as a central meeting and planning location.

In summary, the proposed Agriculture Education Center meets **needs** verses something that is wanted. It meets all requirements for county backing and funding. Generous donors have made available land in a centrally located area for the project. The well-developed business plan is available to guide the operation. We have a non-profit, tax exempt organization to help support and maintain the facility now and once completed. We are supported by the community as well as business, health officials, and professionals who are willing to apply for grants and seek private funding.

We ask you reconsider your decision and join us in getting this much **needed** project to our citizens. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.


  
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[www.FriendsofAg.org](http://www.FriendsofAg.org)

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