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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release:**

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### **Clayton County Chairman Jeffrey E. Turner Delivers Final State of the County Address**

*Over 400 at the Morrow Center for Turner's Sold-Out Address & Lunch*

CLAYTON COUNTY, GEORGIA – On Thursday, May 16, 2024, the Council for Quality Growth, in partnership with [Clayton County Government](#), [Clayton Chamber of Commerce](#), and the [ATL Airport Chamber](#) hosted Chairman Jeffrey E. Turner's 12<sup>th</sup> and final State of Clayton County Address. Over 400 Council and Chamber members, elected officials, businesses, residents, county staff, and partners of Clayton County gathered to hear updates from Turner as he prepares to leave the post and turn it over to new hands. The lunch was presented by [Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport](#) and [The Development Authority of Clayton County](#). The event was completely sold-out at the [Morrow Center](#) for the Chairman's outgoing address.

Chairman Turner made quite the entrance, being led to his stage by the Majestic Marching Cardinals, Jonesboro High School's nationally recognized marching band. In his State of the County address, Turner reflected on the state of Clayton when he first took office, the state of Clayton today as he prepares to leave office, and his vision for the state of Clayton in the future. He took office in January of 2013 and is wrapping up his 3rd term as Chairman of Clayton County's Board of Commissioners. Due to term limitations, Turner cannot run again. With a long career in law enforcement, he is vying for the Sheriff's seat next.

"Our county was hurting," Turner said of the time when he first took office. "I had a lot of sleepless nights." In 2013 and on the tail of the Great Recession, Clayton had high unemployment, foreclosures were rampant, and the county had little more than 1 month of reserves in the bank. The Local Option Sales Tax was about to expire and would've required higher property taxes from all residents as a result. Under the Chairman's tenure, it was not only renewed in 2012, but again for 10 more years in 2022.

Turner prioritized transit for Clayton County. In 2013, 74% of voters approved a penny tax to bring MARTA to Clayton. "Transit was a must for our county," he said. "The mothers of our children were pushing baby carriages with small children in tow along the side of Tara Boulevard." Turner says MARTA's extension of bus service to Clayton helped to turn things in the right direction for a few years. His next big challenge was the COVID pandemic.

Clayton County received \$33.2 million in ARPA funds in April of 2020. Chairman Turner said it "provided a lifeline for the community." His administration prioritized small business, vital nonprofits, and county services that allowed residents to retain their livelihoods. "Over 50,000 public school kids and their teachers were able to safely continue their work together. Thousands of families stayed in their homes."

Today, Chairman Turner boasts a 3.9% unemployment rate, a growing population of 300,000, median household income up to \$56,000, and a very healthy financial position with 4 months of reserves. He discussed SPLOST-funded projects from the last few years, including the northeast Police Precinct, the Riverdale Library, the Flint River Community Center, and more. He reported progress on road widening, public safety, and beautification projects around the county as well. Clayton County received a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission to support these projects. Turner credited the partnerships and collaborations for keeping the county moving in the right direction.

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Looking ahead, Chairman Turner said, “the landscape of our county is being transformed to reflect our growth and development.” The ARC’s projections say 348,000 will live in Clayton County by 2050. Turner recognizes the need to provide a range of housing and says the younger populations are driving the addition of more multifamily. “The need for housing to address everyone’s needs will soon be critical for our county,” he said. Turner says the county also has several single-family projects, mixed-use developments, and senior housing communities underway.

In addition, the new county administration building will be complete by the end of 2026, a project that is funded by the recently renewed SPLOST. Other projects supported by this tax are a new fire headquarters, a small business incubator, and enhancements to parks and trails. “When our citizens overwhelmingly renewed our SPLOST, they expected us to provide resources to enhance their quality of life,” Turner said. “And we are doing just that.”

Turner announced that Clayton will soon have a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) operated through MARTA. The planned 15-mile BRT line, [Rapid Southlake](#), will run from Hartsfield-Jackson down to Southlake Mall. MARTA is also building an Operations & Maintenance Facility in Forest Park, due to be operational by August 2029.

The outgoing Chairman is overseeing a culmination of projects stemming from the vision he set for Clayton County 12 years ago. “I am very proud of our State of the County and how I am leaving it for my successor,” he concluded. “It has been my honor to serve our great county for 3 terms as its Chairman, and I pray that God will continue to bless Clayton County.”



*[Clayton County Chairman Jeffrey E. Turner Delivers his 2024 State of the County Address at the Morrow Center]*

The Council for Quality Growth’s State of Clayton County annually convenes the county’s business community with its local government bodies, as well as with other local leaders from across the region. In addition, the Council works with Clayton County and its municipalities year-round to advocate for our members doing business in the area. “The Council is very proud of our ongoing partnership with the leadership in Clayton County to support quality growth and development,” said Michael Paris, President & CEO of the Council for Quality Growth. “We celebrate the vision and commitment Jeff Turner has shown over the last 12 years as

Chairman, and we will continue to support the efforts to keep Clayton a thriving place to live, work, and play.” The Council for Quality Growth has hosted all 12 of Chairman Turner’s State of Clayton addresses, and we look forward to working with the new administration next year.

The State of Clayton also featured remarks from Sally Riker, 2024 Chair of the Council for Quality Growth, and Sarah Skinner, Manager of the ARC’s Metro North Georgia Water Planning District. Jan Lennon, Deputy General Manager of Operations, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and Dr. C. Harrison Braddy, Chairman of the Development Authority of Clayton County, also address the room as presenting sponsors. The Chairman’s wife, Darlene, proudly introduced Turner for his final State of the County just before his drumline procession.

A photo gallery and the recording of the full event will be made available in the coming days at <https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org/news-press/>.



[From left: Sarah Skinner, Dr. C. Harrison Braddy, Sally Riker, Chairman Jeffrey Turner, Darlene Turner, Michael Paris ]

### **About the State of the County/Agency Series**

The Council for Quality Growth hosts 10 ‘State of’ events across the region, including 8 counties and 2 agencies. We work in close collaboration with the office of the County Chairs in Cherokee, Clayton, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, as well as with leadership at MARTA and the Atlanta BeltLine, to provide a platform for our counties and agency partners deliver an annual update on achievements, projects, and the



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future that is specifically geared toward the business community and the Council's membership. A full calendar of the Council's 2024 Signature Events, including the State of the County/Agency series, can be viewed and downloaded here: [2024 Programs Calendar](#)

### **About the Council for Quality Growth**

The Council for Quality Growth is a trade organization that works to ensure continued growth and economic success for generations to come by providing advocacy, information, and education to its members. In its 39<sup>th</sup> year, the Council is committed to the mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth and is proactively involved in the formulation of policy and legislation critical to the growth and development industry. The Council addresses, head-on, strategic economic planning, infrastructure needs, and tough quality-of-life issues throughout the metro Atlanta region and state. For more information, please visit <http://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org>.

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