



**Request for Information (RFI): Developers and Grocery
Operators Input**
Invest Atlanta

Contact: Lazerick Russell

Section 1: Overview

Invest Atlanta is requesting information from qualified developers and retail grocery operators to provide input that will assist in improving and increasing residents of the City of Atlanta’s (The “City”) access to healthy foods. Specifically, Invest Atlanta (IA) is seeking responses which will inform Invest Atlanta on the needs and priorities of operators in the grocery retail industry. The intent and purpose of this request is to use the information generated by this RFI, in conjunction with other information available to Invest Atlanta, to create and expand public resources that will enable a rapid increase in fresh food access in accordance with Mayor Dickens’s goal: 85% of Atlanta residents be located within a half mile of fresh, affordable food by 2025.

The RFI method is not a competitive solicitation method and, as a result, does not satisfy the requirement for competitive bidding. The RFI method is an information-gathering tool and information gathered may or may not be used by Invest Atlanta to develop a competitive solicitation. There is no requirement to respond to an RFI and failure to respond to an RFI will not prohibit participation in any competitive solicitation that may result from the RFI. However, it is strongly encouraged to respond to RFIs as this is a great way to ensure Invest Atlanta develops and targets appropriate resources to pair market needs with our public policy objectives.

Nothing in this RFI shall be construed to create any legal obligation on the part of Invest Atlanta or any respondents. Invest Atlanta reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to amend, suspend, terminate, or reissue this RFI in whole or in part, at any stage. In no event shall Invest Atlanta be liable to respondents for any cost or damages incurred in connection with the RFI process, including but not limited to, any and all costs of preparing a response to this RFI or any other costs incurred in reliance on this RFI. No respondent shall be entitled to repayment from Invest Atlanta for any costs, expenses or fees related to this RFI. All supporting documentation submitted in response to this RFI will become the property of Invest Atlanta.

Background of Fresh Food and Grocery Strategy

Invest Atlanta has prioritized increasing the pipeline of businesses within the City of Atlanta (COA) that desire to set up or expand their grocery offerings. Specifically, Invest Atlanta is targeting businesses that want to extend their offerings in areas typically characterized as a “USDA Low Income, Low Access Community” or highly disinvested communities with food accessibility challenges as shown in Appendix A. Communities adjoining to Low Income, Low Access and disinvested neighborhoods are considered priority communities in the Strategy. In 2015, just 52% of City residents lived within a half-mile of fresh food and by 2020 only 75% of residents across the city had access to affordable fresh food. Ultimately this research has led to the City’s overall development of a grocery and healthy foods strategy (the “Strategy”) for improving COA residents’ access to food. This strategy consists of four overarching strategies:

1. Attract Major Supermarket & Grocery Stores;
2. Expand, Retain & Improve Corner and Neighborhood Markets;
3. Support Innovative Food Access Models; and
4. Drive Policy, Systems, and Environment Change.

The overall goal of this Strategy is to increase the number of residents within a half-mile of fresh, affordable food to 85% by 2025.

Current Grocery and Healthy Foods Data

Invest Atlanta has identified 32 stores with less than 50 employees in Atlanta. Please reference Appendix A for background data regarding Atlanta’s disinvested neighborhoods and existing food access points. In addition, there are links provided below as site references for the data collected. Respondents shall use Appendix A along with the data sources linked below to understand the priority geographies for the program. Those geographies identified therein are those which Invest Atlanta is interested in soliciting input from respondents. Fresh food maps and data are based on our research. If you have feedback regarding data analysis and visualization, please provide input on this subject as an addendum to the RFI prompts in Section 5.

Reference Links:

1. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Food Access Research Atlas accessible [here](#).
2. AgLanta Interactive Map accessible [here](#).
3. Invest Atlanta Small Business Loan portfolio accessible [here](#).
4. Invest Atlanta Tax Allocation District tools accessible [here](#).
5. Mayor Dickens’ food access goal accessible [here](#).

Section 2: Schedule of Events

Due Date	Action Required
February 9, 2024	Release of RFI
February 23, 2024	Deadline for submitting Responses

Issuing Officer
 Lazerick Russell
 Email: lrussell@investatlanta.com

Section 3: Submittal instructions

Responses to this Request for Information must be submitted in electronic no later than

5:00 p.m., February 23, 2024, to the issuing officer at lrussell@investatlanta.com. Proposals received after the deadline time and date may not be considered.

By submitting a response to the RFI, the Respondent is acknowledging that the Respondent:

1. Has read the information and instructions, and
2. Agrees to comply with the information and instructions contained herein.

Listed below are key action items for successful response to this RFI. The Schedule of Events in Section 2 identifies the dates and time for these key action items. This Section of the RFI provides instructions regarding the process for reviewing the RFI, preparing a response to the RFI and submitting a response to the RFI.

A. RFI Released

The release of this RFI is formally communicated through the posting of this RFI on the Georgia Procurement Registry, which is accessible online as follows: <https://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/gpr/index>

The release of this RFI is formally communicated through the posting of this RFI on Invest Atlanta's Request for Proposal site which is accessible online as follows: <https://www.investatlanta.com/about-us/invest-atlanta-rfps>

B. RFI Review

The RFI consists of the following:

1. This document, entitled "Request For Information: Developers and Grocery Operators Input", and
2. Any and all documents provided by Invest Atlanta as attachments to the RFI or links contained within the RFI or its attached documents.

Please carefully review all information contained in the RFI, including all documents available as attachments or available through links. Any difficulty accessing the RFI or opening provided links or documents should be reported immediately to the Issuing Officer (See Section 2 for contact information).

C. Preparing a Response

When preparing a response, the supplier must consider the following instructions:

1. Ensure the response is accurate and readily understandable.
2. Clearly label attachments such that Invest Atlanta can easily organize and navigate the supplier's response.

D. Submit Electronic Copy

Supplier must provide the following:

- One electronic copy via email to the Issuing Officer (See Section 2).

Requirements for Electronic Copy

1. Use caution in creating electronic files (i.e., make sure files do not contain viruses, etc.).
2. Use commonly accepted software programs to create electronic files. Invest Atlanta has the capability

of viewing documents submitted in the following format: Microsoft Word or WordPad, Microsoft Excel, portable document format file (PDF), and plain text files with the file extension noted in parentheses (.txt).

Section 4: Invest Atlanta Incentive Toolkit

Invest Atlanta is seeking the help of developers and grocery operators to provide innovative and actionable ideas, information, and recommendations on how to increase Atlanta residents' access to healthy foods. Respondents should be prepared to provide all necessary information and/or documentation regarding their recommendations and input.

The Invest Atlanta economic development incentive toolkit is offered to assist in launching special projects off the ground. Incentives are typically evaluated upon the merits of each proposed project with high value placed on capital investment and good jobs created. Invest Atlanta may also consider the impact which a project is forecasted to yield regarding food accessibility within Atlanta's Low Income, Low Access Communities. Current tools include the following:

1. Economic Opportunity Fund
 - a. Structured as a cash grant this is the most flexible incentive with an average award amount of \$250K and awards historically ranging from \$50K to the upper six figures. Award amount is determined on a project-by-project basis and is influenced by proposed impacts on job creation and capital investment, with improvements in food access highly valued in the review process.
2. Tax Allocation District (TAD)
 - a. This incentive with variable award amounts is positioned primarily to fund infrastructure and capital components for commercial real estate development projects. The East Side, West Side, and Perry Bolton TADs can provide grants for hard costs and support for capital expenses for grocer-related projects while the Campbellton, Hollowell - MLK, Metropolitan, and Stadium TADs can support property tax incentives. To learn about Invest Atlanta's TAD programs more [here](#).
3. Lease Purchase Bonds
 - a. With a suggested minimum of \$10M on a 10-year term, Invest Atlanta holds the title to real and personal property while the taxable value of that property is reduced to 50% and increases 5% each year until the 10th year.
4. Middle Wage Job Fund
 - a. This tax incentive is gained by hiring people who are identified as disadvantaged or target residents as full-time employees on a salary between \$40,000 and \$80,000 with benefits for a role which does not require a four-year degree. The value of this tax incentive begins at \$1,000 per employee and can increase up to \$2,000 per employee. Disadvantaged and target employees include:
 - i. Veteran
 - ii. Disabled individual
 - iii. Homeless individual (someone who has experienced homelessness within 1 year)
 - iv. Unemployed (for over one year)
 - v. Earning less than the Atlanta living wage as determined by ARC
 - vi. Ex-offender
 - vii. Individual age 55+ that has been out of work for more than one year

- viii. Individual referred by WorkSource and/or other Partners
 - ix. A resident in a Disinvested Neighborhood as defined in One Atlanta Economic Mobility Strategy
 - x. High School Graduates with minimal or no college experience
5. Technical Assistance
 - a. Available at zero cost to businesses with a City of Atlanta business license, technical assistance providers are available for consultations on topics such as business planning, search engine optimization, and grocery store operations management.
 6. Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund
 - a. This low interest loan, with past awards ranging from \$50,000 to seven figures, is purpose built to fund remediation of contaminated brownfield properties. This loan may be used for traditionally non-scope hazardous materials such as asbestos. Non-profits qualify for grant-based funding opportunities under this program.
 7. Low Interest Loans
 - a. The Invest Atlanta Small Business team offers low interest loans designed to serve a variety of purposes for businesses in the City of Atlanta. Notable callouts include the Atlanta Recovery Loan Program and the Commercial Down Payment Assistance Program. Further information regarding these loan products can be found [here](#). Loan amounts range with a maximum of \$200,000.

The Strategy is described in Appendix A with maps referencing priority communities. Communities adjoining to Low Income, Low Access and disinvested neighborhoods are considered priority communities in the Strategy. A description of Invest Atlanta’s incentive toolkit can be reviewed in Appendix B. Invest Atlanta’s grocery strategy is described in Appendix A.

The established economic development incentives described above and in Appendix B shall not be considered a fixed list for the purposes of supporting food retail investments. In addition to the above list of current tools, Invest Atlanta has conceptualized the following potential support measures and is interested in soliciting feedback on their suitability, value, and alternatives:

1. Purchasing and leasing land for development and operation by a commercial food retailer.
2. Purchasing, developing, and leasing land for operation by a commercial food retailer.
3. Distressed community fund to attract operators and support financial stabilization.

Section 5: Requested Information

Respondents should be able to show that they currently provide grocery-related services such as commercial food retail in urban communities or advise on economic development incentives for grocery retail attraction to at least one U.S. state government and/or several local governments. Respondents should also be prepared to show how such existing solutions meet the needs of Invest Atlanta and its goals for the Grocery and Healthy Foods Initiative. Below is a list the overarching objectives for the RFI:

Objectives:

1. Understand the priority areas for expansion and operation in the grocery industry in the Atlanta market.

2. Understand incentive opportunities to increase grocery business expansion interest in Atlanta's disinvested, Low Income, Low Access communities, priority commercial corridors, and priority neighborhoods including the following:
 - a. Commercial Corridors
 - i. Campbellton Road Southwest
 - ii. Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway
 - iii. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
 - b. Neighborhoods
 - i. Bowen Homes
 - ii. Downtown
 - iii. Grove Park
 - iv. Pittsburgh
 - v. Thomasville Heights
3. Understand commercial food retail investment decision making processes.
4. Identify the efficacy of incentives and support currently available in our toolkit, including proposed enhancements to these offerings.
5. Gather insights on additional incentives or support needed to catalyze specific projects in Low Income, Low Access Communities.

Invest Atlanta is requesting the following from each Respondent:

Please provide input on all following aspects for which you can provide information:

1. Priority Areas:

- a. What do you see as the priority areas for expansion and development in the grocery industry?
- b. What specific technologies, services, or infrastructure improvements do you believe should be prioritized in Invest Atlanta's economic development toolkit?

2. Existing Toolkit:

- c. Please review the toolkit of incentives which we currently offer (Appendix B).
- d. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low and 10 being high), indicate the ability of the toolkit to facilitate food retail investment in Low Income, Low Access Communities in Atlanta.
- e. Provide your feedback on the effectiveness of these incentives to the needs which you typically encounter in business expansion and propose changes to these incentives to make them more effective.
- f. What other incentives have you, or would you like to utilize, around food retail investments in Low Income, Low Access Communities?

3. Additional Needs:

- g. What additional incentives or support would be instrumental in getting your specific projects off the ground?
- h. In your experience, what gaps exist in the current toolkit which you would like to see addressed to lower business expansion barriers within the City of Atlanta?
- i. Page 7. Identified potential new grocery business attraction incentives. Please provide your feedback based on these potential incentives.
- j. What else would you like to add regarding Invest Atlanta's business expansion incentives as they pertain to your grocery business experience?

Suggested Response Format

Responses to this RFI may be submitted in the preferred format of the respondent. Acceptable formats

include but are not limited to presentations, comparative evaluations, and short form free responses.

Section 6: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

At Invest Atlanta, economic prosperity and competitiveness in Atlanta start with equity—equitable access to opportunity and pathways to wealth creation. It is more than a goal; it is a guiding principle that drives us. We advance our work through this lens to ensure that all Atlantans are positioned to benefit from economic investments in our city, regardless of their zip code.

Invest Atlanta encourages all Respondents to promote opportunities for diverse businesses, including Minority Business Enterprises (“MBE”), Female Business Enterprises (“FBE”), and Small Business Enterprises (“SBE”) to compete for business as subcontractors and/or suppliers.

However, nothing herein should indicate that an MBE, FBE, or SBE may not apply and be selected independently, as MBEs, FBEs, and SBEs that meet the qualifications of this RFQC are encouraged to submit their qualifications for consideration. For an MBE, FBE, or SBE to participate on the contract, said MBE, FBE, or SBE must be certified as an MBE or FBE and be registered with the City's Office of Contract Compliance M/FBE Register. SBEs must be registered with the City and are defined as businesses not exceeding \$2.5 million in gross sales during the recent calendar or fiscal year.

Firms interested in obtaining applications for certification should contact these organizations:

- City of Atlanta – Office of Contract Compliance (MBE/FBE): Jason Ingram, Interim Director, 55 Trinity Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia 30303, Tel: 404.330.6010, Fax: 404.658.7359, email: bbell@atlantaga.gov
- Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) certification by the U.S. Small Business Administration provided they reflect certification because of minority or women-owned status.

Georgia Open Records Act

The laws of the State of Georgia, including the Georgia Open Records Act, as provided in O.C.G.A. §50-18-70, *et seq.*, require certain public records be made available for public inspection. Even though information (financial or other information) submitted by a Respondent may be marked as “confidential”, “proprietary”, etc., Invest Atlanta will make its own determination regarding what information may or may not be withheld from disclosure.