



DeKalb County Government

Manuel J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Agenda Item

File #: 2025-1528

Substitute

10/28/2025

File Status:

Public Hearing: YES ☐ NO ☒

Department: Board of Commissioners - District 6

SUBJECT:

Commission District(s): All Commission Districts

To Allocate an Amount Not to Exceed \$56,160 to Compassionate Atlanta to Coordinate a Living Sculpture on the Stone Mountain Trail and Coordinate Community Workshops and Programs, Ultimately Implementing a Compassionate Corridor from Clarkston to Scottdale

Information Contact: Commissioner Edward C. "Ted" Terry

Phone Number: 404-371-4909

PURPOSE:

To Allocate an Amount Not to Exceed \$56,160 to Compassionate Atlanta to Coordinate a Living Sculpture on the Stone Mountain Trail and Coordinate Community Workshops and Programs, Ultimately Implementing a Compassionate Corridor from Clarkston to Scottdale

NEED/IMPACT:

The Compassionate Corridor will link two art installations the Heart of Mother Earth, located in Clarkston, Georgia, and the Lungs of Mother Earth, proposed to be built in Scottdale. This funding will go towards the creation of the Lungs of Mother Earth to compliment the eight-foot-tall, 400 pound anatomical shaped heart sculpture that is the Heart of Mother Earth. Both sculptures will be along the Stone Mountain Trail connecting Scottdale to Clarkston through a Compassion Corridor that will spark curiosity, environmental awareness, encourage community involvement, and provide living art to DeKalb County. Additionally, this funding will go towards the supplies needed to build the art, payment to the artist for their time, incorporating a meadow around the sculpture, signage, community workshops to bring about awareness and environmental education, social media storytelling, and additional community art opportunities with Posts for Peace and Justice and No More Littering, incorporating recycled materials. This Compassion Corridor project is a visionary environmental art and community engagement initiative designed to connect the cities of Clarkston and Scottdale through creativity, compassion, and ecological stewardship, while highlighting community engagement and involvement. This project will begin in Fall 2025, upon approval of funding, and conclude in the Fall of 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact to the operating budget. \$40,500.00 for the artwork will be allocated from the following award:

New CV360 Project#: 200035

Task #: 01

New CV360 Award#: 700133 - \$300,000

Expenditure Type# 541200

Cost Center/Organ: 86101 CIP PARKS

Grant Period: 04/03/25 12/31/30



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The remaining \$15,660 will be paid by District 6 Reserve for Appropriations (00206.579002.100.0000.0000). This totaling \$56,160.

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve the resolution and authorize the chief executive officer or her designee to execute all necessary documents.



Compassion Corridor Proposal

Submitted to: Commissioner Ted Terry, DeKalb County Super District 6

Submitted by: Compassionate Atlanta, in partnership with artist Shannon Willow and community collaborators

Funding Request: \$56,160

Program Period: Fall 2025 to Fall 2026 (upon funding)

Date: Oct 15, 2025

Project Overview

The Compassion Corridor is a multi-year visionary environmental art and community engagement initiative designed to connect the cities of Clarkston and Scottdale through creativity, compassion, and ecological stewardship. Led by Compassionate Atlanta, in partnership with career artist and eco-activist Shannon Willow, the Compassion Corridor builds upon the success of the *Heart of Mother Earth* installation to expand community awareness, education, and environmental care across DeKalb County.

Anchored by two monumental art installations — the *Heart of Mother Earth* and the proposed *Lungs of Mother Earth* — the @2-mile corridor will serve as a living symbol of our interconnection with nature and one another. Each site will be supported by pollinator meadows, community art, and public education designed to inspire Earth stewardship, well-being, and a deeper sense of shared humanity.

Background and Inspiration

Through a national grant from the Mediators Foundation, artist Shannon Willow designed and created the *Heart of Mother Earth*, an eight-foot-tall, 400-pound anatomical-shaped heart sculpture now thriving at Trailside Green Pocket Park in Clarkston. Surrounded by a pollinator meadow, the installation has become a living classroom — sparking curiosity, reflection, and environmental awareness among passersby on the Stone Mountain Trail of the Path Metro Atlanta Bike Path.

The *Heart of Mother Earth* is maintained by lead artist and Master Naturalist, Shannon Willow, DeKalb Master Gardeners volunteers, and Green Box Homes, in partnership with the City of

Clarkston. The site remains pesticide and herbicide-free and continues to evolve as a community-centered Earth education space.

Building on this momentum, Compassionate Atlanta, in collaboration with Shannon Willow and Commissioner Ted Terry, together envision the creation of the *Lungs of Mother Earth* — a companion installation that expands the concept of living art and connects Clarkston to Scottdale along a “Compassion Corridor.”

Project Description: Lungs of Mother Earth

The *Lungs of Mother Earth* will mirror the heart’s anatomical and material design, using a combination of steel, wood, and living moss. This living sculpture will be installed at the corner of Church Street and Proctor Avenue in Scottdale, directly along the Path Foundation’s Stone Mountain Trail, further activating the corridor through beauty, human connection, education, and ecological impact.

A 3,500-square-foot pollinator meadow filled with native, drought-tolerant plants will surround the sculpture. Using a no-till method like the *Heart of Mother Earth* installation, the meadow will improve soil health, promote biodiversity, and reduce maintenance costs. The project will be launched with a major community engagement day which will be a Community Planting Day, inviting residents to “sow the seeds of connection, awareness, and healing” together — literally and symbolically breathing life into the corridor.

The goal for the unveiling event of the *Lungs of Mother Earth* will be targeted for on or around Earth Day 2026.

Environmental Partner:

The Lead Artist’s Environmental Partner will be Green Box Homes, founded by Tres Crow. They will be responsible for the maintenance of the meadow during the project term. They specialize in regenerative landscaping which restores soil, boosts biodiversity, sequesters carbon, and fosters climate resilience.

Maintenance Regimen for the Meadow by Environmental Partner:

Reasoning: The goal is to develop a vibrant and diverse meadow that is capable of self-seeding which will continue to grow on its own, unencumbered, ensuring the long-term health of the meadow.

- Once the meadow is sown and planted, 2 trained Green Box growers will visit the site weekly for 1 hour to perform common maintenance tasks for the first 6 months.
- After the first 6 months and visits will taper off to bi-weekly for the next 3 months, or until the meadow is ready to be cut and reseeded in the Fall.
- Growers from Green Box Home will disperse additional seeds monthly to create a full meadow.
- Additional seeds will be disbursed and spent seed heads from the existing plants will also be disbursed to speed up adoption and crowd out unwanted and non-native plants.
- General maintenance includes weeding, watering, and pruning.
- Green Box Homes is a well-established environmental business. They are well equipped with appropriate machinery for the scale of this project, and their fee includes the use of their equipment.
- Green Box Homes will purchase all plant, soil and seed materials needed for the meadow and their estimate of \$2,000 plus \$2,500 for project maintenance fee.

Supporting Art Installations

Two additional community-created art pieces will further animate the corridor and amplify its message of compassion and environmental health:

Peace Post Creation and Installation:

Created in collaboration with *Posts for Peace and Justice*, designed with local community input to promote peace, justice, and connection.

The *Compassion Corridor Peace Post* is a community art installation designed to bring DeKalb residents together to explore the value and priority of peace within the county. Through an interactive, facilitated community conversation and art creation session held in **Spring 2026**, after the installation of *Lungs of Mother Earth*, participants will co-create words and imagery that express their collective vision of peace, compassion, and environmental care. These community-generated messages will be permanently incorporated into the Peace Post, ensuring that residents become true co-creators and stakeholders in this lasting public expression of unity and civic pride. The final installation—scheduled for **Summer 2026**—will reflect the voices of the community and highlight shared commitments to sustainability and Earth stewardship.

The location of the Peace Post will be determined collaboratively with county staff, residents, and the artist, and will comply with all zoning and ownership requirements. This project provides residents the opportunity to be part of both the discussion and the solution, modeling authentic civic engagement that helps neighborhoods thrive.

Budget: \$3,000 - inclusive of materials, facilitated community conversation, art creation, and installation costs.

No More Littering Art Creation and Installation:

Led by artist Heather Elson, created from recycled plastic lids collected by Metro Atlanta volunteers. This art piece will engage residents in creative environmental action and highlight the Social Determinants of Health.

This art piece will transform recycled plastic lids collected by Metro Atlanta volunteers into a vibrant public art piece along the Compassion Corridor. Through team building, community-based conversations and art facilitation offered in **Spring 2026**, participants of all ages will learn about reducing single-use plastics, creative reuse, and the connection between environmental health and the **Social Determinants of Health**. This collaborative process empowers residents to take tangible action toward sustainability while beautifying shared public spaces and strengthening neighborhood bonds.

The installation, scheduled for **Summer 2026**, will be placed at a location determined in partnership with the planning team and county staff. This fully funded project providing an accessible and engaging opportunity for community members to experience environmental education, civic participation, and creative stewardship in one shared effort.

Budget: \$1,500 — inclusive of materials, facilitated community conversation, art creation, and installation costs.

In future years, subject to additional funding, we envision more art installations to increase community engagement.

Timeline

Creating unique art can be a fluid process and estimated creation time can vary. All participants will make every effort to adhere to this generalized timeline. Specific dates are to be determined and will be determined based on the successful completion of the art project. If there is a need for deviation from this timeline, it will be with the consensus of all parties with the intent to still meet all deliverables.

- **Project Timeline:** Fall 2025 to Fall 2026.
- **Start date:** Fall 2025 (upon funding)
- **Lungs of Mother Earth Art Installation:** On or around April 22, 2026, Earth Day.
(Estimate is 5 months to create. Based on The Heart of Mother Earth, 60 to 70 hours a week)
- **Education Sessions:** Facilitated seasonally by Shannon Willow.
 1. **Community Planting Day** – Spring 2026.
 2. **Spring into Action** – Spring 2026.
 3. **Get in Rhythm** – Fall 2026
- **Peace Post facilitated gathering:** Spring 2026.
- **Peace Post art installation:** Fall 2026.
- **No More Liddering facilitated gathering:** Summer 2026
- **No More Liddering art installation:** Fall 2026

Community Engagement and Education

Compassionate Atlanta will coordinate all artists, community partners, and communications to ensure a cohesive, inclusive experience. These activities will include educational sessions, community conversations, art creation and installation of two additional community created art pieces along the corridor.

1. **Earth Education Sessions at The Heart and Lungs of Mother Earth led by Shannon Willow:**
 1. **Community Planting Day:** Preparing and planting the meadow together including how to install one's own pocket wildflower garden.
 2. **Spring into Action:** Learning actionable steps for native planting and pollinator health.

3. **Get in Rhythm:** A drumming experience exploring harmony with Earth's natural rhythms, featuring Shannon Willow and Master Drummer, Amy Jackson.

The education sessions *led* by main artist **Shannon Willow**, are designed to advance the goals of the Compassion Corridor by educating DeKalb residents on Earth care, sustainability, and the connection between personal well-being and environmental stewardship. Sessions will be held at the *Heart of Mother Earth*, the *Lungs of Mother Earth*, and various points along the Compassion Corridor, as determined by the artist, allowing participants to engage directly with the living art installations. Sessions will begin in **Fall 2025** and continue through **Fall 2026**, with each session budgeted at **\$1,000** to cover facilitation, materials, and community engagement activities.

Volunteer and Maintenance Opportunities, also promoting environmental education — work with Shannon Willow and Green Box Homes to ensure ongoing stewardship and care for the spaces.

2. **Peace Post community conversation and facilitation** will connect residents across Clarkston, Scottdale and beyond to explore compassion, wellness, and sustainability. A cross-sector resident/BoC community conversation to design and create the Peace Post will entail a discussion of the issues of concern and their solutions as envisioned by Dekalb County residents and BoC staff. The fee of \$3,000 is project based and includes community conversation, materials, and installation of the art.
3. **No More Liddering community conversation and intergenerational art creation** will allow for families, children and adults to gather and create a one-of-a-kind piece to repurpose recycling materials and discuss how we can all make a difference with our consumer choices. The fee of \$1,500 is project based and includes community conversation, materials, and installation of the art.
4. **Compassionate Atlanta's Role:**
 - **Coordination:** Compassionate Atlanta will serve as the coordinating body for the Compassion Corridor, providing oversight and cohesion across all project components. Responsibilities include maintaining a master calendar, coordinating with artists and partners, communicating with county staff, managing accounting, and ensuring

program alignment and accountability. Coordination will take place both **in person at each site** and through **virtual planning meetings** from **Fall 2025 through Fall 2026**.

This ongoing management ensures that all installations, sessions, and community engagement activities are executed seamlessly. Compassionate Atlanta will remain actively involved from the project's approval through the completion of all art installations and educational programs.

Fee: \$5,000 — based on an estimated **3.5 hours per week at \$30/hour for 48 weeks**, covering comprehensive project management to ensure a cohesive, well-coordinated, and successful implementation of the Compassion Corridor.

- **Social Media and Storytelling:** Compassionate Atlanta will lead and coordinate all storytelling and social media efforts for the Compassion Corridor, ensuring that every stage of the project is documented, celebrated, and shared through an educational and inspiring lens. Beginning with the creation of the pollinator meadow, the campaign will engage volunteers, artists, and residents in visioning and co-creating the living, breathing Compassion Corridor, continuing through the completion of the *Lungs of Mother Earth* and beyond.

Storytelling will be led by Compassionate Atlanta to educate, share environmental tips, and highlight community reflections. The storytelling component will capture the voices, experiences, and insights of community members, artists, and partners as they co-create this transformative project. Through shared stories—both visual and spoken—the campaign will deepen public understanding of how compassion, environmental care, and social connection weave together to build thriving, resilient communities.

A robust social media campaign will feature **educational reels, public stories, and short videos** documenting the creation and growth of the Corridor—from the *Heart* to the *Lungs of Mother Earth*—while highlighting local artists, volunteers, and community partners. Regular posts and digital flyers will promote each event, planting days, and events, while also sharing **interactive opportunities** for residents to practice Earth stewardship at home, such as native planting, pollinator support, and waste reduction.

This ongoing campaign will be shared across **Compassionate Atlanta's 14,000+ followers** and **Commissioner Terry's platforms**, ensuring wide public visibility and

engagement. All collaborating artists and partners will also cross-post using joint hashtags such as **#DeKalbCompassionCorridor**, building a unified digital story that connects online inspiration to real-world environmental action.

Social media posts will be once weekly for the duration of this project. It will include updates, announcements, education, short stories, video reels, and invitations for volunteer engagement. The Commissioner's office will be tagged and all events will be shared with the commissioner's office for their newsletter. Compassionate Atlanta will coordinate with the artists to prepare and distribute the flyers.

Budget: \$3,500 and includes storytelling coordination, digital content creation, social media promotion, and online community engagement. This is a project-based fee.

- **Signage:** Compassionate Atlanta also be responsible for the installation of eight permanent educational signs along the corridor. These signs will invite visitors to reflect on what it takes to design a thriving, compassionate community — exploring simple, accessible ideas around the social determinants of health, such as access to green space, connection, safety, belonging, health access, economic mobility and environmental care. The signs are as follows:
 1. Description of Lungs of Mother Earth art piece – Artist's statement.
 2. Information about the garden and earth friendly care (do not spray or mow).
 3. Calls to environmental action.
 4. The relationship of compassion to the Heart of Mother Earth.
 5. The relationship of compassion to the Lungs of Mother Earth.
 6. Peace Post description.
 7. No More Liddering description.
 8. Names of participants in the project.

These eight permanent, high quality metal signs will accent the art piece and the 2 miles between both art installations.

Budget: The cost of these eight permanent signs is \$2,000 at \$250 each.

Alignment with Commissioner Ted Terry's Vision

The Compassion Corridor aligns deeply with Commissioner Terry's leadership in environmental sustainability, community wellbeing, and civic engagement. By converting underutilized land into thriving, pesticide-free green spaces, this initiative demonstrates how caring for our planet directly enhances the physical and mental health of residents. Small meadow patches can have outsized impacts — beautifying spaces, reducing county maintenance costs, and revitalizing ecosystems. Through art and collective care, the Compassion Corridor will model how compassionate action leads to healthier people and a healthier planet.

Role of Compassionate Atlanta

As the connective tissue of this initiative, Compassionate Atlanta will:

- Coordinate partners, artists, and community volunteers.
- Manage project communications and social media storytelling.
- Promote environmental and social compassion through online and in-person engagement.
- Evaluate impact through community participation and outreach metrics.

This collaborative structure ensures long-term sustainability and continued community ownership of each site.

Project Partners

- **Lead Artist:** Shannon Willow
- **Assistant Artists & Fabricators:** [TBD]
- **Environmental Partner:** Tres Crow and Green Box Homes
- **Collaborating Artists:** Heather Elson (No More Liddering); Posts for Peace and Justice
- **Coordinating Organization:** Compassionate Atlanta
- **Community Partners:** DeKalb county residents and gardeners, City of Clarkston and Scottdale residents
- **Funding Partner:** Office of Commissioner Ted Terry

Budget

Category	Description	Amount
Artist Fees	Shannon Willow (Lead), One Assistant Artist, One Steel Fabrication Artist. This is a flat rate installation. The budget will be approximately: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Artist - \$16,350 Steel Fabrication Artist - \$5,000 Process & event photographer for documentation - \$1,850 Assistant artist – selection to be based on availability of assistants that Lead Artist is comfortable with - \$30 per hour up to 60 hours – \$1,800 	\$25,000
Art material	Artist supplies such as moss sheets, polymer steel nuts and bolts, wood sheets, etc.	\$4,500
Environmental Partner	Tres Crow + Green Box Homes team – labor and installation	\$2,500
Pollinator Meadow costs	Plants, soil, native seeds and other materials	\$2,000
Community Education Sessions	3 community education sessions (between <i>Heart of Mother Earth</i> and <i>Lungs of Mother Earth</i>) @\$1,000 each.	\$3,000
Peace Post Creation & Installation	Materials, community conversation + artist facilitation & installation	\$3,000
No More Littering Creation & Installations	Materials, community conversation + artist facilitation & installation	\$1,500
Permanent Signage	Educational signs (8) @\$250 per sign	\$2,000
Coordination (CA)	Project management, outreach	\$5,000
On-line Engagement and social media	Social media campaign for promotion and ongoing education, storytelling and on-line interface	\$3,500
Administrative	8% admin	\$4,160
Total		\$56,160

Phase	Activities	Estimated Timeframe
Phase 1 – Planning & Design	Coordination, design meetings, partner gatherings, Heart of Mother Earth education sessions	Nov/Dec 2025
Phase 2 – Fabrication & Community Engagement	Purchase sculpture materials, steel fabrication and develop educational campaign	Winter 2026
Phase 3 – Community gatherings & Companion Art	Peace Post and No More Liddering creations and community gatherings	Spring 2026
Phase 4 – Installation & Planting	Lungs of Mother Earth installation + Community Planting Day	Spring 2026 Earth Day event
Phase 5 – Supplemental Art Installation	Peace Post and No More Liddering Installations	Summer 2026
Phase 5 – Celebration & Reflection	Culminating community event and storytelling	Fall 2026

Anticipated Outcomes

- Companion environmental art installation of *Lungs of Mother Earth* to accompany the *Heart of Mother Earth* sculpture along the Stone Mountain Trail
- Creation of a Compassion Corridor to connect the heart and lungs and provide education around building thriving communities
- 3,500 sq. ft. native pollinator meadow established
- 3 environmental education sessions and 2 community conversations and art generation events engaging 300+ residents
- 50+ volunteers engaged in planting and maintenance
- 1,000+ residents reached through outreach and online storytelling
- 2 neighborhoods connected by compassion-driven green infrastructure

Conclusion

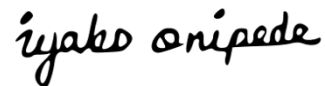
The Compassion Corridor is more than a beautification project — it is a living movement for connection, compassion, and collective healing. By linking the Heart and Lungs of Mother Earth, DeKalb County will lead by example in demonstrating how environmental care and human wellbeing are one and the same. As a “living” project, this corridor will evolve over time and serve as a living, breathing space for residents and visitors as a destination to take in the beauty of our earth and connect with the community. Each year, a different dimension can unfold that reflects community engagement around social issues and ongoing education around environmental concerns.

Together, we can breathe love through our hearts for the life force of Mother Earth.

With gratitude,



Leanne Rubenstein
Co-Executive Director



Iyabo Onipede
Co-Executive Director

Images from the 'Heart of Mother Earth' by Shannon Willow
These images show the stages of the creation process and community engagement.

