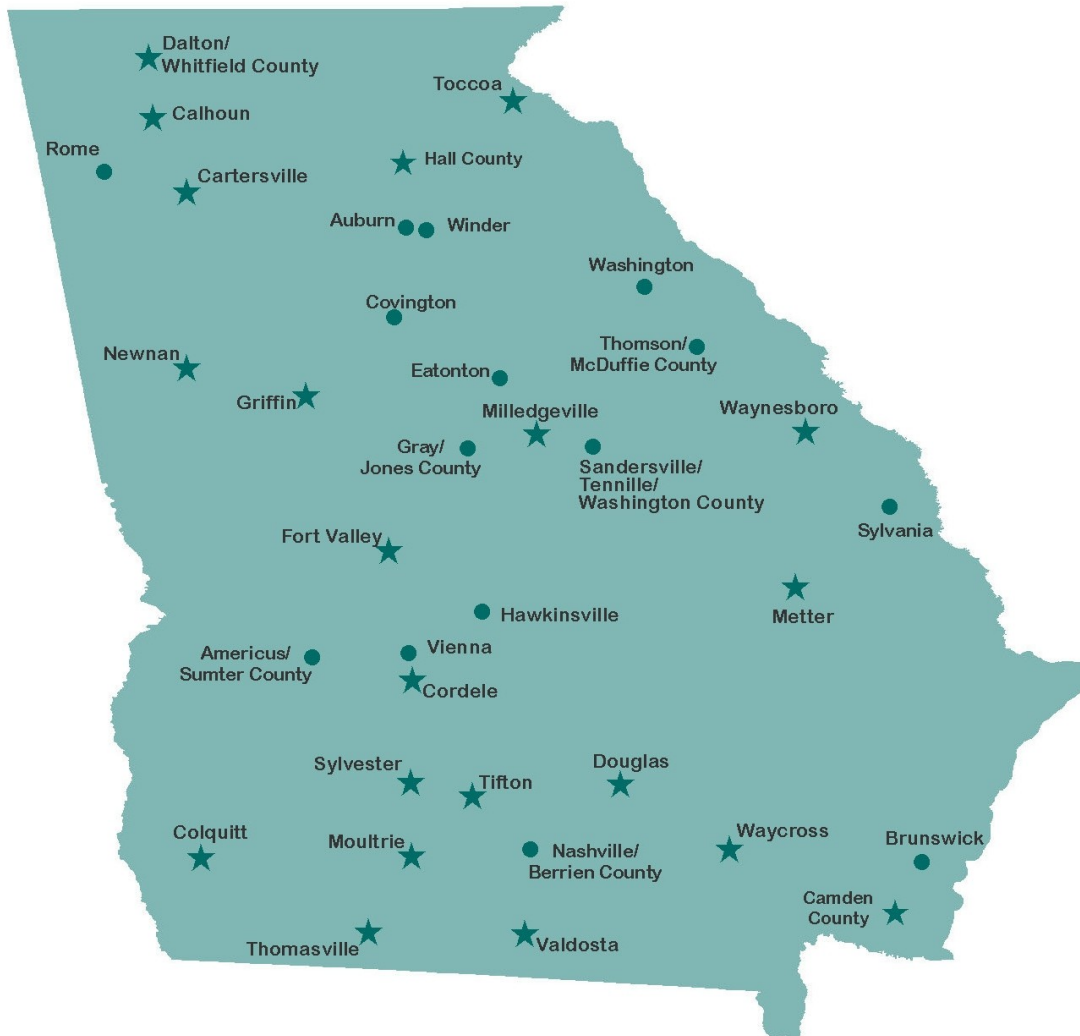




# Georgia Initiative for Community Housing



**Helping Your Community Meet Its Housing and  
Neighborhood Revitalization Needs**



### **Contact Information**

Karen Tinsley  
GICH Program Coordinator  
Housing and Demographics  
Research Center  
University of Georgia  
706.542.4949  
klt@uga.edu

### **Compiled by**

Taylor Hawke  
Consumer Journalism  
University of Georgia  
229.881.5336  
tayhawke@uga.edu

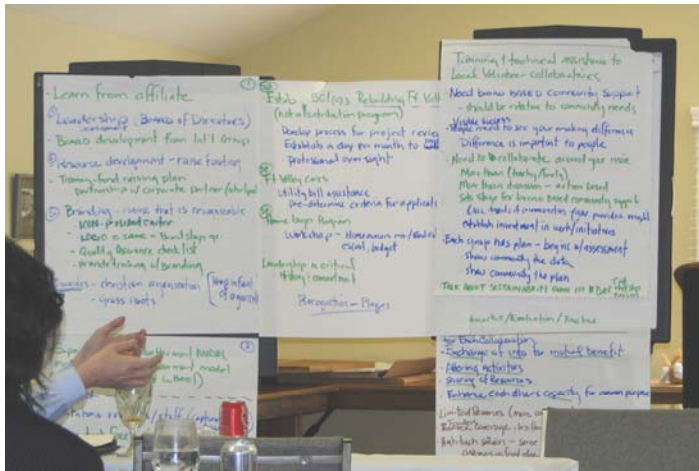


[www.fcs.uga.edu/hace/hdrc/gich](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hace/hdrc/gich)

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# I. About GICH





Since 2005, the following communities in Georgia have directly benefited from the program:

Americus/Sumter County	Metter
Auburn	Milledgeville
Brunswick	Moultrie
Calhoun	Nashville/Berrien County
Camden County	Newnan
Cartersville	Rome
Colquitt	Sandersville
Cordele	Sylvania
Covington	Sylvester
Dalton/Whitfield County	Thomasville
Douglas	Thomson/McDuffie County
Eatonton	Tifton
Fort Valley	Toccoa
Gainesville	Valdosta
Garden City	Vienna
Gray/Jones County	Wadley
Griffin	Warner Robins
Hall County	Washington
Harlem	Waycross
Hawkinsville	Waynesboro
	Winder

*"Covington's involvement with GICH has paid great dividends. Not only has it helped us focus our housing efforts, it has also opened the door to financing opportunities that otherwise would have likely been out of reach for us. The resources shared by all of the sponsoring partners have allowed us to address our housing initiatives much quicker than we anticipated. We have also benefited by learning about programs and successes within other GICH communities. The program will pay dividends in Covington for many years to come."*

**– Mayor Kim Carter**  
**City of Covington**

## Partners



**The University of Georgia**

College of Family and Consumer Sciences  
Housing and Demographics Research Center  
&

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## Founding Sponsor



## Other Sponsors



Carl Vinson Institute of Government  
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Committed to the future of rural communities.

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**Georgia Initiative for  
Community Housing**

**Helping Your  
Community  
Meet Its  
Housing &  
Neighborhood  
Revitalization  
Needs**





## What is the program?

Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) helps communities create and launch a locally based plan to meet their housing and neighborhood revitalization needs through

- Technical assistance
- Collaboration
- Expert presenters
- Training
- Facilitation
- Consensus building
- Networking
- Mentoring

## What must interested communities do?

During the three-year program of technical assistance and cross-community sharing, participating community housing teams will:

- Attend two retreats a year with other participating communities
- Identify issues and needs, available resources, and potential obstacles
- Develop new ideas about meeting local housing needs and enhancing community development
- Learn about best practices and available resources and funding for housing and community development
- Produce a community housing plan with objectives and goals
- Begin implementation of the action plan

## What is the program participation timeline?

June..... Application posted online;  
Attend resource session at GMA convention in Savannah  
July..... Attend informational webinar;  
Submit letter of intent to apply  
September ..... Submit written application; Second yearly retreat [after selected]  
October..... Site visit to finalist communities  
November ..... Selection announcement  
February ..... First yearly retreat

## For more information contact:

Karen Tinsley  
GICH Program Coordinator  
Housing and Demographics  
Research Center  
University of Georgia

706.542.4949  
klt@uga.edu

## Visit the website:

[www.fcs.uga.edu/hace/hdrc/gich](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hace/hdrc/gich)

## Local GICH Initiatives

The following are some examples of initiatives that have been undertaken by communities as a result of their participation in GICH:

- Targeted a distressed neighborhood for revitalization
- Developed multi-family tax credit apartments; redevelop a failed subdivision
- Revised out-dated codes and ordinances; adopt new ones
- Increased code enforcement; remove or demolish abandoned or dilapidated homes
- Created a Land Bank Authority or Community Land Trust
- Obtained first CDBG and CHIP grants; developed a rehabilitation program; provided housing counseling and down payment assistance; completed sewer/water infrastructure improvements
- Wrote and adopted an Urban Redevelopment Plan; created a Redevelopment Authority; obtained Opportunity Zone designation
- Conducted a housing assessment and windshield survey
- Partnered with Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together, Work Camp, churches, and others
- Convened neighborhood clean-up days; establish neighborhood watch programs
- Launched an education/public awareness campaign





## **HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY MEET ITS HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION NEEDS**

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing offers communities a three-year program of collaboration and technical assistance. The objective of the Initiative is to help communities create and launch a locally based plan to meet their housing and neighborhood revitalization needs. The program represents a collaboration of partners: the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), the University of Georgia (UGA) Housing and Demographics Research Center and the UGA Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach. The Georgia Power Company is GICH's Founding Sponsor. Additional in-kind support is provided by Georgia EMC, the UGA Archway Partnership, and the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

### **Purpose**

Quality, affordable housing is critically needed for Georgia's families. According to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) FFY2005-FFY2010 Consolidated Plan, in 2000 there were 766,725 low- to moderate-income households suffering at least one housing need, with the overwhelming majority experiencing cost burdens, spending over 30% of their gross incomes to obtain housing. Furthermore, Georgia's communities struggle to respond to substandard and dilapidated housing and deteriorating neighborhoods. A range of housing programs to help meet those needs are available through the state and federal governments, the private sector, foundations, and nonprofit organizations; however, those housing programs must generally be delivered by community-based organizations. The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing was developed recognizing that many Georgia communities, especially our rural communities, struggle with how to bring together the critical players, access funding, and organize and implement a strategy. The goal of the Initiative is to help communities address their housing and neighborhood revitalization needs through partnerships and coordinated action.

Many leaders of Georgia's communities have a clear vision for their community. They want to create a climate for innovation and prosperity for families. They want diversity in their housing stock that provides a range of affordability for families of all incomes. They want housing that is an asset to their community. They want to preserve what is excellent in their existing housing stock, create new housing opportunities and foster vibrant neighborhoods. What they lack is a clear road map to achieve their vision. With its professional facilitators, housing experts, legal experts, and administrative support structure, the Initiative framework guides each housing team through the steps of (1) clearly identifying what the community wants related to housing and community development, (2) showing communities how to develop an asset map and to identify resources, and (3) developing and implementing a community housing work plan. An important part of the facilitated retreats and technical assistance is to

provide support to the community housing teams as they tackle their first goals and objectives. After completing the three-year program, the housing teams are able to move forward independently toward meeting additional housing and neighborhood revitalization goals. These trained, successful housing teams can then become a resource for other communities in the state.

The community housing teams also develop their own local expertise in available housing programs and legal tools. One reason that the Initiative was developed to be a three-year program was so that communities would have time to create their housing work plans and then begin implementation. Actions that housing teams might take to implement their plans could include funding activities (developing funding applications) and putting in place needed legal structures (i.e., working with the local government to designate redevelopment zones, to create code enforcement boards, or create a local land bank authority). The partners and staff of the Initiative are able to either provide advice on these matters or help link the community to specialists with that expertise. Going through this sort of process in turn develops experience and expertise at the local level.

### **Detailed Program Description**

The Initiative provides a three-year program of training, technical assistance and facilitated collaboration for community housing teams. The teams are comprised of local nonprofits, city and/or county government, housing authorities, local lenders, real estate professionals, chambers of commerce, local school boards, and other key players in the housing arena and normally consist of 15 to 20 people. Each participating community's housing team then develops and implements a local housing plan, with the organizations represented on the team taking the lead on the appropriate parts of that plan.

**Facilitated Retreats:** The Initiative consists of three major program components. First, the Initiative provides participating communities with the opportunity to participate in a series of facilitated retreats. Over the three-year period, the community housing teams attend six retreats. These retreats are modeled on the National League of Cities' successful Affordable Housing Program. This model allows the teams to work in a focused retreat setting, while learning and interacting with the housing teams from the other communities.

Broad community representation and dedicated member participation on the housing team is vital to developing and implementing an effective housing plan. Participating communities are encouraged to send their full housing teams to each retreat. In reality, it is not always practical for every member to travel to each retreat. In fact, the team may have members that never attend the retreats, but participate in local meetings and events. It is imperative, however, that each team has a core group of 8-12 members that are dedicated to attending the retreats for the full three year program. Lack of continuous participation of at least several members is detrimental to the team's success.

*First Retreat* — The first retreat is a two-day event held early in the first program year (February). The bulk of the time during the first retreat is spent in facilitated work sessions, with each of the teams meeting separately with their own trained facilitator. The focus of those work sessions is problem identification, goal setting, environmental scan (resources/obstacles), identification of resource needs, and developing a work plan. The facilitated work sessions are interspersed with opportunities for the teams to report back to the larger group, beginning the process of cross-community sharing and collaboration.





*Second Retreat* — About half-way into the first program year (August), a second two-day retreat is held for the housing teams. As with the first two-day retreat, all of the communities send their housing teams for two days of intensive work. The second retreat focuses on providing training relating to the communities' resources under Georgia state law (i.e., urban redevelopment, code enforcement, land banks, opportunity zones, and special service/tax districts) and available funding programs for housing and community development. Individual, facilitated work sessions allow each team to consider how/if the legal and financial tools presented could be used to further the community's housing plan. Housing teams also have the opportunity to spend time assessing progress to-date and developing an action plan for the community's next steps.

*Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Retreats* — Four, one to two-day retreats are spaced out during the second and third program years. Because years two and three are intended to start the implementation phase for the communities and their housing teams, these retreats focus on next steps for the housing teams, on-going development of work teams, and special issues that arise. The purpose of these retreats is to keep the communities progressing toward their housing goals.

Training: The second component of the Initiative is training. The program training focuses on approaches to solving community housing issues (e.g., use of land banks) and on available housing and community development programs. Housing teams are also introduced to unique partnerships, housing success stories, and networking opportunities. Woven throughout the experience is an emphasis on planning, goal setting, problem solving, and development skills. The training is delivered in two ways. First, training sessions are built into each retreat agenda. Secondly, the partnering organizations (DCA, GMA and UGA) make available their relevant existing training programs (e.g., DCA's applicant workshops and housing conference) to participating communities.

Technical Assistance: One unique aspect of the Initiative is the technical assistance component of the program. DCA's regional staff in the 12 state service delivery regions are assigned the responsibility to work with community housing teams in their regions. Regional staff routinely checks on the progress of the teams and help access any specialized assistance that they might require. As the state's housing agency, DCA administers a range of programs that can promote homeownership, build affordable rental and for-sale housing, provide rental assistance, meet the emergency shelter and service needs of the homeless, and help individuals with disabilities access housing opportunities. DCA's Community Initiative and program staff are on-call to provide technical assistance to the local housing teams. GMA's legal and research staff answer questions and provide assistance to the participating cities as needed. Housing and extension staff from the University of Georgia provides staff and support services to the designated teams.

Additionally, utilizing the close working relationships that the partners have with USDA Rural Development, the Federal Home Loan Bank, the state's Regional Commissions, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Wells Fargo and other lenders, local governments, real estate professionals and developers, housing education providers, and others, the Initiative offers the participating communities the opportunity to learn about a range of programs and to establish partnerships to implement their community housing plan.



### **How to Participate**

The application process (June – September) provides the program partners with a pre-program snapshot of the community. The application process is designed to meet two objectives. First, the process identifies communities that are ready to fully participate in the three-year program and act on their goals and work plans. Secondly, the application process itself is a first step in the community's plan development. Each community is asked to identify:

- Its housing needs (housing need data, as well as local knowledge).
- Members of its community housing team — representing a cross section of organizations and relevant players.
- Its building blocks for success — past successes, community resources, or other factors that will lead to future success for the community housing program.

A site team visits the applicant communities (October), meets with the community's housing team, and tours the community with the team to get a first-hand look at local housing and neighborhood revitalization needs. The site team also discusses the Initiative process with the team and prepares the members for their role over the next three years. Following the site visits with the finalist communities, the team makes recommendations to the Initiative's selection committee. Four to six communities are selected based on demonstrated housing need and readiness to participate, including active involvement by key sectors of the community (November).



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## Partners



**The University of Georgia**

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## Founding Sponsor



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## Other Sponsors



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## Joint Planning Committee

Name	Title	Organization	Phone Number	Email
Sue Chapman	Operations Coordinator	Archway Partnership, University of Georgia	706.542.8873	chapmans@uga.edu
Carmen Chubb	Assistant Commissioner for Housing	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	404.679.0607	carmen.chubb@dca.ga.gov
Steven Dempsey	Associate Vice President for Public Service and Outreach	University of Georgia	706.542.6167	dempsey@uga.edu
Janice Eidson	Director of Conferences and Training	Georgia Municipal Association	678.686.6256	jeidson@gmanet.com
Cynthia Harrison	Community Initiatives Coordinator	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	404.502.6176	cynthia.harrison@dca.ga.gov
Dennis Epps	Associate Director	Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia	706.542.6242	wdepps@uga.edu
Steve Foster	Senior Urban Advisor	Georgia Power	404.506.4975	srfooster@southernco.com
Laura Keyes	President	Georgia Planning Association	404.463.3243	lkeyes@atlantaregional.com
Susan Peacock	Senior Economic and Community Development Consultant	Georgia Electric Membership Corporation	404.521.7630	susan.peacock@georgiaemc.com
Erica Powell	Conference and Training Associate	Georgia Municipal Association	678.651.1015	epowell@gmanet.com
Tom Rodgers	Associate Director of Housing	Housing and Demographics Research Center, University of Georgia	706.542.4161	rodgers@fcs.uga.edu
Malisa Thompson	Team Georgia Manager, Region 5	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	404.326.1048	malisa.thompso@dca.ga.gov
Bill Thornton	Deputy Director	Georgia Municipal Association	404.688.0472	bthornton@gmanet.com





## Joint Planning Committee

Corinne Thornton	Georgia Academy for Economic Development Director	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	706.884.8950	corinne.thornton@dca.ga.gov
Karen Tinsley	GICH Program Coordinator	Housing and Demographics Research Center, University of Georgia	706.542.4949	klt@uga.edu
Don Watt	Office of Special Initiatives Director	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	404.679.0660	don.watt@dca.ga.gov

### Previous Significant Contributors

Kent Kirbow, Georgia Department of Community Affairs


Jane Massey , Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Winfred Owens, Georgia Department of Community Affairs



MEMORANDUM

TO: Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Teams

FROM: Don Watt 

DATE: November 10, 2008

SUBJECT: NCSHA Award

Congratulations and thank you for the work you have done and are doing in your community. Your efforts with addressing housing issues within your local communities was recognized by the National Council State Housing Agencies(NCSHA), a national organization representing state housing finance agencies like DCA.

NCSHA accepted nominations for innovative housing programs and projects nationally from State Housing Finance Agencies. In August, DCA submitted a nomination to recognize GICH under the Special Achievement Category. This category recognizes Housing Finance Agency (HFA) programs, projects, or actions that respond in an outstanding manner to an important state need, have significant impact on a population, geographic area, or economy, and cut across traditional program lines.

The nomination included information regarding the purpose of GICH and how the initiative was developed, partners involved, and the design of the program. The application described local concerns related to safe and affordable housing, historic housing stock, the growing diversity of populations, and the lack of capacity to address these needs identified by all GICH communities. Pictures of events from GICH retreats, community clean up days, repairs or the building of houses, and scenes from GICH graduations were included in the nomination.

Again, congratulations and thank you for your commitment to the program but more importantly to your community. It was an honor to be selected as the recipient of the Special Achievement Award over eighteen other nominations.



# Georgia Initiative for Community Housing

## Year Seven Progress Report - 2011

- ★ = Program Alumni
- = Program Participants





## Executive Summary

With the ongoing support of the Georgia Power Company as Founding Sponsor, the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 36 Georgia communities during its first six years. In 2011, the fifth class of communities: Brunswick, Hawkinsville, Rome, Sandersville/Tennille/Washington County, and Vienna, successfully completed the program, becoming GICH alumni. Other program support comes from Wells Fargo and a USDA RD grant.

In 2011, the freshman, sophomore and junior classes of GICH continued working to revitalize declining neighborhoods, create new affordable housing options, and provide financial and home buyer education to their residents. GICH provides a platform for teams to think of creative solutions and network ideas with housing professionals, city officials and staff, as well as community volunteers from across the state. Housing teams continued to make steady progress toward building the framework and relationships on which long term housing and community programs will be built.

The direct support of the GICH partners – the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), the University of Georgia (UGA) Housing and Demographics Research Center, and the UGA Office of the Vice President of Public Service and Outreach - included ongoing technical assistance, as well as the organization and sponsorship of retreats for the participating communities. In 2011, these retreats were hosted by Savannah and Athens, where more than 150 community housing team members came together for facilitated work sessions, targeted assistance, networking and training by housing experts. Many of the initiatives implemented in the individual communities were a direct result of information shared at the GICH retreats. Additional in-kind support was provided by Georgia EMC, the UGA Archway Partnership, and the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government.

GICH communities are gaining a better understanding of their local housing needs, learning about housing and community development tools, and acquiring valuable information on available funding sources to assist them with addressing those needs. As evidenced by their accomplishments in this report, they are steadily enhancing their knowledge and effectiveness in addressing the issues in their communities. Even in the challenging housing market of 2011, communities were still able to move forward on plans to revitalize their neighborhoods by removing abandoned and dilapidated houses, obtaining grants for rehabilitation, and providing down payment assistance and counseling. (See following page). Many GICH communities formed significant new partnerships, adopted urban redevelopment plans and amended current ordinances in support of their objectives.

Since many housing challenges require more than three years to address, GICH is committed to providing ongoing technical assistance with implementing local housing plans. In 2011, the program partners held an alumni planning meeting with 32 representatives from 10 GICH communities. The main suggestion was to convene networking sessions for the alumni communities. The GICH networking listserv now has more than 550 subscribers.

The GICH partners and sponsors look for additional ways to help increase local capacity for housing and community revitalization. In 2011, five GICH community representatives received scholarships to attend the Loft Housing & Beyond summit in Madison, GA on December 14, 2011, where they learned about best practices for rebuilding cities to their original purpose – as livable centers of their communities, where citizens have access to jobs, education, recreation and commercial opportunities.



## GICH by the Numbers

### **Funds - Number of Communities: 10**

CDBG and CHIP funds received or utilized in 2011- \$1,982,793

GEFA - \$254,000

Other DCA – Housing Activities grants - \$26,184

NSP - \$1,795,000

Other - \$10,000

### **Number of Units - Number of Communities: 12**

Constructed (or under construction) – 115

Rehabilitated – 53

Removed abandoned or dilapidated – 69

Conducted housing assessments – 4

### **Housing Counseling, Down Payment Assistance - Number of Communities: 7**

Down Payment Assistance – 15 households

Housing Counseling – 914 clients

### **New Activities - Number of Communities: 12**

#### *Code or ordinances implemented or updated*

Auburn - Commercial zoning districts amended to include multi-family

Hawkinsville - Amended zoning ordinance to allow for loft housing downtown

Sylvania - Adopted an Infill Assessment Plan

Washington - Amended Land Development Regulations

Winder - Approved rezoning to allow for senior, multi-family housing

#### *Positions created*

Covington - Housing/Financial Counselor

Winder - Filled vacant Code Enforcement Officer Position at the City

#### *New agencies/organizations/authorities created*

Americus/Sumter County - Created a Land Bank Authority and drafted an Urban Redevelopment Plan

Auburn - Adopted an Urban Redevelopment Area

Nashville/Berrien County - Adopted an Urban Redevelopment Area and established an Opportunity Zone

#### *New partnerships formed*

Auburn with tax credit developer

Brunswick with several local stakeholders through efforts to reenergize GICH team, including Golden Isles Convention and Visitors Bureau

Covington with health services provider in association with new supportive housing units

Eatonton with Chamber of Commerce Leadership Team and local businesses

Gray/Jones County with Jones Area Council on Relief and credit counseling agency as well as with Jones County People Looking Ahead, a Chamber of Commerce group

Thomson/McDuffie County with Habitat for Humanity

Washington with housing authority

Winder with several area churches and local businesses

# Freshman

## Auburn

In their first year, the Auburn GICH team focused on increasing high-quality rental housing options that provide live-in-place opportunities. The City won a 2011 award from the Georgia Planning Association for Outstanding Plan Implementation Small Communities, which recognizes the City's commitment to plan in accordance with the input and desires of the community. Selected activities include:



- Researched development partners with LIHTC experience for the first phase of 100-140 apartments at Auburn Station, a pending mixed-use development. Assessed the quality of projects previously constructed by prospective builders.
- Identified another tract suitable for multi-family, senior housing.
- Adopted an Urban Redevelopment Plan as a tool to transform blighted properties and specifically to leverage improvements in the existing multi-family sites referenced previously.
- Made amendments to the Strategic Implementation Plan to include the Auburn Station site and to the Zoning Ordinance to allow mixed-use development in commercial zoning districts via Special Use Permit.

## Eatonton

The Eatonton GICH committee decided to focus on assessing the community's housing stock and needs, while increasing code enforcement and implementing several clean-up and beautification programs. Selected activities include:

- The GICH team has enlisted the Regional Commission to conduct a Housing Assessment for the City, which will be finished spring 2012. The information gathered will give the team insight on potential target areas.
- In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce's 2011 Leadership Team, the GICH team rehabilitated a house via the We Care Program. Through this effort, unsightly shrubs and brush and an old satellite dish were removed; the house was pressure washed; new shrubs were planted; and new downspouts, windows, doors and a handicap ramp were installed. This project was completed solely with volunteer hours and community donations; no city funds were expended.
- With support from City Council, the code enforcement officer has increased enforcement of current codes and ordinances, a first step in community revitalization. With the removal of more than 16 dilapidated properties, adjacent neighbors have begun to clean up their properties with no initiation from the city.
- To broaden community involvement and appreciation, as well as showcase the City's beauty, the team members held the inaugural Christmas Decorating Contest for residents and business owners, garnering more than 30 entries. An awards ceremony was held at the Plaza Arts Center, covered by the local newspaper. This event was a tremendous success and the team plans to hold the competition again next year.



- In addition to the GICH team, Eatonton Main Street and the Peoples Bank will sponsor a Community Beautification Day on March 17, 2012. Other community partners will include the Putnam County schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, churches and other local organizations and businesses. To encourage trash removal from homes, businesses and yards, the City has agreed to collect trash and debris for the following week free of charge. Groups have volunteered to assist property owners that need an extra hand; the use of large equipment has been donated for any demolition projects; and 20 planting and beautification projects are scheduled in the downtown. The Peoples Bank will sponsor a cookout for community volunteers and property owners.
- A community housing fair is being planned. This event will help educate citizens on all aspects of housing, including owning, renting, upkeep and more.

## Nashville/Berrien County

To address the lack of decent, safe affordable housing, Nashville/Berrien County GICH team focused on three goals: to promote and provide assistance for homeownership; to use code enforcement to eliminate blight; and to identify available resources to address the housing needs. Selected activities include:

- Partnered with the South Georgia Regional Commission to conduct a housing assessment, to complete an Urban Redevelopment Plan, and to establish an Enterprise Zone. The URA contains 38 dilapidated and 14 deteriorated structures, as well as 16 vacant parcels.
- Worked closely with City and County Code Enforcement to ensure necessary codes are being obeyed.
- Partnered with Wiregrass Technical College to provide classes for prospective first-time home buyers (to begin in 2012).
- Made a community visit to the City of Fitzgerald to learn about their redevelopment program.

## Sylvania

The Sylvania GICH team is focused on infill and redevelopment in the City to address substandard structures and the need for affordable housing. In the first year of the program, the team focused on education, outreach, and planning. Selected activities include:

- Hosted speakers on various subjects: establishing a Land Bank, establishing a Habitat for Humanity chapter, expanding the scope of the Housing Authority, developing Low Income Housing Tax Credit housing, USDA Rural Development programs, and Urban Redevelopment Plans.
- Developed by the Coastal Regional Commission, the city adopted an Infill Assessment Plan in June. Three primary infill assessment areas are identified: Hat Street, Andrews Steet, and Thompson Street neighborhoods.
- A GICH team member is currently redeveloping an old school. The front part is now a Senior Day Care and Activity Center and the classrooms behind the facility have been turned into one bedroom senior apartments. The city helped by tapping into the water lines and setting up the meter boxes.





## Washington

The Washington GICH team is focused on addressing substandard housing and improving housing conditions in the City. The City has been successful in forming partnerships and developing housing programs for rehabilitation, energy efficiency, housing counseling and acquisition, demolition, and construction of homes for sale. Selected activities include:

- Using an \$800,000 CDBG grant, completed Rusher Street neighborhood revitalization infrastructure, demolished 14 dilapidated structures, and permanently relocated 5 families. Affordable home construction has started to be sold to low- to moderate-income, first-time homebuyers.
- Addressed 30-35 lots that were blighted and overgrown via City Code Enforcement Officer.
- Worked to amend the City's Land Development Regulations with the assistance of the CSRA Regional Commission.
- With a \$254,000 GEFA Energy Efficiency Grant, conducted Home Performance Audits on 350 homes, implemented a \$25,000 Rebate Program to financially assist homeowners in purchasing energy efficiency appliances, and provided Energy Efficiency education to 100 homeowners.
- With an \$8,000 Housing Counseling Grant from DCA, provided Home Buyer Education and Financial Literacy workshops for 250 people.
- Awarded a \$358,000 CDBG grant for rehabilitation, reconstruction, and land acquisition in the Norman St. target area. (To be used in 2012)
- Established a MOU with the City of Washington's Public Housing Authority to initiate a First-Time Home Buyers program for current residents.
- A developer was approved for LIHTCs for 60, senior housing units to be built in the Urban Redevelopment Area.



## Sophomores

### Americus/Sumter County

The Americus/Sumter GICH Team developed short term solutions for their long term goals of transforming 10 defined areas, removing all dilapidated properties, and building a more productive tax base. Selected activities include:

- Created a Code Enforcement Team which consists of the Building Inspector, City Manager, Code Enforcement Manager and others.
- Created a Land Bank Authority.
- Completed the Urban Redevelopment Plan for approval by the city and the county.
- Provided flexible-term demolition financing to homeowners for removing dilapidated structures. 8 houses were demolished, half of which were voluntary and half financed by the City. None went to court.





## Covington

The Covington Housing Team (CHT) continues to pursue its “Out With the Old... In With the Infill, Infill, Infill” approach. The Covington Redevelopment Authority continues to guide redevelopment of Walker’s Bend, a mixed-use, mixed income, Earth Craft community less than 2 miles from downtown. Investment to date: \$10.5 million private and \$4 million public. Details for 2011 include:

- Using LIHTC, Harristown Park is complete with 60 new residences for seniors 55 and over (48 apartments and 12 townhomes). 500 people on its pre-lease waiting list. The CHT is working to partner with a tax credit developer for additional senior apartments in Walker’s Bend.
- Began construction on 32 single-family residences for sale in Walker’s Bend. The Covington Cottages are market rate and down payment assistance is available through a 2010 CHIP grant. (Completion estimated for summer 2012)
- Affordable Equity Partners received LIHTC in 2010 to build 32 single-family homes for rent. Construction to begin in 2012. These homes are in The Village at Walkers Bend and are lease to purchase after 15 years.
- Secured funding for the construction of the New Leaf Center in Walker’s Bend, a mixed use development with 32 one-bedroom apartments and a job training and workforce development center. The Covington Housing Authority will own and manage the facility and will work to transition qualified tenants to market rate. (Construction to begin summer 2012)
- Secured partners and funding for New Leaf Supportive Housing, 28 units of supportive housing for homeless individuals. Partners include the Covington Housing Authority, Paces Foundation, and View Point Health Services, with funding proposed from the DCA Permanent Supportive Housing Program. (Construction to begin summer 2012)
- Developed and implemented a 16-week, 32-hour homeownership and household finance class. 67 individuals received this counseling in 2011 through the partnership between the Covington Housing Authority and the Covington Redevelopment Authority.
- Through code enforcement efforts, 24 dilapidated houses have been demolished and 7 have been rehabilitated in 2011.



*Harristown Park Apartments*

## Gray/Jones County

The Gray/Jones County GICH team continues progress on increasing affordable housing options for their citizens and learning from sister communities (Macon). Selected activities include:

- Researching the possibility of forming a Housing Authority.
- Improving a CDBG application to re-apply in April 2012.
- In partnership with Mustard Seed Ministries, re-roofed 10 owner-occupied homes with volunteers and donations.



*Reroofing Partnership*

- In partnership with the Jones Area Council on Relief and the CCCS of Macon, held 2 of 6 financial planning workshops.
- Participating in the Jones County People Looking Ahead Now, a grass roots initiative of the Chamber of Commerce. At the last quarterly benchmark breakfast, GICH team members reported on progress and discussed goals.

## Thomson/McDuffie County

The Thomson/McDuffie County GICH team continues to address neighborhoods in decline, to survey existing housing stock conditions, to increase community involvement, and to work with rental property owners on code enforcement practices. Selected activities include:

- Awarded a multi-activity \$800,000 CDBG grant for the Pitt Street area. This is the third CDBG grant in 3 years. With CHIP, local funds, and in-kind support, the total investment in this area will be over \$4,000,000 for rebuilding infrastructure and houses. Improvements include sewer replacement and rehabilitation, updated storm water feature, and sidewalks, curbs and gutters.
- Conducted a marketing survey of residents. With 600 respondents, these data will help guide future housing activities in Thomson/McDuffie.
- Received the first piece of property in the Thomson/McDuffie Land Bank Authority and began the process of selling it.
- Established partnership through the Housing Authority that resulted in a submission of a LIHTC application for 35 single-family units.
- Spurred further development through revitalization efforts and increased code enforcement. Habitat constructed a new home, and a CHIP application will be submitted for Habitat to construct 4 additional homes in the Pitt Street area.



## Winder

The Winder GICH team has made considerable progress towards building partnerships with community groups to improve housing in Winder and has received significant press on their accomplishments and the need for affordable housing. Selected activities include:

- Organized Project Winder: a community based effort to repair owner-occupied homes in identified target areas. Headed by First Baptist Church, this effort involved other area churches, the City of Winder, the Winder Housing Authority, and more than 120 community volunteers. Rehabbed 14 owner occupied homes over 4 days with the Habitat for Humanity Brush of Kindness program, funded by Jackson EMC's Operation Round Up. The GICH team is already making plans for next year.
- Received the final Housing Assessment and Inventory report, which includes 4 neighborhoods in the target area: East Broad, East Midland, Patrick Mill, and Second Street. Working with the Winder City Council to create an Urban Redevelopment Area and establish Enterprise Zones.



- Provided by the Winder Housing Authority and Action, Inc., 16 clients took homeownership classes, increasing the eligible applicant pool for moving from tenant to ownership. One client moved from Public Housing to homeownership.
- Received City Council approval of a rezoning application for a 64 unit senior housing development. NorSouth Development received 2011 LIHTC for Stratford Court to begin construction 2012.
- Filled the vacant position of Code Enforcement Officer at the City. The Winder Police Chief held meetings for all patrol zones including areas targeted for housing improvement and also met with the GICH committee.
- Removed 4 dilapidated housing units, condemned 6 additional houses, and Habitat for Humanity built one house.

## Juniors

### Brunswick

The City of Brunswick's Community Housing Resource Assistance Board (CHRAB)/GICH team continues to meet monthly with the primary focus on updating and finalizing the Community Housing Assistance Plan (CHAP) and re-engaging partner organizations to enhance collaboration efforts. Selected activities include:

- Created a membership database, invited new partners, and extended a renewed invitation to previous members to participate in ongoing housing initiatives in the City. This work has resulted in greater integration with the City of Brunswick City Commission, the City's Downtown Development Authority, the City's Planning Department, as well as with community partners such as the Golden Isles Convention and Visitors Bureau, private real estate developers, and the Brunswick Housing Authority.
- Hosted the Golden Isles Convention and Visitors Bureau to share their rebranding and marketing campaign to promote the islands and the City of Brunswick as a desirable place to vacation and live. This addresses the long-standing concern about crime and safety within the City which creates marketing existing affordable homes difficult.
- Continued to market the City's remaining rehabilitated NSP home.
- Rehabilitated 20 houses using CDBG and removed 19 dilapidated or abandoned houses. Habitat for Humanity built and closed on 3 homes.
- Totally Free, Inc. provided housing counseling to 450 clients and individuals throughout a 15-county service area and continues to offer credit counseling workshops on a monthly basis out of their Glynn County and Camden County locations.

### Hawkinsville

The Hawkinsville GICH team continues to focus on revitalizing housing in the City. The cornerstone project of the city's initiative is the redevelopment of the former Pillowtex Mill into a mixed-use, affordable housing development, which the city has received \$1 million in funds to support through the HOPE VI and Low Income Housing Tax Credits programs in 2010. 30 units are under construction. Other activities include:

- The City received a total of \$800,000 in CDBG and CHIP funding (2010) to support its owner-occupied, housing rehabilitation initiative. 6 homes were rehabilitated in 2011.



- Continued code enforcement efforts, removed dilapidated structures (33 to date) and cleared junk lots.
- Amended the zoning ordinance to allow loft housing in downtown Hawkinsville.
- Partnered with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission to hold 2 housing fairs.
- In 2012 the Hawkinsville GICH team will merge with the Urban Redevelopment Agency, established in 2007, to form one group for all housing activities.

## Rome

The Rome/Floyd GICH team continues to promote the ideas on housing identified in the “Housing is for Everyone: Rome/Floyd County Housing Plan” and to build awareness about the housing needs of low income residents. The team meets regularly to network and build partnerships to attain this goal. Other activities include:

- Repaired 3 homes with CHIP funds and 10 homes with CDBG funds.
- Applied for \$300,000 CHIP (2012) funds to continue moderate rehabilitation program.
- Demolished 18 homes due to code enforcement.
- Allocated down payment assistance to 12 families through the Floyd County CHIP program.
- Through the Appalachian Housing Counseling Agency, 89 clients participated in housing counseling classes.
- Mercy Housing South East constructed 77 units of senior housing through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program that is scheduled to opened March 2012.
- The local Habitat chapter constructed 3 homes and made repairs to 9 homes.



*Housing Rehabilitation*

## Sandersville/Tennille/Washington County

The Sandersville, Tennille, Washington County (STWC) GICH Team continues working to provide different types of housing with the use of a variety of resources and programs. Selected activities include:

- The City of Tennille received a \$500,000 CDBG grant and is partnering with a for profit developer to rehabilitate a vacant school and repurpose into an assisted living facility, Memory Lane.
- Using 2009 CHIP funds, the City of Sandersville completed reconstruction of 2 homes in 2011 and the remaining funds will be used to rehabilitate owner-occupied homes in a targeted area.
- Received \$500,000 CDBG award to address street flooding and drainage problems in a targeted area of Washington County.
- Developer received LIHTC award to begin phase two of Washington Estates, a single family, rental subdivision for low income individuals. The second phase will add an additional 40 homes.
- GICH team members conducted a Homebuyers Workshop with participation from USDA, Washington County UGA Cooperative Extension, local banks and other community partners.



*Washington Estates*



## Vienna

The Vienna Team (VICH) continues addressing their plan objectives: to improve the City's low-income housing stock, to rid all neighborhoods of blighted properties and improve infrastructure, and to educate the public about homeownership issues and opportunities. Selected activities include:

- Using 2010 CHIP funds, rehabilitated 3 homes and started reconstruction of another.
- Submitted application for 2012 CHIP funds for rehabilitation of 6 more homes.
- Supported and assisted with a LIHTC application to rehabilitate Woodward Apartments, 36 units of multi-family housing. The developer will submit another application next year.
- A private developer completed construction and rented a duplex.
- Completed repairing and upgrading the City's waste water treatment facility.
- Received a \$284,877 CDBG grant for rehabilitation of failing sewer infrastructure in 3 neighborhoods. (Work to begin in 2012)
- Partnered with the GICH team, the City of Vienna, the City of Unadilla, and the Dooly County Communities of Opportunity to hold a Housing Information Expo to educate the public on the programs and resources available to potential and existing homeowners. (186 attendees from 6 counties and 15 vendors)
- Held 4 home buyer education workshops for 42 potential homeowners.
- Increased code enforcement is helping to move condemned property cases through the proper channels to begin nuisance abatement. Removed 4 abandoned or dilapidated houses.
- Working to develop an Infill Portfolio of vacant lots for sale. Many of these lots are included in estates and cannot be sold.



## The Initiative's Eighth Year: Looking Ahead to Progress

In November 2011, GICH selected five very qualified communities: Gainesville, Garden City, Harlem, Wadley, and Warner Robins. Joining the other 10 participating communities, these cities will convene for two retreats in 2012 in Tifton (February) and in Cartersville (September). As always, communities continue to receive technical assistance in the intervening months to ensure forward progress on designing and implementing their housing plans.

The GICH partners and sponsors continue to enhance programming to increase local knowledge about ways to address housing and community development issues. Following participant feedback, two alumni meetings are planned for 2012 in conjunction with the previously mentioned retreats for participating communities, increasing networking and cross-community sharing opportunities. Addressing another participant suggestion, an online, searchable database of GICH community housing activities and best practices will be started in 2012. In addition, follow up workshops are being planned for the Loft Housing & Beyond initiative, and GICH team representatives will again receive scholarships to attend.



## Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Partners and Sponsors



