Celebrating a Decade of Success
Awards
2015
The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) helps communities improve their quality of life and economic vitality through the development of locally-based housing and revitalization strategies.

With the ongoing support of our Founding Sponsor, the Georgia Power Company, GICH has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 55 Georgia communities.

Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary (2014) of the GICH program by recognizing outstanding examples of affordable housing projects/innovations by GICH communities. All GICH communities were invited to submit applications for the first five award categories listed on page two (2).

The panel of experts considered the following criteria in making their recommendations for awards:

- **Measurable benefits to affordable housing in Georgia**
- **Degree to which the project/innovation can be replicated**
- **How well the project/innovation responds to the identified need or opportunity**
- **Cost-effectiveness of the project/innovation**

Upon review of these excellent applications, the awards committee felt two additional categories were needed to adequately recognize the results achieved. Those categories are **Community Transformation** and **Housing Innovation** and are also described on page two (2).

This booklet recognizes the achievements of all our applicants. Thanks to these communities for participating in the GICH program, for their efforts to increase affordable housing and to revitalize communities, and for submission of an application for this award program.

1- *Celebrating a Decade of Success*
Adaptive Reuse
Recognizes outstanding design in the adaptive reuse of existing structures for affordable housing units. Developments or housing units nominated should exemplify quality design that is compatible with the surrounding natural or built environment, in keeping with quality growth principles, while meeting the needs of its target residential market and the goals of the GICH plan.

Affordable Rental Housing
Recognizes achievement in (1) the creation of affordable rental developments by new construction or substantial rehabilitation, including those that reflect the principles of quality growth; and especially those that reflect the goals of the GICH plan (2) innovation in managing affordable rental housing; (3) innovations in creating mixed-use, mixed price rental housing with a substantial affordable component; or (4) other innovations or partnerships to provide safe, decent, affordable rental housing.

Community Outreach and Engagement
Recognizes the (1) creative use of media and other forms of promotion to effectively promote the goals of the local GICH team (2) participation of volunteers (3) Volunteer participation in community activities pertaining to the GICH team goals (4) creative partnerships that resulted in housing improvements and/or community revitalization.

Homeownership
Recognizes achievement in (1) construction of new affordable housing; (2) renovation or redevelopment of housing for home ownership; (3) counseling programs to assist low and moderate income homebuyers,(4) mortgage finance opportunities, or (5) other innovative programs or partnerships that promote affordable homeownership and reflect the goals of the GICH team. Nominations may include activities such as construction projects, including those that reflect the principles of quality growth; financing programs; and home buyer education.

Neighborhood Revitalization
Recognizes projects and partnerships directed toward revitalizing or redeveloping existing neighborhoods or communities. Recognizable achievements could include the use of new or existing tools: (1) Code Enforcement (2) Land Banks (3) Revitalization Plans (4) Housing Assessments (5) Renovation of owner occupied homes and/or demolition of dilapidated structures (6) Increase in affordable housing options. Successful projects may occur over a number of years.

Community Transformation
Recognizes innovative neighborhood revitalization that goes beyond the achievements listed above by incorporating the GICH team plan with creative partnerships that improve educational opportunities within the community, provide transportation options, increase retail development and incorporate walk-ability which together improve the overall quality of life for residents.

Housing Innovation
Recognizes achievements in Neighborhood Stabilization through the creative redesign of partially developed abandoned subdivided tracts. Recognizable innovations include (1) Re-development plans that reflect the principles of quality growth (2) Mixed-uses that meet the needs of the target market (3) Rental and homeownership options for affordable housing and (4) Green space.
The City took a proactive and innovative approach to address a failed 50 acre, 240 single family unit development, less than a mile from the town square. Caught in the housing bubble that resulted in a bankrupt developer and three failed banks, only 80 of the proposed 240 units had been constructed with only 50 sold. Finished but unoccupied homes were being auctioned at 40% of the original sales price and were being purchased primarily by investors.

In 2009 the City Council approved an urban redevelopment plan that included Walker’s Bend and created the Covington Redevelopment Authority to oversee the implementation of the redesign of this community to include multi-use, mixed income, Earth Craft developments with more usable green space.

The revised design included: The New Leaf Center, three and four story buildings, with 28 apartments over retail and office space, near the entrance to the development developed and managed by the Covington Housing Authority.

11 town homes and foreclosed properties renovated by Habitat for Humanity of Newton County with $533,000 in NSP1 funds.

A 27 unit permanent supportive housing development built by Paces Foundation, a CHDO and Housing Tax Credit Developer, for developmentally disabled persons and the chronically homeless.

32 single family detached homes with a club house and green space constructed by Magita Development, another Housing Tax Credit Developer, for lease purchase.

A 60 unit affordable Senior Apartment Building, built by MACO Development with Housing Tax Credits.

The Covington Cottages, affordable 2 and 3 bedroom new homes built to Earth Craft standards with $75,000 to $95,000 price points. Constructed by local home builders, financed by local banks with down payment assistance from a CHIP grant.

Randy Vinson
770-385-2179
rvinson@cityofcovington.org

3 - Celebrating a Decade of Success
“Gainesville Housing Initiative”

Since becoming a GICH community, it has been the goal of the Gainesville Housing Initiative to strengthen the quality of life through coordinated and sustained efforts to: improve housing conditions, create housing opportunities, and to connect people to housing resources. Such focus has transformed Gainesville’s approach of using State and Federal grant funds to address housing needs scattered throughout the City into a coordinated, concentrated approach implemented on a street-by-street and neighborhood scale.

A. Homeownership
- Secured $77,500 for down payment assistance from CHIP funds
- Awarded $1,000,000 in HOME funds to build new affordable housing units
- $210,000 allocated by the Gainesville Nonprofit for the construction of new affordable homes

B. Neighborhood Revitalization
- Acquired (10) properties for the purpose of eliminating slum and blight
- $522,500 for Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation (10)/Reconstruction (2) from CHIP
- Created a buffer for target area neighborhood to shield from heavy industrial uses
- Aided in the development of (4) new transitional housing units
- Sidewalk repairs on over (30) streets in targeted areas
- CDBG funds for the purchase of additional railroad right of way to extend the city’s greenway
- Allocated $342,000 for streetscape funds to make improvements in the Redevelopment Area*
- Code enforcement activities which resulted in: 15,494 cases started; 15,318 property owners complied, 176 citations issued., 42 substandard homes were demolished (owner compliance), 17 homes were remodeled (owner compliance)

C. Affordable Rental Housing
- Supported the development of Myrtle Terraces, an 84 unit affordable senior HTC project
- Provided support for a tax credit application initiated by the Gainesville Housing Authority and Walton Communities for the development of 84 affordable rental units
- Worked with local developers to renovate 218 substandard affordable housing units

D. Community Outreach and Engagement
- Held Housing Summit which included over 30 local Nonprofit Organizations
- Hosted Community Housing Festival which included over 25 Housing Vendors and 100 participants
- Incorporated local high school students in housing reconstruction projects funded by the CHIP Program
- Partnered with local Home Depot through the Good 360 Program to receive donated building materials to assist with housing repairs and development

Chris Davis
770-531-6581
cdavis@gainesville.org
Jones County is somewhat of a bedroom community for Bibb and Houston Counties. Higher than average income earned by residents who travel outside the county to work places the county in a higher economic tier, although there are still pockets of poverty. Obtaining federal funding to address the needs of the targeted poverty areas has been difficult because grants are weighted in favor of areas with higher poverty levels. Although Jones County received one CDBG grant, expenditure of the funds was delayed because of the lack of clear property titles by otherwise eligible home owners. But the GICH team is not discouraged and continues to seek funding to maintain current properties and increase affordable housing options for Jones County.

Through housing fairs and educational seminars they actively collected applications for assistance from residents in need. They acted as a conduit for services by directing residents to local partners with resources. Through their collaboration they have repaired roofs, built ramps, painted homes, and provided structural repair and yard work. Some of the partners include: River of Life, Mustard Seed Ministries, local churches, the Neighborhood Service Center and JACOB (Jones Action Committee on Relief).

To increase eligibility for future funding, the team coordinated seminars where local banks, attorneys, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Macon, and governmental partners provided information on the preparation of wills, the clearing of property titles, resolution of heir property, fire safety, preparing for homeownership, home buyer education and credit and debt counseling.

An invaluable GICH team member, the Publisher of the Jones County News, keeps the work of the GICH Team in front of the community by publishing meeting information and covering special projects.

Donald Black
478-986-3674
whidbyadams@windstream.net
“Crossroads to the Future Strengthening Lithonia’s Families and Neighborhoods”

The City of Lithonia’s GICH team focused on the establishment of a sense of community and the revitalization of older neighborhoods. Their two phase program focused on increasing community involvement; increasing the number of owner occupied homes; educating current homeowners on home maintenance; and encouraging community beautification.

To clearly understand the volume of their challenges, they first partnered with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) through Community Choices to conduct a housing assessment. The assessment resulted in a database and interactive map of the city that identifies not only housing conditions but also street and sidewalk conditions. The inventory tool and process developed by the ARC and the City received an award from the Georgia Planning Association in the “Outstanding Initiative, Small Community” category in 2013. The assessment and a series of community meetings revealed that Lithonia had many absentee landlords. A form-based zoning code was adopted to address the condition of abandoned and dilapidated homes and to facilitate development opportunities in the downtown and commercial core of the city. Reserve officers have been recruited to assist with code enforcement efforts. Four of 16 dilapidated homes have been demolished, and three more are under contract for demolition.

The city is partnering with the DeKalb Regional Land Bank to encourage donation of abandoned properties. Applications are being distributed to seniors, veterans, those living with disabilities, and citizens with lower incomes who need assistance with home improvement. Those with major repair needs will be referred to the Special Purpose Home Repair program of DeKalb County. Additional community outreach workshops will be conducted by the Lifecycle Building Center. Lithonia continues to explore funding opportunities for its community revitalization efforts.

Education for current homeowners is being provided through a series of workshops on home repair and energy efficiency. To increase homeownership the team also partnered with a University of Georgia Housing and Community Development class on a Service Project that conducted four focus groups to identify barriers to homeownership. A resource guide was developed that will be used to organize a housing fair later this year.

Deborah A. Jackson
770-482-8136
Deborah.jackson@lithoniacity.org
Pembroke

“Sawmill Landing”

The Pembroke GICH team conducted a housing inventory and assessment survey, the results of which indicated a need for adequate workforce housing. From an economic development standpoint, the City lacks an adequate stock of housing to support new industry being recruited by the Development Authority of Bryan County. The city is also located adjacent to the Fort Stewart Army Base and within driving distance of Hunter Army Field whose troops and support personnel also need affordable housing.

In partnership with W.H. Gross, the City of Pembroke, Downtown Development Authority of Pembroke, and Pembroke Housing Team, the city applied and received its first LIHTC award for Sawmill Landing in 2014. The project will include 60 workforce housing townhome units, 30 three-bedroom units, 21 two-bedroom units and 9 one-bedroom units. The workforce housing will benefit both retail and industry in the City of Pembroke and the Bryan County Interstate Centre in unincorporated Bryan County.

Sawmill Landing will create a positive impact for the City of Pembroke. It will provide housing for overburdened renters. Increase recruiting capability for local industry and improve the local economy. It has already shown to be a positive driver for neighborhood revitalization in the area.

Sawmill Landing and the efforts over the past three years of the GICH Team in Pembroke has stimulated community partnerships between residents, business owners, nonprofit organizations and government entities. Over 25 organizations come together on a monthly basis to target housing and economic issues. Specific to Sawmill Landing, the application garnered support from the Downtown Development Authority, the City, the Development Authority of Bryan County, the Bryan County Commissioners and the Bryan County Board of Education.
“Improving the Community One Neighborhood at a Time”

Working with and in the neighborhoods in Perry is at the forefront of the Housing Team’s efforts to improve housing. Community outreach and involvement is optimized with quarterly Neighborhood Clean-up Days. The team has improved the aesthetics of three neighborhoods to date and more are planned. Most importantly, a sense of neighborhood pride and appreciation has been fostered.

Each Saturday clean-up is led by the housing team but supported by residents, City of Perry elected officials and employees, Boy Scouts, Habitat for Humanity, the Fuller Center for Housing, Phenomenal Women, ABBA House, Grace Church youth groups, and the Perry High School girl’s basketball team. Not only do these days result in a clean neighborhood they also provide a chance for engagement with the residents as volunteers assist wherever needed.

Neighborhoods in Perry had become unsightly due to neglect, illegal littering and dumping, and an aging population unable to maintain their properties. The clean-ups have resulted in warmer more welcoming neighborhoods where residents are proud to live and who again assume the responsibility for maintaining the own neighborhoods.

The number of volunteers increased with each clean-up day. From 20 on the first day, to 30 on the second, and more than 40 on the third. Local businesses donated water and food. More than five (5) tons of debris has been removed.

It is often the most basic activity that serves as the catalyst for transformation. The Perry Housing team believes these clean-up days have provided this catalyst as more communities request assistance from the team. Less litter and better kept homes are the tangible benefits with the blooming prosperity and pride of those who live in these neighborhoods the real lasting legacy of these clean-up efforts.

Robert Smith  
478-988-2757  
Robert.smith@perry-ga.gov
“South Rome Community Redevelopment”

The redevelopment of the South Rome Community has been a multi-year and multi-funded re-birth of a neighborhood. There have been many accomplishments made along the way and this application only highlights a portion of them. The Rome City Commission, South Rome Redevelopment Corporation and neighborhood activists have stood together during conflicts to come together and work out a winning solution.

The Rome/Floyd GICH team was instrumental when the master plan update process began in 2009 and helped implement housing needs that were identified into the new/updated goal section. These included quality affordable housing and improved housing choices.

Highlighted accomplishments are as follows:

- The construction of the Floyd County Health Department- $9.5 million
- The construction of the Boys and Girls Club- $3.7 million
- Etowah Village LIHTC Multi-family (senior) complex- $10 million
- The construction of the new Ann K Davie Elementary School- $6.8 million
- Rehabilitation of 58 owner occupied homes (minor and moderate)- $523,000
- Construction of the Silver Creek Trail- $400,000
- Construction of the Kingfisher Trail and Bridge- $385,000
- S Broad Street Corridor Improvement (Street-scape) $2.4 million
- Construction of a multi-family rental complex (Pennington Place) in partnership with the Northwest GA Housing Authority using CHIP funds- $1 million

Investments from Rome, Floyd County and other sources since 1982 = $60,543,142

The revitalization of South Rome is not completed and continues to move forward. The next steps are to continue to create public/private partnerships, fundraising activities and implementation of the plan. Tons of work and years of effort!

Bekki Fox
706-802-6704
bfox@romega.us

9 - Celebrating a Decade of Success
Roswell’s historic Groveway Neighborhood was in decline and a large percentage of the City’s affordable housing was at risk of being eliminated.

Through its three-year participation in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Program (GICH), the City of Roswell and its partners have been able to fuel more than $100 million of investment for the revitalization of the low-income Groveway neighborhood. This investment has involved the removal of dilapidated properties, the construction of new higher-end residential, and the preservation of existing affordable housing in the area. The execution of all three components was essential to ensuring the positive impact of the neighborhood revitalization efforts was sustained.

The Roswell GICH team had to overcome the problem of convincing its largely affluent population that affordable housing and increased housing options for the workforce and Seniors was a legitimate need. The City is 98 percent built-out so available land is limited and expensive. Certain sectors of the Roswell economy are hurting because of a lack of local workforce. And the age of the citizen population is on the rise. Any revitalization efforts had to take into account all of these components and allow for more residential density.

Private developers doubled available housing units in the area by acquiring the 150-unit Frazier Street Apartment Complex and replacing it with the new 320-unit Roswell City Walk. Also, HomeStretch Housing Initiative of North Fulton acquired and is rehabilitating rental units at a Forrest Street apartment complex and the Roswell Housing Authority acquired and is rehabilitating rental units at a Myrtle Street apartment complex. Those acquisitions will preserve and improve 36 affordable housing units in the Groveway neighborhood. Additionally, the Roswell Housing Authority partnered with private developers Macauley+Schmit and Integral Group LLC to build the Veranda at Groveway complex, which will provide the area with an 80-unit mixed-income Senior only residential facility.

There was and is still a need in our community to preserve housing affordability.

Charles Alford
770-641-3847
calford@roswellgov.com
“Victoria Place Redevelopment”

In 2009 the City of Thomasville wrote the Victoria Place URA/RAS to promote appropriate infill housing development, rehabilitation, and reinvestment while addressing public infrastructure deficiencies, blight and unsightly and hazardous private property conditions.

**Activities Completed 2010-2015**

- GICH Team initiative to create the Land Bank in 2007. The Land Bank and/or City acquired over 40 individual parcels of land with funding from private foundation, CDBG 2010, the City of Thomasville and property donations
- Demolished 12 vacant dilapidated and blighted structures
- Infrastructure: street and drainage improvements, new street, alleys, sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, trail section, crosswalks, utility installations
- Rehabilitated 5 owner occupied homes and 1 rental property with CHIP 2009/CDBG 2010 funding
- Provided down payment assistance to 5 Habitat for Humanity home buyers (CDBG 2010) & Created Housing & Resource Center (CDBG-RD 2010) - (6th Habitat home under construction now)
- Established Victoria Place Overlay (zoning) District
- Reorganized Land Bank Authority, 2013. Transferred properties between Thomasville-Thomas County Land Bank Authority and City; Land Bank is owner/developer of 30 lots in Victoria Park. City owns streets/parks
- Completed construction at 312 Victoria Place
- Land Bank Authority hired consultant to develop marketing materials, signage, and website
- Thomasville Landmarks rehabilitated 4 homes for sale; two properties sold early 2015
- City completed construction of Victoria Park central Green Space
- Land Bank sold 2 existing homes on Wright St to private owner and 3 lots to builder/developer
- Multi-use Trail Phase 1 construction, signage and on-street parking in progress
- Reconstructed one house and rehabilitated one owner occupied property with CHIP 2013 funding

**Commercial Property Improvements and New Construction in Victoria Place URA 2012-2015**

- Opportunity Zone established to incentivize job creation
- Vacant building at 222 Fletcher St renovated as mixed use facility including 4 upscale loft-style apartments
- New four unit office/retail space constructed at corner of W Jackson St and Victoria Place
- Major renovations completed to retail spaces on W Jackson St
- Clean-up/demolition of old service station site at corner of Bartow St and W Jackson St
- Service station rehabilitation and addition of auto detail shop on Broad St
- Renovations at TCA Studio 209 (Thomasville Center for the Arts) on Remington Ave
- Renovations in progress at Thomasville Landmarks historic building on Remington Ave
- New CNS Operations building constructed by City on Victoria Place

Charlotte Christian
229-227-3368
charlotte@thomasville.org
After working with GICH, we felt strong about changing the reputation of certain neighborhoods which have such odious, legal names such as Tom Town and Kill Me Quick. The neighborhood finally chosen, near Tom Town was Leila Ellis. Leila Ellis is an aging neighborhood, ravaged by blight, decay, and overpriced rental costs. Many of the homes are within the historic district and the housing stock is in great need of repair and maintenance partially due to the lead based paint and asbestos.

Since inception, along with the partnerships, particularly with the City of Valdosta's Community Development Department, we have built 20 new single family homes and have participated in various degrees of rehabilitation to another 8 homes. We have had a total economic impact of $11,271,071 using a common figure used by many chambers of commerce to indicate the number of times a dollar “turns over” before it comes to rest or leaves your community.

As a smaller community, far away from the larger state and federal assistance, we put together a great coalition in our area. By becoming a GICH member in 2005, we learned how to work together to accomplish our goals. We listened and learned from some of the best minds in the state of Georgia on housing and its effects on building a better city for all its citizens. We modeled our efforts after what we learned together in order to have a successful revitalization of our neighborhoods. Our coalition worked together to build the Valdosta- Lowndes County Land Bank Authority which has been so successful, that we contributed in developing the Georgia Land Bank Resource Manual in June 2013 along with the Center for Community Progress, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., Georgia Association of Land Bank Authorities, Inc., Georgia Municipal Association, and the Association County Commissioners of Georgia. We have conducted multiple surveys so the people who live and raise their families in the neighborhood will have a voice that will be heard. We feel that the revitalization is not only in the physical construction but also the revitalization of a spirit of cooperation to bring together the organizations, churches, government, nonprofit agencies, volunteers, individuals, and residents. We treat everyone as a neighbor and member of our neighborhood. Being a part of GICH not only allowed us to be mentored, it taught us how to mentor to others about low cost affordable housing.

Stuart Mills
229-245-1330 ext 24
smullis@valdostahabitat.org

12 - Celebrating a Decade of Success
Valdosta

“Ashley House Apartments”

The Ashley House is a historic property located in the historic district of downtown Valdosta. It has been a senior affordable housing Project Based Rental Assistance property since 1980. The building has been in this location since 1925 and was the tallest building for over 200 miles until the last decade. The building is irreplaceable.

This project was designed to address the redevelopment of this building preserving the historical and affordable housing aspects of the building, while continuing to re-invigorate the downtown area. But the project brought more to the residents of the Ashley House. The building is currently 100% HUD rental-assistance for older persons with 61 residential units and 2 commercial spaces on the bottom floor. Units have been renovated with new carpet, cabinets, appliances, fixtures and paint finishes. Also provided is a beautiful green space courtyard, a computer center, wellness room and arts and crafts room.

The property is the first historical development to be certified as an EarthCraft multifamily building and an EarthCraft site.

Vanassa Flucas
229-259-3571
vflucas@valdostacity.com
“Vienna Neighborhood Revitalization”

When the City of Vienna received the GICH Community designation, one goal set by the Vienna GICH Team was to rid all neighborhoods of blighted properties and to improve the existing housing stock in the City. We tackled this goal by using a 3 point approach:

1. The first step was to take a more aggressive approach against blight in Vienna’s neighborhoods by revisiting the City’s Code and making changes where needed.
2. The second step was to determine the condition of Vienna’s existing housing stock.
3. The third step was to look for ways to assist owners of substandard and near substandard properties in making improvements to their homes.

According to data gathered in the 2009 Housing Assessment 24% or 269 houses were classified as substandard and 2% or 24 houses were classified as dilapidated.

**Outcomes for ridding neighborhoods of blighted properties since 2009:**

1. 16 dilapidated houses demolished
2. 21 dilapidated/substandard mobile homes were either demolished or removed from the City.
3. 5 mobile homes had been placed illegally on a site not meeting code for a mobile home park. Through stronger code enforcement, the owner was made to remove them.
4. Removal of these blighted structures has resulted in several nice lots that are now available for infill construction.
5. 36 junked vehicles have been removed from the City and neighbors are doing a much better job of keeping their properties cleaner.
6. As a result of cleanup, 2 recycling collection stations have been set up in Vienna for local usage.
7. Citizens are now taking pride in their community and taking an active role in keeping their community attractive by reporting offending properties to City Hall.

**Outcomes for improving existing housing stock:**

1. Rehabilitation of 11 houses using 2011 & 2012 CHIP Grant funds
2. Total reconstruction of 2 houses using 2011 & 2012 CHIP Grant funds
3. An additional 12-14 houses are on schedule to be rehabilitated using the 2013 & 2014 CHIP Grant funds.
4. 8 homes were weatherized through GEFA’s Weatherization Program at an average investment of $5,590 per home.
5. 3 homes were rehabilitated by Southwest Georgia United using USDA Housing Preservation Grant funds with a total investment of $38,788

Janet Joiner
229-268-4920
jjoiner@sowega.net

14 - Celebrating a Decade of Success
“Hands on Washington”

Hands on Washington is an innovative program created by the City of Washington’s GICH team to address revitalization and community development needs.

The mission of the organization is twofold:

1) To create a coalition of organizations dedicated to assisting low to moderate income homeowners with maintenance, repair and restoration of their properties.

2) To encourage citizens and organizations to work together through community building activities.

Washington is a small rural community in Wilkes County, Georgia, with a high poverty rate, struggling with economic development and affordable housing programs. Families with household incomes of less than 60% of the median area income struggle to perform basic maintenance to their homes. Hands on Washington will assist with essential exterior repairs and rehab of owner occupied properties.

The organization is currently partnering with local agencies, businesses, civic organizations, Kiwanis and Rotary, churches, the Unity Group, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, school alumni, the Senior Center and skilled contractors who will provide volunteer labor. They are also partnering with the schools and encouraging volunteerism among the students. An Art Teachers class created the organizations new logo.

Hands on Washington is in the process of securing its nonprofit status which will increase fund raising opportunities and expand the ability of the group to assist the residents of Washington.

Barbara Bacon
706-678-3277
bbacon@washingtonwilkes.org
Georgia Initiative for Community Housing

The success of the GICH program is a result of the direct support of our partners.

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