Helping Your Community Meet Its Housing Needs

Since the program’s founding in 2004, GICH has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 71 communities throughout Georgia. Communities selected to participate in the three-year program receive technical assistance from state practitioners and academic experts, as well as a competitive advantage in applications for state community development and affordable housing funding. Upon graduation from the three-year program, GICH communities are encouraged to continue to work toward local housing goals and utilize the GICH network of state agencies, academic experts, and other GICH teams which have addressed often similar housing issues.

GICH provides a platform for teams to develop creative solutions to complex local challenges through collaboration with local, regional, and state leaders. In 2018, the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes of GICH continued efforts to revitalize neighborhoods, create new affordable housing options, and provide financial and homebuyer education to their residents.

GICH BY THE NUMBERS

Leaders in GICH communities learn how they can utilize many of the housing and community development financing tools that DCA offers to local governments and other organizations. Additionally, GICH communities receive a competitive advantage in the application processes for several of these tools. As a result, GICH communities are able to implement their community housing plans with various grants and tax credits while building their local capacity.

In 2018, across all current and former GICH communities, DCA invested:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Housing Tax Credit financing</td>
<td>$14.43M</td>
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<tr>
<td>for the development of affordable rental housing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia Dream down payment assistance funding</td>
<td>$8.86M</td>
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<tr>
<td>for first-time homebuyers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant funds</td>
<td>$8.45M</td>
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<tr>
<td>supporting local housing and community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>development initiatives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP)</td>
<td>$5.51M</td>
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<tr>
<td>grants for rehabilitation and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>construction of owner-occupied homes</td>
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Since 2004, DCA has invested $361,790,881 across the 71 Georgia communities that have participated in GICH. $362M
opportunities or programs for housing assistance. Quality of life for McRae-Helena residents is of the upmost importance. A neighborhood cleanup was organized to remove many years of debris from three properties to mitigate rodents, mosquitoes, and safety hazards in a neighborhood. The City has dedicated financial resources and secured grant funding to improve water quality and pressure in two specific residential areas as well as increased water conservation efforts and education throughout the town. The team has worked to develop several community partnerships in order to impact a greater number of citizens.

“The LiveNorcross GICH Team is providing invaluable assistance to the City in identifying and addressing the full gamut of our housing needs. The efforts of this excellent team that has come together and been guided through the GICH process is exploring innovative ways to provide quality and affordable housing for all of our residents. Their initiatives have been noticed and are anticipated to generate meaningful results in the near future!”

Mayor Craig Newton, City of Norcross

City of Norcross | The Norcross GICH team developed subcommittees to allow for more in-depth engagement with local issues, including affordable homeownership, affordable rental housing, rehabilitation of aging housing stock, transient (hotel/motel) housing, ordinance and zoning review, and community engagement and GICH marketing. Each committee made significant progress toward its goals and developed relationships with City leadership to ensure GICH projects overlap with the local government’s goals and resource distribution. The Rehabilitation of Aging Housing Stock Committee was especially successful in its work to connect the City of Norcross with the Gwinnett County Habitat for Humanity chapter in efforts to conduct community outreach and connect homeowners to rehabilitation grants.

Troup County | The Troup County GICH team, which includes representatives from the cities of LaGrange, West Point, and Hogansville, has dedicated financial resources and secured grant funding to improve water quality and pressure in two specific residential areas as well as increased water conservation efforts and education throughout the town. The team has worked to develop several community partnerships in order to impact a greater number of citizens.

“The efforts of the county to not only address the housing needs in the Allatoona area, but first to address the needs of the residents makes this process a little different. While it is taking longer to see structural changes, we know investing in the people is the long term fix, as well as just the right thing to do. Oftentimes communities simply run off the problems and start fresh without offering the current residents any option to stay or improve their situation. We are redeveloping the people at the same time we are working to redevelop the area.”

Matt Warren, Bartow County GICH Team member, Engagement Pastor at Crosspoint City Church.

City of Commerce | The completion of a local housing assessment in 2018 allowed the City of Commerce’s GICH team to incorporate builders and developers into the strategic planning process for target areas identified through assessment results. The results determined current and future development needs for the city. Participation in GICH also helped the City of Commerce receive a $612,000 Community HOME Improvement Program grant to support the rehabilitation and development of owner-occupied housing.

City of Dublin | As the City of Dublin GICH Team completely nearly 70% of the initial work program goals it created when it entered GICH in 2017, the team continues to refine and update its work plan based on new trends. Dublin was awarded a Community Development Block Grant of $710,000 in 2018, which will assist with the rehabilitation of 13 housing units, the reconstruction of one
home, and three acquisition-rehabilitation projects. Dublin’s GICH team also facilitated a citywide housing assessment, which allowed the team to prioritize three subareas most in need of housing improvements.

**City of Fairburn** | The Fairburn GICH team primarily worked in the city’s Lightning community where they focused on utilizing code enforcement to demolish dilapidated and abandoned properties and to clean up unkempt homes. A partnership with Habitat for Humanity also helped Fairburn’s GICH team create new affordable housing and rehabilitate existing homes in the Lightning community.

The team’s work impacted community development and quality of life issues through the redevelopment of the Cora Robinson Park in the Lightning community and the installation of sidewalks in the Summerwood community.

**Union City** | Union City’s GICH team continued its work in achieving locally-identified goals in its Housing Plan by hosting various meetings to discuss development options and housing types that would best exemplify a creative and sustainable housing project. Meetings with potential designers to discuss the aesthetics, layout, number of units and sustainability options, have driven the work of the team in planning for Union City’s future. The team’s further partnerships with the Union City Housing Authority and assessments of housing stock also helped the GICH team prioritize high-need areas and efficiently use public resources.

**Warrenton** | We’ve assembled a broad representation of civic, business, religious, public service and elected leaders committed to improving the quality of life of our citizens.

The completion of our housing assessment will provide valuable information needed to properly identify those areas with the greatest need for housing improvements. Additionally, our city and county have begun the process to develop a joint county/city zoning and building code plan. We have completed a city wide housing assessment of over 700 properties. The data collected by this assessment will provide our GICH team & city leaders with the information needed to properly identify target areas in the greatest need of assistance. Additionally, the housing assessment was the first step in a process which will move to the development of our Urban Redevelopment Plan and Revitalization Area Strategy.

**JUNIORS**

**Athens-Clarke County** | Based upon the results of a comprehensive housing market study, the Athens-Clarke County GICH team began to significantly consider various housing tools. The GICH team partnered with the Athens Land Bank Authority to meet with Frank Alexander, Co-Founder and Senior Legal and Policy Advisor for the Center for Community Progress, to discuss and determine the viability and feasibility of voluntary inclusionary zoning in Athens-Clarke County. Vital elected officials and community members attended this meeting and discussions continue to progress for the potential implementation of an inclusionary zoning ordinance in Athens. The GICH team also facilitated the removal of five dilapidated and/or abandoned properties in 2018.

**Evans County** | The Evans County GICH team implemented a countywide Adopt-a-Street program, completed housing conditions surveys for the majority of homes in the City of Claxton, and razed many dilapidated commercial buildings. The team continues to work toward the completion of housing surveys across the entire county, a process which GICH team members have used to involve community members and convey the importance of improving living conditions throughout the county. Once completed, housing surveys will allow the Evans County GICH team to continue planning toward an economically vibrant and competitive rural South Georgia county.

“The GICH program is designed to push communities to learn and achieve in a short period of time. Without support from the UGA and DCA, we would not have been able to accomplish what we have so far. As a graduating community, this program has helped to create a solid foundation that our team can continue to build upon.”

Mary Kathryn Griffin
Director, Claxton-Evans Co. EDA

**City of Millen** | The Millen GICH team’s process of creating an Urban Redevelopment Plan has helped the City determine where greatest need exists and prioritize investment and development in those communities. Looking ahead, the team hopes the completion of a housing assessment on each house in the city limits will aid future efforts to apply for grants. Additionally, they plan to host targeted housing fairs and update local ordinances. While participating in GICH, the City of Millen received a Community HOME Improvement Program grant, which supported the rehabilitation of four houses and reconstruction of one home.

**City of Monroe** | Participation in GICH has allowed the City of Monroe to bring housing and neighborhood quality of life concerns into the public conversation between citizens and local government officials. For many years, housing was generally ignored in Monroe, but the GICH team’s involvement has sparked a citywide conversation surrounding what types of housing are needed most in the community and which practical solutions should be considered to address distressed properties. GICH has provided the avenue to bring together those interested in problem solving for the future. The Monroe GICH team hosted a local housing exposition, which saw over 200 attendees interested in homeownership opportunities. The team also facilitated the removal of 25 abandoned or dilapidated properties and worked closely with a Low Income Housing Tax Credit developer to begin construction on a senior living development in the historic mill district of Monroe.

**City of Rockmart** | The Rockmart GICH team has relied heavily on partnerships with the City of Rockmart, including the Community Development Department, Public Works, and the Police Department’s transition to community policing practices. The team helped city officials enhance code enforcement through the creation of an Environmental Court and Abandoned Property, Blight, and Tethering Ordinances. Rockmart’s GICH team has also worked to involve the community through events that publicize the importance of clean and safe neighborhoods. Unique partnerships with social service organizations, nonprofits, and city officials have helped the team facilitate new investment in areas where many properties were previously abandoned or vacant, a significant boost to the city’s workforce.
GICH PARTNERS

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) helps communities improve quality of life and economic vitality through the development of locally-based housing and revitalization strategies. GICH is a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; the University of Georgia’s Housing and Demographics Research Center, a unit of the Department of Financial Planning, Housing, and Consumer Economics in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences; University of Georgia’s Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach; and the Georgia Municipal Association. GICH’s founding partner, Georgia Power, and its ongoing retreat sponsor, Wells Fargo, continue to support the initiative’s ability to reach diverse communities across Georgia. GICH is also funded through the Rural Community Development Initiative (RDCI), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Grant program.

Christopher Nunn – Commissioner DCA
Linda Fox – Dean College of Family & Consumer Sciences UGA
Laura Meadows – Director Carl Vinson Institute of Government UGA
Bill Thornton – GMA

In Loving Memory of Karen Tinsley

[July 9, 1972 - April 3, 2018] Karen was a beloved daughter, sister, aunt and friend. She had many passions, including cycling, tennis, traveling and collecting friends from all over the place. She moved to Georgia from her childhood home in New York and soon fell in love with Athens, so much that she stuck around to pursue two advanced degrees, earning the right to call herself a “Double Dawg.”

She discovered her passion quickly as part of a UGA-based program created to improve housing conditions across the state of Georgia. She excelled at it, working quietly, quickly, sometimes anxiously and almost always well beyond the glow of the spotlight, to help people who needed it the most. In doing so, she endeared herself to thousands of people. They loved her because she was authentic and because she cared.

Karen was not boastful, but she was passionate about her work and able to translate complex ideas into common vernacular to achieve the greatest impact. She had just earned a promotion to Senior Public Service Associate at UGA, and as a public servant, nobody was more caring, more knowledgeable, more willing to do the work, than Karen.

We are all better for having known her.