



2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

Helping Your Community Meet Its Housing Needs

Since the program's founding in 2004, GICH has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 76 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 2019, 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 2019, across all current and former GICH communities, DCA invested:

Low Income Housing Tax Credit financing for the development of affordable rental housing **\$11.9M**

Georgia Dream down payment assistance funding for first-time homebuyers **\$10.6M**

Community Development Block Grant funds supporting local housing and community development initiatives **\$11.4M**

Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) grants for rehabilitation and construction of owner-occupied homes **\$4.7M**

Since 2004, DCA has invested \$398,414,682 across the 76 Georgia communities that have participated in GICH. **\$409M**

16 Communities Enrolled in 2019

FRESHMAN

City of Social Circle | The City of Social Circle worked to define and communicate housing initiatives to residents as they developed their housing team. They implemented neighborhood clean-ups and provided housing and utility resources for the community. Through faith-based organizations and other local partners, the housing team has had success educating and promoting community wide support of several projects from community clean-up to CDBG and CHIP applications. The housing team prioritized and began a housing assessment of target areas, as well as the removal of one abandoned or dilapidated home.

City of Centerville | The Centerville team has continued to actively promote community engagement, housing opportunities, and cultivate local partnerships. This year they began pursuing participation in their existing county land bank, strengthening code enforcement, and investing specifically in the Spring Lake Housing community.

City of Conyers | The City of Conyers continued to build their housing team and network of community partners. The Conyers Housing Authority has been very involved and began the process of tax applications for renovations and new construction to provide more affordable rental housing opportunities. Additionally, they made priorities of senior housing, code enforcement, and began a survey on extended stay lodging in their community.

City of Smyrna | The Smyrna team (Smyrna CHARMS) focused on education of both residents and local leaders of real housing needs facing their community. In collaboration with Keep Smyrna Beautiful and Smyrna Public Works, 318 junk vehicles and 24 tons of yard excess were collected. They hosted an inaugural housing fair in August with local resources from 36 exhibitors. They fostered deeper relationships with ward residents & collaborated with faith-based groups and local developers. They also approved new residential zoning to allow for smaller lot size and floor areas.

City of Arlington | The City of Arlington evaluated and updated local ordinances to adhere to adopt the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code. This will help their team tackle abandoned and dilapidated homes as they develop code enforcement. They initiated community clean-up days and were awarded CHIP funding in 2019 to continue to rehabilitate homes.



“Engaging as a GICH volunteer bolstered my sense of community and fostered a concern to know what my neighbors consider important as active participants in this community, then a drive to accomplish our team objectives together for a better Smyrna, Georgia.” -Tanya Brinkley, GICH Team Member, Contributing Faculty at Walden University, School of Public Policy and Administration

SOPHOMORES

City of Byron | The City of Byron worked to remove 5 abandoned or dilapidated homes and counsel 12 clients in housing education in 2019. They implemented a local blight tax as well as updated nuisance property code. A full-time Code Enforcement position was created and filled. The city received significant CDBG funding from DCA as well as an EDA grant for city water upgrades.

City of Cochran | The City of Cochran completed a city-wide housing assessment in early 2019. This supported a successful CHIP application and subsequent rehabilitation of 6 homes. In May they adopted an Urban Redevelopment Plan with assistance from the Heart of Georgia Regional Commission to identified housing investment opportunities. Six abandoned or dilapidated homes were removed, and the City adopted a vacant properties ordinance. Two new positions were created for code enforcement officer and downtown development director.

City of McRae-Helena | In 2019 McRae-Helena zoning ordinance updates and hired a code enforcement officer. They held homebuyer education workshops and completed rehabilitation on a 25-unit senior citizen apartment complex. They are also continuing to implement 2018 CDBG funding for water improvements.

City of Norcross | The City of Norcross continues to explore the different ways it may be able to address the issues of low home ownership rates, aging housing inventory, lack of affordable rental housing, and transient housing. In 2019 one dilapidated or abandoned home was removed and a New Unified Development Ordinance was adopted in June. They completed a city-wide housing assessment in 2019. In May the LiveNorcross team released an in-depth study of extended stay hotels within the city that sought to better understand the barriers families face to permeant housing.

Troup County/Hogansville/LaGrange/West Point | The Troup County team has continued to collaborate among the cities of Hogansville, LaGrange, and West Point. This year they developed several unified development ordinances, filled a city planning position with housing focused experience, and began the framework of a county wide land bank. “The GICH program has allowed our community to effectively evaluate what we have to offer as a community and helped us demand what we deserve in terms of affordable, safe, and decent housing.” - Erin Johnson, County Planner, Troup County



JUNIORS

City of Dublin | The City of Dublin is continuing to work on our 2017 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), our 2018 CDBG, and a 2019 CHIP grant we received. Collectively the projects will benefit 34 homes in three different neighborhoods across the community. In June 2019, we hosted a USDA Home Ownership Resource Event in conjunction with USDA and the Department of Community Affairs. The informational session was attended by over 80 individuals. The GICH team continued to partner with Keep Dublin Laurens Beautiful and held a Tire Amnesty Day for citizens to drop off their tires for recycling. The GICH Team continues to support our local Habitat for Humanity who finished House #40 in late 2019 and River of Life, a church-based ministry that assisted 23 homeowners through rehabilitation, wheelchair ramp construction, landscaping assistance, and minor repairs. The GICH Team collaborated with River of Life on a landscaping project for a 91-year-old homeowner. We continue to use Blight Tax as a tool to tackle the blighted

areas and since 2016 approximately 45 houses have been cited. In addition, due to aggressive code enforcement, 40 houses have been remodeled and 60 have been demolished.

City of Fairburn | The Fairburn Housing team continued to work in their target area, the Lightning Community in partnership with Habitat for Humanity. After analysis and development, they continue to engage the community through regular public meetings and gathering. The GICH Team served as an advisory group for the Lightning Community Redevelopment study. The goal of the study was to create a strategic revitalization plan for the community, based on a community-based vision. The study was completed in April 2019. In 2019 they also removed 5 abandoned or dilapidated homes.

City of Union City | The City of Union City added two key local government positions in 2019. One code enforcement officer was hired and a grant administrator will be added pending approval. The team began working on a New Redevelopment Area that was approved in Nov. of 2018. Late this year they also began a housing needs assessment of targeted area which includes Gresham Street, Lower Dixie Lake, Raymond Drive, & Cypress Pointe. It is to be completed in 2020. 4 dilapidated or abandoned homes were removed in 2019, and they were awarded a portion of a CDBG for Resurfacing and Drainage Improvement.

Bartow County | This year saw the completion of construction on Bartow County's Prestwick Community's LIHTC project for 70 affordable units in a 55+ Government, non-profit, civic and business partnerships have continued to stay strong. New ordinances for both single family homes and mobile homes were created, and many dilapidated or abandoned homes were removed.

City of Commerce | The City of Commerce continues to revitalize and rehabilitate their community. This year they continue to use their 2018 CHIP funds toward new construction and rehab. They began work with Jackson County to establish a new landbank. One new home was constructed by local Habitat for Humanity. A new ordinance reducing blight passed, in addition to the hiring of a code enforcement officer.

City of Warrenton | The City of Warrenton re-focused on affordable housing education and promotion through new materials, clean up days, and a partnership with Family Connection of Warren County to hold their first home-buyers education class. They received significant multi-activity CDBG funds for housing and storm water improvements. In 2019 the housing team traveled to consult with other GICH communities and added a real estate professional to their housing team. They also adopted a blight ordinance in the City of Warrenton.

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.

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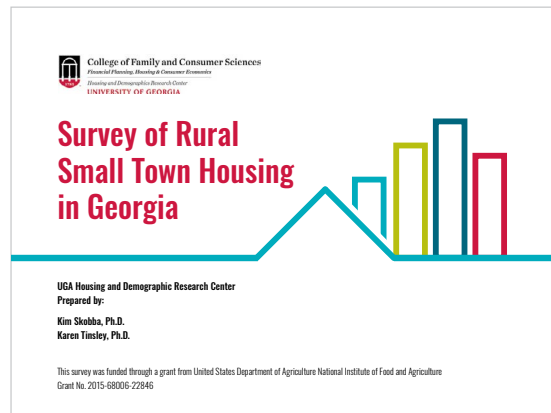


**Financial Planning, Housing
& Consumer Economics**
College of Family and Consumer Sciences
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Relevant Research

This year Dr. Kim Skobba published a Survey of Rural Small-Town Housing in Georgia on affordability and blight in small town Georgia. This research involved the final work of former GICH Director, Dr. Karen Tinsley and provides and overviews different types of rural blight as it relates to the community. Visit our website <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/hdrc> to read the full report.



**In February,
Dr. Jermaine
Durham took
over as Director
of the Georgia
Initiative for
Community**

Housing. He is also an Assistant Professor of Housing and Community Development in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia. Dr. Durham brings a wealth of experience from Housing Authority Development and Non-Profit Workforce Development. His research interests include community development, housing policy and residential inequality.