Helping Your Community Meet Its Housing Needs

Since the program’s founding in 2004, GICH has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 81 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 2020, 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 2020, across all current and former GICH communities, DCA invested:

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit financing for the development of affordable rental housing: $15.1M
- Community Development Block Grant funds supporting local housing and community development initiatives: $13.3M
- Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) grants for rehabilitation and construction of owner-occupied homes: $3.9M

Since 2004, DCA has invested $441,324,452 across the 76 Georgia communities that have participated in GICH.
**FRESHMAN**

City of Adel | Adel has not only made housing a talking point in the city, but has gone to work leveraging tools to meet these housing needs. They created and adopted an Urban Redevelopment Agency and began building a Land Bank with Cook County. They received their first CHIP grant and are finishing rehabilitation of 4 homes in one of their target areas. In addition to building partnerships to increase financial literacy and down payment assistance programs, the Adel GICH team hosted their second annual city-wide clean-up week which was a huge success.

City of Hartwell | Despite a tough year due to the pandemic, the City of Hartwell worked to attract new developers, learned a lot from submitting a LIHTC application, and refined their code enforcement activities. They demolished 3 dilapidated homes and formed a partnership with a local faith-based organization.

City of Ocilla | The City of Ocilla identified and focused on increasing the inventory of affordable housing within the city. They established a Historic Preservation Commission and a Land Bank in addition to beginning a city-wide housing conditions survey.

“The GICH program is a great vehicle for consolidating our housing programs.”
Mayor Matt Seale - City of Ocilla

City of Rossville/ LaFayette | The joint housing team of Rossville and LaFayette has strengthened their working relationship as cities as they have learned how important housing is the economic and social viability of both municipalities. Both cities have begun to adopt zoning amendments to allow for higher density and a more diversified housing stock in residential areas. Code enforcement has been strengthened and seven dilapidated or abandoned housing units have been removed.

“GICH has been single-handedly one of the most impactful programs that the State of GA has combined housing revitalization, economic development, and community development into one program. Working with a multi-city GICH team has been inspiring and solidified a wonderful partnership between two municipalities.”
Elizabeth Wells, Director of Economic Development, Team Leader - Rossville | LaFayette team

City of Statesboro | Statesboro went to work quickly applying for new funding, assisting in the development of an urban development plan, increasing code enforcement, making new community partners, and establishing a sub-division incentive program designed to expand housing opportunities in new areas of the city. They also incorporated new leadership and enhanced partnership with the Statesboro Housing Authority.

“Even though this is the beginning of an on-going journey our hope is that everyone that is serving or will be served will realize that working together works.”
Trish Tootle, Community Relations Officer: Morris Bank - City of Statesboro

**SOPHOMORES**

City of Centerville | The Centerville housing team successfully required a LIHTC project that will result in 65 multi-family units. This incremental redevelopment project met the overall Economic Development goals of the City, re-filled a vacant urban greenfield, and provided much needed housing in their core business district. They also created a methodology for scoring developer applications and allocating their GICH point endorsement toward projects that best meet the city’s goals and needs. This scoring methodology continues to be shared with other GICH communities.
City of Smyrna | The City of Smyrna experienced significant staff turnover in addition to delays due to COVID-19 responses and priorities. They have continued to keep housing needs a part of the citywide conversation and learn about the tools and resources available.

City of Social Circle | The City of Social Circle focused on better understanding their community’s housing situation with statistical analysis and initiating a housing assessment. They continued to conduct neighborhood clean-ups and advertise their housing team well to gain trust with the broader community. Through increased code enforcement efforts, they have seen increased investment from long-time landlords. They created a part-time code enforcement position, adopted a formal property maintenance code, and are revising a more detailed housing strategy into their comprehensive plan.

JUNIORS

City of Byron | The City of Byron continued to strengthen their blight ordinances and code enforcement, while utilizing previous CDBG funding to complete seven home rehabilitations in their initial target area. This year they began the first steps working with Peach County to create a Land Bank.

“My greatest accomplishment will forever be to continue to create a deep sense of community and to help create a place that is compassionate and strong for each other.”

Tiffany Sandefur, City Administrator - City of Byron

City of Cochran | The City of Cochran secured its first CHIP grant and are excited to begin rehabilitation of six housing units. Cochran adopted new zoning ordinances, filled a Code Enforcement job vacancy, and hired a grant consultant to seek new funding opportunities. They have a great working relationship with a regional developer and in 2020 they secured LIHTC funding for another multi-family project in conjunction with them.

“I’ve been needing basic housing improvements for over 20 years. The housing program has helped keep me in my home.”

Ms. Minnie Hughes, Cochran CHIP rehabilitation recipient - City of Cochran

City of Norcross | Following an extensive survey of extended stay motels in Gwinnett County, the Norcross housing team along with strong local partners, continues to provide transitional pathways from motels to permanent housing. They were also instrumental in the City creating a city-wide redevelopment authority to support on-going affordable development options. Their biggest victory has been raising awareness of the extent to which people are precariously housed in Gwinnett County.

Troup County, LaGrange, Hogansville, West Point | Despite the pandemic hindering group meeting and project work, the Troup County joint team continued to make housing a priority in 2020. A Troup County non-profit, Groundswell, secured USDA Rural Energy Savings Program funds to improve housing energy improvements in 20 homes, and is to be expanded countywide in the future. Hogansville and West Point each received tax credits in 2020 to approve projects totaling nearly 120 affordable apartment units. LaGrange received CDBG funding to assist in reconstructing seven rental units. The county as a whole removed 39 dilapidated or abandoned housing units.

“It was great to work collaboratively with all three Cities and County to strategize on how we would like to develop. As a result of our collaboration, we can be in concert and overlap each other with respect to development, with complementary regulations, requirements and programs.”

Alton West, Community Development Director - City of LaGrange.
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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The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for Georgia communities. We grieve the loss of life from the virus and our hearts go out to the families affected. Despite the hardships, GICH communities continued to prioritize housing to address needs in their communities. We applaud the resilience and hard work of all GICH communities in 2020.