



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
of **COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Maureen Freehill, Deputy Commissioner for Housing, DCA
Wesley Brooks, Deputy Commissioner for Homeownership, DCA
Kimberly Carter, Deputy Commissioner for Community Development, DCA
Laura Ann Holland, Director of Strategy and Key Initiatives, DCA

CC: Denise Farior, Division Director, Housing Finance Development, DCA
Samanta Carvalho, Division Director, Homeownership
Reggie Taylor, Division Director, Community Finance
Jermaine Durham, GICH Director, UGA

FROM: Austin Chancy, GICH Program Coordinator, DCA

RE: GICH Alumni Certification 2026 Approvals

DATE: April 6, 2026

Executive Summary

In 2026, 44 communities as part of the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) were successfully certified following review of submitted documentation and program participation requirements. Certification reflects continued commitment to housing planning, community engagement, and implementation of affordable housing strategies.

Introduction

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) is a three-year program that helps communities improve their quality of life and economic vitality through locally driven housing and revitalization strategies. Upon graduation from the program, communities can apply for alumni certification to demonstrate their continued participation in GICH. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has designated 44 GICH certified alumni communities in 2026. The purpose of certification is to encourage GICH alumni to continue their efforts of addressing affordable housing issues and shortages within their communities by using the Housing Plan document developed while participating in the program. Certified alumni communities are eligible for additional incentives through DCA's Housing Tax Credit, Community HOME Investment Program, and Community Development Block Grant programs.

Note: Based on feedback from our alumni, changes were implemented this cycle. Alumni certification is now a yearly application instead of every-other-year. We also now require communities to provide evidence of two meetings a year rather than one. Additionally, the continuing education requirement was removed.

Overview of 2026 Alumni Certification Process

This year, 45 GICH alumni communities applied for alumni certification in 2026. 44 were successful and were recertified. This is an increase from last year, when we had 38 certified communities. Each application was evaluated through a standardized scoring process requiring the completion of four key criteria, including:

1. Updating their GICH team roster
2. Attending at least one GICH retreat in 2025
3. Holding at least two team meetings with a majority of active team members in attendance in 2025

4. Updating their GICH housing plan within the last three years OR having their updated plan incorporated into a local planning document in the past three years

Currently Certified Alumni Communities

For DCA's purposes, the following is a comprehensive list of all communities who are currently certified as alumni. In all, there are currently 44 certified alumni communities and 5 recent graduates.

- Albany
- Athens-Clarke County
- Baldwin County
- Bartow County
- Blakely
- Brunswick
- Calhoun
- Centerville
- Chattooga County
- Colquitt
- Cordele
- Covington
- Dalton/Whitfield County
- Douglas
- Dublin
- East Point
- Eatonton
- Ellijay/East Ellijay/Gilmer County
- Gainesville/Hall County
- Griffin
- Hartwell
- LaFayette
- Liberty County
- Madison
- McRae-Helena
- Millen
- Newnan
- Norcross
- Pembroke
- Perry
- Hogansville/LaGrange/West Point/Troup County
- Rockmart
- Rome/Floyd County
- Statesboro
- Sylvester
- Thomasville
- Tifton
- Union City
- Valdosta
- Warner Robins
- Warrenton
- Washington
- Waynesboro
- Winder

Recent Graduates: Class of 2025 (Expires 1/1/2027)

- Canton
- Chamblee
- Gwinnett County
- Montezuma
- Villa Rica