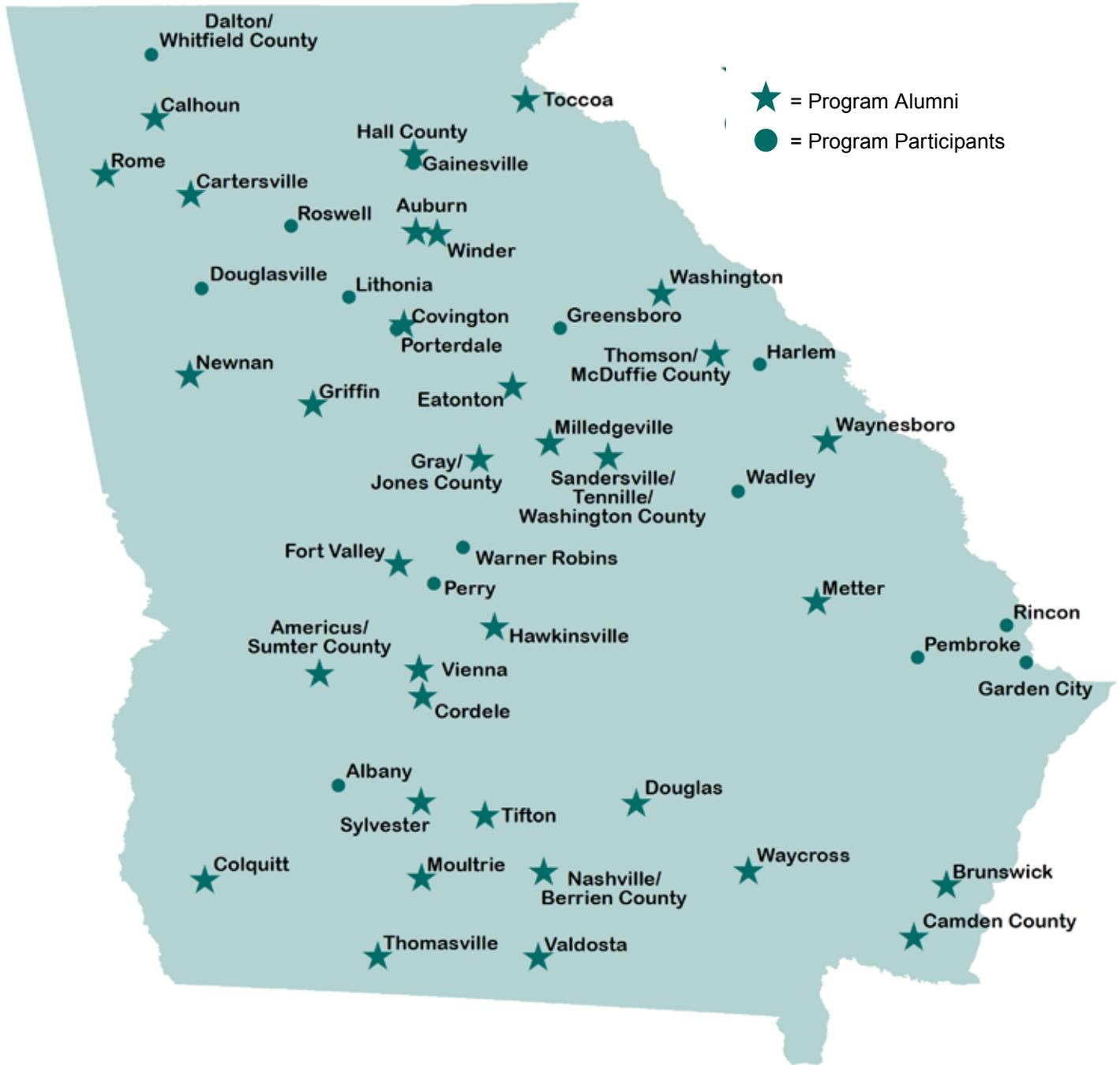




Georgia Initiative for Community Housing



Year Ten Progress Report - 2014

Executive Summary

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 50 Georgia communities during its first ten years. In 2014, the eighth class of communities: Gainesville, Garden City, Harlem, Wadley, and Warner Robins successfully completed the program, becoming GICH alumni.



In 2014, the freshman, sophomore and junior classes of GICH continued working to revitalize declining neighborhoods, create new affordable housing options, and provide financial and home buyer education to their residents. GICH provides a platform for teams to think of creative solutions and network ideas with housing professionals, city officials and staff, as well as community volunteers from across the state. Housing teams continued to make steady progress toward building the framework and relationships on which long term housing and community programs will be built.

The direct support of the GICH partners – the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), the University of Georgia (UGA) Housing and Demographics Research Center, and the UGA Office of the Vice President of Public Service and Outreach - included ongoing technical assistance, as well as the organization and sponsorship of retreats for the participating communities. In 2014, these retreats were hosted by the cities of Douglasville and Valdosta, where more than 150 community housing team members came together for facilitated work sessions, targeted assistance, networking and training by housing experts. Many of the initiatives implemented in the individual communities were a direct result of information shared at the GICH retreats. Additional in-kind support was provided by Georgia EMC, the UGA Archway Partnership, and the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Additional support is provided by the US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, through a Rural Community Development Initiative grant.

GICH communities are gaining a better understanding of their local housing needs, learning about housing and community development tools, and acquiring valuable information on available funding sources to assist them with addressing those needs. As evidenced by their accomplishments in this report, they are steadily enhancing their knowledge and effectiveness in addressing the issues in their communities. Communities moved forward on plans to revitalize their neighborhoods by conducting housing assessments, removing abandoned and dilapidated houses, obtaining grants for housing rehabilitation, partnering to develop units with Low-income Housing Tax Credits, and providing housing counseling. (See following page). Many GICH communities formed significant new partnerships, created new agencies/authorities and amended ordinances in support of their objectives.

With the tenth year of programming completed and in order to celebrate past accomplishments, make improvements to current programming, as well as plan for future enhancements and/or changes to the program, the principal partners (UGA, GMA, DCA, and Georgia Power) launched a year-long strategic planning effort in October 2014. Already, partners have updated the mission statement, conducted two, focus groups with key, alumni participants, and established GICH community liaisons for incoming housing teams.

GICH by the Numbers

Funds Awarded in 2014 - Number of Communities: 9

CHIP - \$975,043 (Dalton Housing Authority, Gainesville, Greensboro, Harlem, Wadley)

CDBG direct entitlement allocations to low-income housing activities – \$249,616 (Gainesville, Roswell, Warner Robins; Albany not included in amount)

HOME - \$1,000,000 (Gainesville)

Other – \$161,477 (Albany – GEFA, Dalton – Lowe's, Pembroke – Home Depot)

Number of Units - Number of Communities: 9

Constructed (or under construction) – 9 (Habitat)

Low Income Housing Tax Credits awarded in 2014 – 212 (Pembroke, Perry, Warner Robins)

Rehabilitated – 51

Removed abandoned or dilapidated – 29

Conducted (completed or working) housing assessments – 3

Housing Counseling, Down Payment Assistance - Number of Communities: 11

Housing Counseling – \$159,185 serving 1,407 clients

Georgia Dream First Mortgages & Down Payment Assistance – 234 loans (\$13,299,355)

New Activities – Number of Communities: 10

Code or ordinances implemented or updated

Albany – Updated Zoning regulations to include a “reasonable accommodations” policy for disabled individuals

Lithonia – Adopted a form-based Zoning Code for downtown and commercial core

Perry – Adopted a Blight Tax Ordinance; adopted a strategic plan with housing focus

Porterdale - International Property Maintenance strengthened; adopted a blight ordinance

Rincon – Adopted Code Enforcement Ordinance

Roswell – Adopted a form-based, unified development code

Warner Robins, Wadley - Adopted the International Property Maintenance Code

Positions created or filled

Albany – Grants Manager

Garden City - Director of Planning and Economic Development

Lithonia – Reserve Officers recruited to assist with code enforcement

Pembroke, Perry, Wadley - Code Enforcement Officer

Rincon - Community Development Planner

New agencies/organizations/authorities created

Albany - The Oaks at North Intown Development Corporation, Inc. (obtained 501 C 4 designation)

New partnerships formed

Albany - Re-entry coalition, Homeless Coalition, Flint River Habitat for Humanity, Albany Housing

Gainesville – Hall County Government

Garden City - Savannah Board of Realtors, Paper Clip, Patrick's, Randell and Deans Hair Salon, Lion Club, Garden City United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church of Garden City, Jasper Springs Baptist Church, YouthWorks

Greensboro - ATLAS Ministries

Lithonia - DeKalb County Community and Human Development

Pembroke - W.H Gross Construction and the US Army

Perry - Fuller Center for Housing, Habitat for Humanity, Perry Volunteer Outreach

Porterdale – Energema, housing counseling agency

Rincon - Family Promise, a local homeless prevention non-profit agency

Albany

The City of Albany's primary focus in 2014 was on the development of a GICH Target Area and the formation of partnerships. In partnership with the Albany Housing Authority, the City of Albany's Code Enforcement Department, and other local agencies, the City demolished the "Blue Houses," dilapidated structures within the target area. This vacant property is slated for the development of multi-family housing financed through Low-income Housing Tax Credits (application to be made June 2015). In addition, the City has removed 12 abandoned houses and rehabilitated 29 houses using CDBG funds and 122 clients are receiving housing counseling. The City of Albany adopted a "reasonable accommodations" policy applicable to zoning regulations dealing with housing for disabled individuals and hired a new Grants Manager. A new non-profit, The Oaks at North Intown Development Corporation, Inc., is seeking designation as a local Community Development Housing Organization. An important partnership with the Flint River Habitat for Humanity and the Albany Housing Authority was formed in relation to the Re-entry and Homeless Coalition. The City was awarded a \$154,944 grant from DCA and GEFA for weatherization, housing counseling and Emergency Shelter. The City of Albany has a direct entitlement for CDBG and HOME funds which were used for variety of housing activities, including the construction of a senior duplex development of 10 units and 2 single family homes built by Habitat for Humanity.



Albany rehabilitation

Douglasville

The City of Douglasville's GICH team focused on team building and organizing and created vision and mission statements. They held several housing events and increased awareness through social media. The team held its first homebuyer workshop. With more than 10 vendors, the event highlighted DCA's Georgia Dream Homeownership Program. In partnership with Georgia Power and the Tallatoona Community Partnership, the GICH team hosted a weatherization educational event. Another event was convened for the Mayor and city council, city staff, and the GICH team to gain an understanding of what developers look for in communities. Tax credit consultants attended and participants heard a presentation on the CDBG program. The team is partnering with the University of West Georgia to conduct an inventory of all residential properties in the city. In addition, the team created a logo and city staff created a Douglasville Housing Group Facebook page.

Perry

The City of Perry's GICH team focused on improving blighted conditions in targeted areas and garnering community support for their overall housing work plan. The team held three community clean-up days in the Sand Hill and New Hope neighborhoods and a fourth was

held in March 2015. A major success of the team was the adoption of a Blight Tax Ordinance, which will increase the millage rate on dilapidated properties by a factor of seven. Increased code enforcement efforts included a newly created Code Enforcement Officer position and approval from Council to demolish four dilapidated houses. The City is partnering with the City of Warner Robins and Houston County to establish a Land Bank Authority. Oliver Place, a development of 100 apartment units, was awarded Low-income Housing Tax Credits and construction will begin next year. The team formed partnerships with the Fuller Center for Housing, Habitat for Humanity and Perry Volunteer Outreach. Other activities include: the adoption of a housing-focused City strategic plan, completion of a Master Plan, as well as a market analysis of the City with a focus on downtown housing.



After Habitat for Humanity completion

Porterdale

The primary focus of the City of Porterdale's GICH team is to increase homeownership by 15%. The team has formed partnerships with Energema, a housing counseling agency, United Bank, Hometown Realty and the Newton County bar to provide an incentive package for homeownership. A homeownership brochure was delivered to every renter in the City, and new homeowners have noted that without these incentives (free inspection, exterior paint, and discounted garbage service) they would not have purchased in the area. Increased code enforcement is a parallel goal of the team. The city adopted the International Property Maintenance code and a Blight Tax Ordinance. In addition, UGA students participating in a Housing and Community Development course completed a housing assessment of the "New Town" target area, and the city was awarded a \$266,000 CDBG grant for housing rehabilitation.



Porterdale rehabilitation

Rincon

The main focus of the City of Rincon's GICH team was conducting an assessment of the housing within the city. This was completed through a partnership with a Savannah State University graduate student, who will also analyze the data related to the need for workforce housing. The City updated the Nuisance Ordinance and created a new Community Development Planner position. In order to refocus and renew commitment to the team, a motto was developed and Lamar Smith Signature Homes designed a logo and donated shirts to the group. A new partnership was formed with Family Promise, a local homeless prevention non-profit agency and a program of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. A lot for a Habitat home was rezoned from Mobile Home to Single-family Residential and the city waived most of the building permit fees. The City is implementing water and sewer upgrades through a CDBG grant.

Dalton

The main focus of the City of Dalton's GICH team is improving the housing stock within the East side of the city, the Housing Authority and surrounding neighborhoods. The team has been successful in funding their projects. Three \$300,000 CHIP grants were awarded for rehabilitation of elderly, owner-occupied homes in neighborhoods surrounding the Housing Authority, scattered sites in Whitfield County, and for the Crown Mill area. GICH team members surveyed over 150 properties door-to-door to confirm homes that were in need of repairs. The Dalton Housing Authority was awarded \$1,500 from the Lowes Heroes program for materials and established a tenant community garden with the help of Lowes volunteers. The team has applied for a Scott's GRO1000 grant to furnish tools and plants and help educate tenants about sustaining the garden. An application was submitted to the Home Depot Foundation to renovate a house which will provide housing for a local veteran. The Dalton Area Project is a youth volunteer program and this year, for seven days, the kids assisted in minor rehabilitation of 26 homes owned by elderly residents. The Housing Authority received approval for 2014 CDBG funding to renovate two duplexes (Vann Circle) and hopes they will be rented to four individuals in the Shelter + Care program. The cost of the project is estimated at \$200,000 and the City committed \$165,400 of the CDBG funds. The Dalton GICH Team also completed the 2013 CDBG project for the street/curb improvement on the west side of Underwood Circle and a street extension. This created a grid pattern, which physically connected two Housing Authority neighborhoods, improved access and safety, and complements planning for future development. The Housing Authority has contracted with the PACES Foundation for assistance with LIHTC application for both new construction and renovation to existing units. Dalton continues to provide housing counseling and this year 316 clients were enrolled in classes.



Dalton rehabilitation

Greensboro

The primary focus of the Greensboro GICH team was to engage the community, create a vision for housing and educate the team. The Mary Leila Mill, a 71-unit development for family housing, is under construction and property acquisition for water improvements is underway. Together with Low-income Housing Tax Credits and CDBG funding reported last year for Mary Leila Mill, the City was awarded a CHIP Grant (\$300,000) for Mill Village Housing Rehabilitation this year. Partnering with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, a housing needs assessment was completed for the neighborhoods in the Urban Redevelopment Plan target areas. In addition, the city is allocating SPLOST funding to improve streetscape and enhance connectivity to the target neighborhood. The



The Mary Leila Mill under construction

GICH team forged a new partnership with ATLAS Ministries, Inc. and made a site visit to the City of Porterdale to learn about successful Mill Village rehabilitation. The team is also gathering information and having preliminary discussions about the possibility of a Blight Tax Ordinance and a Land Bank Authority.

Lithonia

The primary focus of the City of Lithonia's GICH team was establishing a sense of community and continuing to build the team. The housing team continued outreach to the community to identify their concerns and suggestions on addressing abandoned and dilapidated houses. A housing information session was held that provided an opportunity for resource participants to share in greater detail the extent of available services. This fostered a greater collaboration with several partners, including DeKalb County Community and Human Development. A form-based zoning code was adopted to facilitate development opportunities in the downtown and commercial core of the city and more reserve officers have been recruited to assist with code enforcement efforts. The team submitted a request for assistance from the UGA Housing and Community Development service learning class for spring 2015. For 2015, the Lithonia GICH team plans to conduct a housing needs assessment and pursue grant opportunities for housing development and other community improvements projects.

Pembroke

The primary focus for the City of Pembroke's Housing Team was on the development of Code Enforcement. Through this effort, the Pembroke Police Department and Code Enforcement Division implemented a Community Oriented Policing Strategy to aid in the implementation of the ordinances and guidelines set forth by the City of Pembroke. One post certified code enforcement officer was hired. The housing inventory and assessment survey results indicated a need for adequate workforce housing. In partnership with W.H. Gross, the City of Pembroke, Downtown Development Authority of Pembroke, and Pembroke Housing Team, the city was awarded its first LIHTC for Sawmill Landing in 2014. The project will include 60 workforce housing townhome 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. A \$5,000 grant from the Home Depot Foundation was received for Veteran Porch Repair and ADA Housing Rehabilitation. The City of Pembroke and the Downtown Development Authority of Pembroke entered into an agreement with the Coastal Regional Commission for the development of an Urban Redevelopment Plan. This will be a two-year, interactive community process and will aid in long term planning for the city.



Veteran porch repair project

Roswell

The City of Roswell's GICH team mission is to promote strategies that support the Roswell economy through workforce and lifelong housing options. In 2014, the team worked with community partners in

support of this mission, convened a series of educational outreach sessions for various groups and worked to develop new affordable housing opportunities and preserve existing affordable housing units. Team members presented previous survey and research findings and garnered the support of city council. In addition, the team advocated for a new, form-based, unified development code, which was rewritten and approved this year. The Housing Authority of the City of Roswell provided funding for the development of a LIHTC application in support of the Veranda at Groveway Apartments and acquired Myrtle Street Apartments. Twenty-eight 28 units will be rehabilitated and leased. In 2014, the City allocated \$74,616 or 17% of CDBG funds and 90% of HOME funds for low income housing initiatives. Habitat for Humanity (Brush with Kindness program) and HomeStretch are among the non-profits receiving funds for acquisition and/or home repairs.

Gainesville

The City of Gainesville's GICH team continued work on a housing inventory and assessment, and the city is taking steps to create a Land Bank Authority in partnership with Hall County. The City of Gainesville was awarded \$1 million for the development of affordable single family housing through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs 2014 HOME Homeownership and Small Rental Housing Development Program. Phase one of this project will provide five new affordable homes. The City was also awarded a \$306,000 CHIP grant for Down Payment assistance and Housing Rehabilitation. The Team continues to work closely with the Gainesville Housing Authority on plans to submit a LIHTC application next year. Using \$100,000 in CDBG funding, Gateway House plans to construct an additional three apartments for transitional housing, as well as a community room for residents. During 2014, the City completed four emergency assistance repairs, repaired sidewalks on 15 streets and demolished two dilapidated homes. In addition, 11 homeowners voluntarily demolished structures, one home was reconstructed, one home was substantially rehabilitated, four properties were acquired and 62 residents received housing counseling.

Garden City

The City of Garden City GICH team is focused on directly helping low income residents with their housing needs. The team has not received any major grant funding and has relied on building partnerships and working with volunteer residents and groups (Neighbors Helping Neighbors). They continue to promote their work by providing updates at City Council meetings and also through the local newspaper. In September, the GICH team hosted their first housing fair with 25 vendors including the Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Power, local realtors, and bank and mortgage representatives. With positive feedback from both residents and vendors, the event was a success. The team meets monthly and organizes minor rehabilitation projects, such as repainting homes, ADA accessibility improvements, and yard work for seniors. New partnerships this year include



Yard work for seniors project

the Savannah Board of Realtors, the Lions Club, YouthWorks, three churches and several local businesses. Furthermore, the housing team is working on establishing a 501(C)(3). The city hired a new Director of Planning and Economic Development and updated the city's ordinance to encourage residents to remove trash cans from the street in a timely manner.

Harlem

In 2014, the City of Harlem's GICH team completed an Urban Redevelopment Plan which focuses on revitalization of the city's downtown and adjacent residential areas. The plan was developed through active participation of city officials, residents and GICH team members. The City of Harlem was awarded their first CHIP grant (\$306,000) for housing rehabilitation and received a waiver to use revolving loan funds for demolition in the CDBG target area. In an effort to preserve exciting neighborhoods, the team continues to

work with the school system on locating new schools near existing sites. At the same time the GICH team is working to improve the environment for housing in the City. City staff and elected officials have worked to strengthen relations with Fort Gordon. These efforts have positioned the City to capitalize on the expected growth of 20,000 new residents due to the relocation of Cyber Command to Fort Gordon.



CHIP grant for housing rehabilitation

Wadley

The Wadley GICH team incorporated the new "Leaving an Inheritance" logo on all promotional materials and ads. They hosted their 2nd annual Housing Fair and 2nd annual NACA workshop. Working with the Georgia Southern College Bureau of Business and Economic Development they completed the GAP study for the city. With GICH team encouragement, the city of Wadley adopted the International Building Codes and created a position for a Code Enforcement officer; is working on the creation of Historic Preservation Ordinances and the forming of a Historic Commission; and is considering funding for new landscaping and signage on the gateway. The team continues to work with the Regional Commission on completion of their Housing Assessment and while doing so is gathering information from residents on "What Wadley Wants". A new industrial plant slated for the area will bring 100+ new jobs and the need for additional housing, so the team is working to gather information and encourage a LIHTC developer to consider an affordable rental development in the city.

Warner Robins

The Warner Robins GICH team continues progress on community involvement and awareness, neighborhood revitalization and building additional partnerships. Revitalization efforts are targeted to two declining neighborhoods: Camellia Circle and Wellston Villas and include improving infrastructure, enforcing the city building code, and replacing dilapidated structures with new tax producing affordable housing. Code Officers continue to utilize the housing assessment tool to identify substandard and dilapidated houses. With CDBG funding, 18 homes were rehabilitated. Two abandoned/dilapidated houses were removed, the local Habitat for Humanity chapter constructed three homes, and 25

residents received housing counseling services. The GICH team hosted the City's second, successful housing fair, providing education about available local housing resources to area residents. The City adopted the International Property Maintenance Code and the City Attorney began working on by-laws to establish a Land Bank Authority. A developer was awarded Low-income Housing Tax Credits for Potemkin Senior Village of Warner Robins II, a 52-unit apartment building for seniors. The City continues to partner with Rebuilding Together and allocating \$75,000 of CDBG funds for housing rehabilitation.



Housing fair

The Initiative's Eleventh Year: Looking Ahead to Progress

In November 2014, GICH selected five very qualified communities to participate in the program: Cedartown, Liberty County, Pine Mountain, Madison, and Trion. Joining the other 10 participating communities, these cities will convene for two retreats in 2015: in Macon (February) and in Tifton (September). As always, communities continue to receive technical assistance in the intervening months to ensure forward progress on designing and implementing their housing plans. Program partners will continue to develop and implement the strategic plan, as well as sponsor a special housing conference on October 21 on the UGA campus in Athens which will showcase successful initiatives undertaken by GICH communities during the past ten years.



Georgia Initiative for Community Housing

Partners



Founding Sponsor



The UGA Archway Partnership, UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government, UGA Extension and the Georgia EMC provide in-kind support, and the program is partially funded by a USDA Rural Development RCDI grant.



Georgia Initiative for
Community Housing
www.fcs.uga.edu/fhce/gich