

Georgia[®] Department of Community Affairs

November/December 2015

IN THE NEWS

Local leaders brush up on complex issues facing Georgia's regions

Georgia Academy for Economic Development graduates 200+ public servants, officials and community leaders in Fall 2015



The Georgia Academy for Economic Development saw more than 200 local leaders complete a four-session course offered in half of the state's regions in Fall 2015. Pictured at Southern Regional Technical College in Moultrie are graduates from Region 10 in Southwest Georgia. Regions 1, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 11 will have programs offered in their areas in Spring 2016.

The Board of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development, a DCA-administered and sponsored program, announced recently that over 200 local leaders from six regions across the state have graduated from the 2015 Regional Multi-Day Training Program in Regions 2, 3, 4, 7, 10 and 12.

Class participants included elected officials, public servants, business leaders, and educators. The Academy provided each of the graduates an opportunity to gain a unique understanding of the complexities of economic and community development on the local, regional and state levels.

Created in 1993, the Academy assembles a cross section of economic



Community Done Right success stories are a result of local governments adopting a partnership attitude with DCA and with each other and are examples to follow for all Georgia communities.

REGION 3:

City of Suwanee to extend Town Center area

Gwinnett County may soon see an addition to its vibrant and award-winning Town Center in Suwanee with the potential to bring more residents, commercial opportunities, and energy to the current development through housing, retail and restaurant space.

The City of Suwanee Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has taken initial steps to enter a public-private partnership with developer Terwilliger-Pappas that will create a mixed-use multifamily/retail building at Chicago Street and Buford Highway adjacent to Town Center.

"This could be a win for all of us," says Mayor Jimmy Burnette.



Suwanee's beautiful City Hall and park, shown here dressed for the holidays, already serve as an anchor and landmark in the Town Center development.

The proposed development, a \$46 million project, on a 3.5-acre tract currently owned by the DDA, is expected to feature a five-story structure with 10,000 square feet of street-level commercial, retail and restaurant space and 235 high-end apartments. The project also is expected to include a parking garage around which the mixed-use structure will be built.

The primarily one- and two-bedroom residences are expected to appeal to professional millennials and empty-nesters and would further the City's efforts to be a lifelong community.

"We fully expect that these apartments will set the bar for quality in Gwinnett County," says Suwanee's Downtown Manager Adam Edge, "and that rental rates will exceed those of any similar existing Gwinnett County development. Studies have shown that Town Center has some of the highest property values in the county. We believe that this project will not just contribute to, but enhance, Town Center's value."

The new development will have a similar look and feel to the current Town Center area and will employ first-class building materials and architecture and offer top-quality amenities. City Manager Marty Allen notes that previous master plans, dating back to the 2002 Old Town Master Plan and including the recently completed 2015 Downtown Suwanee

development professionals and resources to provide this training in all 12 service delivery regions in Georgia. The Board of Directors of the Academy represent public and private economic development organizations and agencies from across Georgia. Since its inception, the Academy has provided training for thousands of leaders and economic developers around the state; and since 1998, the Academy has been offered annually. Georgia EMC and Georgia Power provide facilitators for the program, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs provides staff support.

"One of the goals for the multi-day regional Academies is to encourage multi-county cooperation," says Corinne Thornton, director of the Georgia Academy and DCA's Community Services team representative for Region 4. "Many times the participants discover the issues facing their community are the same as those facing other communities in their region and can then combine limited resources to address the issue."

The Academy's multi-day program, taught one day a month over a four-month period, includes training in the basics of economic and community development, plus specialized segments on business recruitment and retention, tourism product development, downtown development, planning, and other essentials for community success. In addition, the curriculum features specific leadership skills such as consensus building, ethics in public service, collaborative leadership, and other segments needed for effective community leadership in economic development. Local elected officials may receive certification training credits through the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association for completion of this program.

The Spring 2016 Georgia Academy for Economic Development classes will begin in February. See below for regions, locations and session dates:

Region 1 Rome

February 16, March 16, April 21 and May 26

Region 5 Athens

February 3, March 2, April 6 and May 4

Region 6 Smarr

February 2, March 1, April 5 and May 3

Region 8 Americus

February 16, March 16, April 26 and May 25

Region 9 Vidalia

February 23, March 22, April 20 and May 17

Region 11 Tifton

February 24, March 23, April 27 and June 1

For more information on how to apply for the cohort in your region for Spring 2016, please complete the [Georgia Academy for Economic Development contact form](#) or contact Corinne.Thornton@dca.ga.gov.

Master Plan Update, created a vision for this property.

Developed from 2003-2009, Suwanee Town Center has won numerous planning awards, including the prestigious Atlanta Regional Commission's Development of Excellence Award in 2009.

"We have a proven track record with Town Center of master planning our vision and then working with the private sector to implement that vision," says Allen.

For more information on projects like this one as well as program opportunities offered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in Gwinnett County and the surrounding area, contact DCA Region 3 Community Services Division Representative John VanBrunt at John.VanBrunt@dca.ga.gov.

IN OTHER NEWS

State housing assistance coming to five more Georgia communities



Five Georgia communities have been newly selected to receive assistance with their housing needs through the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), a public-private initiative focused on helping communities strategically grow their economies through housing-related solutions.

Athens-Clarke County, Evans County, and the cities of Millen, Monroe and Rockmart will begin the three-year program in February. Through training and technical instruction during a series of retreats, community housing teams

Eight Georgia communities honored for promoting affordable housing and project innovation

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) celebrates 10th anniversary with awards for 2015



Dr. Tom Rodgers, a retired founder of the GICH program and Professor Emeritus at the UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS), pictured center, was recognized as a "GICH Champion." With Rodgers, from left, is UGA FACS GICH Program Coordinator Karen Tinsley, Georgia DCA Housing Outreach Coordinator Malisa Thompson, UGA Public Service and Outreach Associate Vice President Steve Dempsey, and Georgia Municipal Association Deputy Executive Director Bill Thornton.

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) program recognized the cities of Covington, Gainesville, Pembroke, Rome, Thomasville, Valdosta, Vienna and Washington for their efforts to increase affordable housing and to revitalize their communities at the "Celebrating a Decade of Success" awards event held Oct. 21 at the UGA Georgia Center in Athens.

"With the ongoing support of our Founding Sponsor, the Georgia Power Company, GICH has facilitated progress toward housing stability in 55 Georgia communities. Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the GICH program by recognizing outstanding examples of affordable housing projects and innovations by GICH communities," said Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Deputy Commissioner for Housing Carmen Chubb from the event stage.

Launched in 2004, GICH helps communities improve their quality of life and economic vitality through the development of housing and revitalization strategies. GICH offers communities a three-year program of collaboration and technical assistance. During a community's participation, team members work to create and launch a locally-based plan to meet local housing needs.

All GICH communities were invited to submit applications for five award categories - Adaptive Reuse, Affordable Rental Housing, Community Outreach & Engagement, Homeownership, and Neighborhood Revitalization. Based upon review of the quality of the applications

design and implement strategies to enhance their economies as well as the quality of life for their citizens. During these work sessions, each team will work with and receive continuous feedback from a facilitator or housing professional, as well as engage in cross-community collaboration.

"GICH has made a measurable impact for its participating communities, enabling them to create and launch locally-based plans to meet their housing and neighborhood revitalization needs. I am excited that each class of communities and their housing teams engage in cross-community collaboration and in the development of creative solutions," said Commissioner Camila Knowles of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, a partner in the initiative. "These teams form the foundation which long-term housing and community development will be built upon."

The teams consist of about 12 members and include representatives from local government, business, nonprofit housing organizations, and the public housing authority. Other groups may include faith-based organizations, churches, development authorities, chambers of commerce, school systems, major employers, and law enforcement.

Fifty-five Georgia communities have benefited from the GICH program since its inception in 2005. The communities currently enrolled in the program are Albany, Cedartown, Douglasville, Liberty County, Madison, Perry, Pine Mountain, Porterdale, Rincon and Trion.

Some of the resulting strategies undertaken by communities include revitalizing distressed neighborhoods and subdivisions, developing multi-family apartments through tax credits, updating codes and ordinances, creating a land bank authority, writing an urban redevelopment plan, conducting a

received, the awards committee included two additional categories, Community Transformation and Housing Innovation, to adequately recognize the results achieved.

The panel of experts considered the following criteria in making their recommendations for awards: measurable benefits to affordable housing in Georgia; the degree to which the project or innovation can be replicated; how well the project or innovation responds to the identified need or opportunity; and cost-effectiveness.

Award winners

Adaptive Reuse Award: *The City of Valdosta*

Affordable Rental Housing Award: *The City of Pembroke*

Community Outreach & Engagement Award: *The City of Washington*

Homeownership Award: *The City of Thomasville*

Neighborhood Revitalization Awards: *The Cities of Gainesville and Vienna*

Community Transformation Award: *The City of Rome*

Housing Innovation Award: *The City of Covington*

GICH is a collaboration of partners including: 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; UGA's Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach; the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and the Georgia Municipal Association. The GICH program is funded by Georgia Power as well as the USDA, through a Rural Community Development Initiative grant. Additional in-kind services are provided by UGA's Archway Partnership and the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, both units of the UGA Office of Public Service and Outreach, and the Georgia Electric Membership Corporation.

State recognizes seven cities/counties for planning in advance

Second year of "PlanFirst" designation brings funding, visibility



housing assessment, and launching community clean-up programs.

Up to five communities are selected through a competitive process each year to participate in the initiative. Communities are selected based on need and their demonstrated commitment to community improvement. Any city, county or public housing authority in Georgia is eligible to apply on behalf of a community housing team. Applications are due each September.

DCA reps hit the Big Apple for bonds to benefit first-time home buyers



Members of DCA's Executive Team and Housing Group, as well as DCA Board member Frank Turner and cfX Client Relationship Manager Kenny Pops, traveled to Wall Street in New York City in early December to offer \$111 million in bonds to the market to fund the Georgia Dream Homeownership Program for first-time home buyers. DCA holds a "AAA" rating, which is the highest possible rating, from Standard and Poor's. The Georgia Housing Finance Authority, or GHFA, the legal issuer of the bonds and whose programs are administered by DCA, is one of only nine AAA-rated housing finance agencies in the nation.

The City of Madison, with its Town Park area shown above, was one of ten communities given the "PlanFirst" designation in the program's inaugural year of 2015. Seven new Georgia communities were recently recognized for 2016 as having a great track record of plan development and implementation.
PHOTO CREDIT: The Georgia Department of Economic Development

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) announced Nov. 18 that seven Georgia communities have received statewide distinction in a program recognizing excellence in community planning. Columbus-Muscogee County, the City of Dublin, Gwinnett County, Liberty County, the City of Lula, the City of Porterdale, and the City of Roswell have each achieved the state of Georgia's "PlanFirst" designation for 2016.

The distinction acknowledges communities that have a proven track record of implementing their plan and a history of good plan development. This group of seven communities is only the second to have been given the designation. These communities are representative of the variety of local governments across the state -- urban and rural, large and small, cities, counties, and one consolidated government.

"We are honored to recognize these communities for their comprehensive planning and consistent use of planning strategies," said DCA Director of the Office of Planning & Environmental Management Brian Johnson. "It is fundamental for sound economic development and enhanced quality of life for residents. DCA values their commitment to planning at the local level."

The PlanFirst program received 15 applications in its second year. Eligible communities were required to address four primary program criteria: goals, leadership, community participation, and implementation. The designation will last for three years, beginning Jan. 1, 2016, and enables these communities to take advantage of various incentives that include public visibility, eligibility for funding, and reduced interest rates on certain DCA and Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) programs.

"We are in the second year of this program, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that more governments than ever are using their plans to move their communities forward. A fully thought-out plan, with ambitious yet achievable goals, is extremely important in steering a community into a prosperous future," added DCA Planning Outreach Coordinator Adriane Wood. "The PlanFirst program recognizes those communities and rewards them for shaping their own futures together."

The newly-designated communities join the inaugural group of ten communities that received the designation as the PlanFirst class of 2015. Those communities were Athens-Clarke County, Coweta County, Johnson County, Jones County and the cities of Braselton, Gainesville, Madison, Suwanee, Vienna and Woodstock.

The next deadline for applications is May 15, 2016. More information about the program is available at [DCA's Planning and Quality Growth/PlanFirst webpage.](#)

DCA representatives hear from Southwest Georgia leaders at Regional Commission



DCA Community Services Division Director Saralyn Stafford, pictured third from left, and DCA Field Services CDBG representative Casey Moore, fifth from left, attended the Southwest Georgia Regional Commission's annual Legislative Appreciation reception in Camilla Oct. 29 and enjoyed hearing from Representatives Ed Rynders of District 152, pictured far left, and Darrel Ealum of District 153, fourth from left. The regional representatives from the offices of U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson, U.S. Sen. David Perdue, Congressman Sanford Bishop, and Secretary of State Brian Kemp also spoke briefly. Also pictured, in order from left, are Robert McDaniel, executive director of the SWGA Regional Commission; Michael Bryant, regional representative for Congressman Bishop; Charles White, regional representative for Sen. Perdue; Josh Watson of Secretary Kemp's office; Jody Redding, regional representative for Sen. Isakson; and Scott Maxwell of Mathews & Maxwell, Inc.

Communities that apply but are not selected are eligible for a one-on-one technical assistance visit to improve on their application for future designation rounds. This assistance will allow any community the opportunity to target those items and improve before the next round of applications is due.

The Department of Community Affairs developed the program with a steering committee comprised of partners including the Georgia Municipal Association, Association County Commissioner of Georgia, the Georgia Planning Association, the Regional Commissions, and the University of Georgia Archways program, and other state agencies including the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, the Historic Preservation Division and Environmental Protection Division.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

October & November 2015 Financial Awards

Region 6: Wilkinson County

The City of Allentown in Wilkinson County was awarded a \$15,507 reimbursement for repairs made to its primary well through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Immediate Threat and Danger (ITD) program. The project will benefit 167 persons of whom 85 are low- to moderate-income.

Region 8: Macon County

The City of Montezuma in Macon County was awarded \$42,058 in interim assistance to demolish a collapsed building and stabilize the surrounding buildings through the CDBG/ITD program.

Region 9: Jeff Davis County

The City of Hazlehurst in Jeff Davis County was awarded \$247,977 in CDBG Employment Incentive (EIP) grant funds to assist with the construction of public water improvements to serve the Beasley Forest Products facility. Within 24 months, the company plans to rebuild and expand their kiln dried production and warehouse facility, creating 41 new jobs adding to the 250 existing jobs and investing approximately \$15 million.

Region 11: Clinch County

The City of Homerville in Clinch County was awarded \$226,944 in CDBG/EIP grant funds to assist with the construction of public water improvements to serve the Dupont Yard, Inc. facility. Within 24 months, the company plans to expand their current wood and timber product facility, creating 24 new jobs adding to the 60 existing jobs and investing approximately \$330,000.

Region 12: Effingham County

The City of Rincon in Effingham County was awarded \$500,000 in CDBG/EIP grant funds to assist with the construction of public road improvements to serve the Kroger Company's proposed new Kroger Marketplace grocery store and fuel service center. Within 24 months, Kroger plans to construct



a new 120,000 sq. ft. retail center creating 68 new, full-time equivalent jobs and investing approximately \$23,303,642.

[The OneGeorgia Authority also awarded ten Equity grants during the Summer and Fall 2015 awards cycles totaling more than \\$2.6 million. See the complete list here.](#)

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[Camila Knowles, Commissioner](#)

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