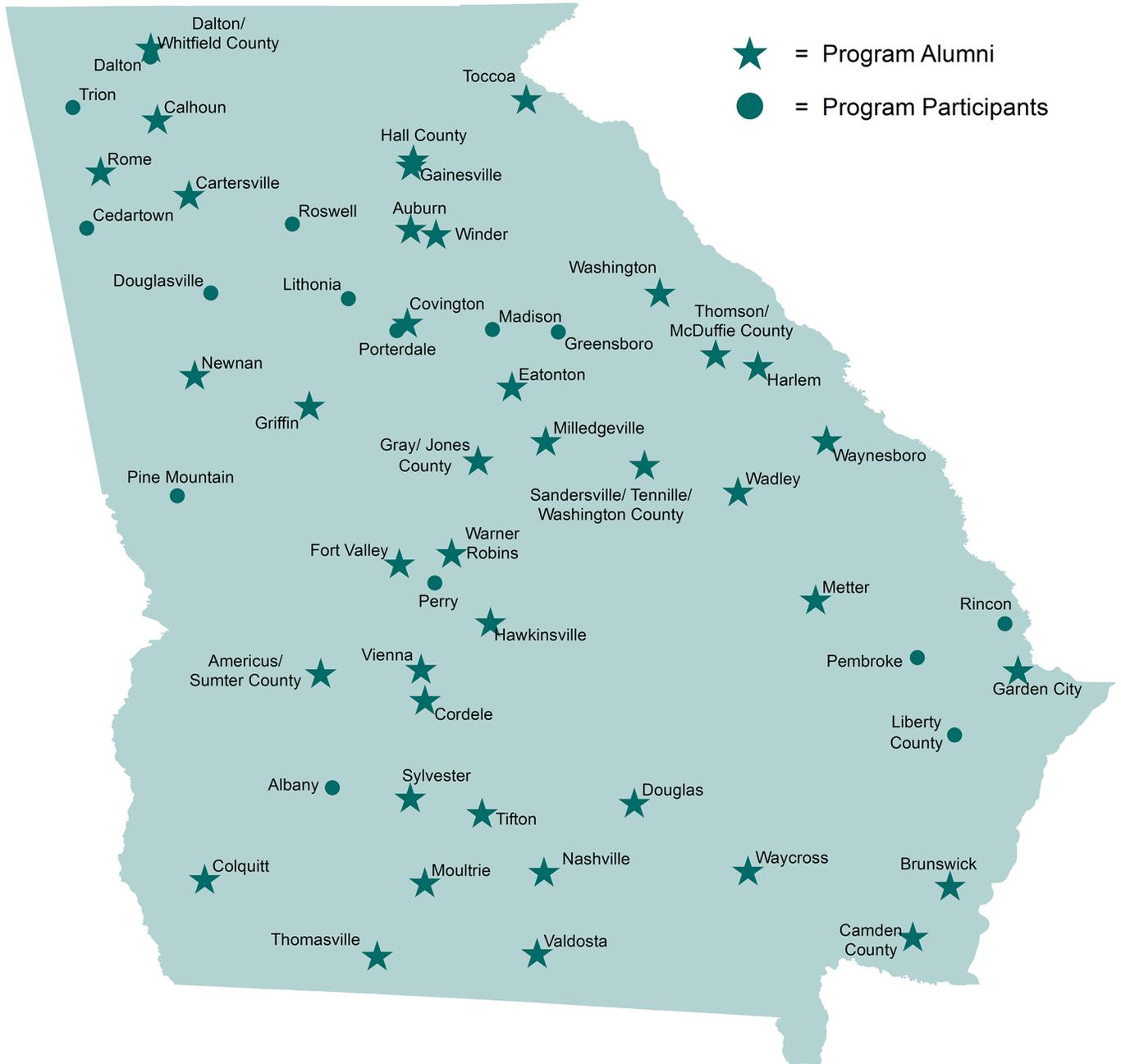




Georgia Initiative for Community Housing



Year Eleven Progress Report - 2015

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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 55 Georgia communities during its first eleven years. In 2015, the ninth class of communities: Dalton, Greensboro, Lithonia, Pembroke, and Roswell successfully completed the program, becoming GICH alumni.

The 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. Additional in-kind support was provided by Georgia EMC, the UGA Archway Partnership, the UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and UGA Extension. Additional support is provided by the US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, through a Rural Community Development Initiative grant.

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. In 2015, 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. Retreats were hosted by the cities of Macon and Tifton, where more than 150 community housing team members came together for facilitated work sessions, targeted assistance, networking and training by housing experts. 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. Many of the initiatives implemented in the individual communities were a direct result of information shared at the GICH retreats.

As identified during the strategic planning efforts of 2014, a statewide housing conference was planned and convened on October 21, 2015 at the UGA Georgia Center for Continuing Education in Athens. A centerpiece of the conference was an awards luncheon: **“Celebrating a Decade of Success.”** GICH 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. The seven award categories were Adaptive Reuse, Affordable Rental Housing, Community Outreach & Engagement, Homeownership, Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Transformation and Housing Innovation. In addition, 13 GICH Champions were recognized as individuals who have given countless, volunteer hours to the program since the beginning.

GICH by the Numbers

Funds Awarded in 2015 - Number of Communities: 9

CHIP - no awards made by DCA in 2015

CDBG - \$2,262,200

Low Income Housing Tax Credits - \$2,806,717

(Annual awards to developers in Albany, Cedartown, Liberty County, Lithonia)

HOME - \$1,025,000 (Cedartown)

Other -

Trion - \$6,000 Habitat for Humanity Coosa Valley from the Tillotson Foundation

Pembroke - \$625,000 Drug Free Coalition, Grant Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Number of Units - Number of Communities: 14

Constructed (or under construction) - 7 (Habitat)

Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments - 243

Rehabilitated - 243

Removed abandoned or dilapidated - 29

Conducted (completed or working) housing assessments - 3

Housing Counseling, Down Payment Assistance

Housing Counseling - \$75,000 serving 449 households with pre-purchase, post-purchase, and foreclosure prevention counseling

Georgia Dream First Mortgages & Down Payment Assistance - \$9,895,622

87 loans in 7 communities - Albany, Lithonia, Douglasville, Perry, Madison, Roswell, Liberty

New Activities - Number of Communities: 10

Code or ordinances implemented or updated

Cedartown - Blight Tax Ordinance

Greensboro - Corridor Overlay Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance updated regarding Personal Care Homes

Madison - International Property Maintenance Code; updated Transferable Development Rights Ordinance

Porterdale - Local Historic District Ordinance

Roswell - Uniform Development Code

Trion - International Property Maintenance Code

Positions created or filled

Cedartown - Code Enforcement Officer

Lithonia - AmeriCorps VISTA (3 positions)

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Madison - Grant writer retained

Pembroke - City Planner

New agencies/organizations/authorities created

Lithonia - Formalized relationship with DeKalb Regional Land Bank Authority

Pembroke - Urban Redevelopment Board

New partnerships formed

Liberty County - Hinesville Housing Authority, Keep Liberty Beautiful

Lithonia - Wendover Housing Group

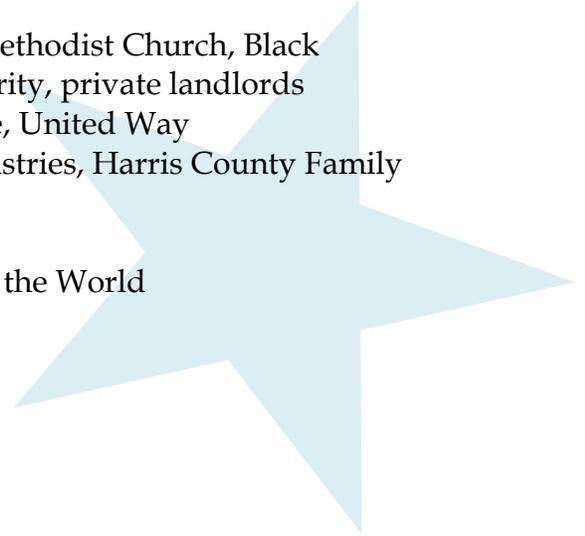
Madison - Faith based community, led by First United Methodist Church, Black Ministers Association, Downtown Development Authority, private landlords

Pembroke - Bryan County Cooperative Extension Service, United Way

Pine Mountain - Habitat for Humanity, Square Foot Ministries, Harris County Family Connection, Wells Fargo and others

Roswell - Child Development Center

Trion - Habitat for Humanity Coosa Valley Woodmen of the World



FRESHMAN

Cedartown The primary focus of the City of Cedartown CIGH team is the eradication of blighted properties and providing quality housing options for residents. The city has made notable advancements in its effort to clean up neighborhoods and has demolished two structures. Importantly, although the city had a court order allowing demolition, the city negotiated with the property owners to demolish the structures themselves, at no cost to taxpayers. Cedartown has hired an



additional code enforcement officer to tackle minor code violations like grass overgrowth and trash on property, allowing the city's other code enforcement officer to dedicate more time to focus on identifying and eradicating blight. In addition, in August of 2014, the Cedartown City Commission adopted an ad valorem tax increase ordinance on blighted properties. Revenues are used only for community redevelopment purposes. Although the city has not levied this tax, it is available if needed. Two housing activities underway are sure to have a big impact on improving quality housing options in Cedartown: a \$20 million renovation of Cedartown Housing Authority property and a 62-townhome development utilizing Housing Tax Credits. CDBG funds (\$500,000) for sewer improvements were awarded. The GICH team has strengthened partnerships with organizations like the Cedartown Housing Authority, Vantage Development, LLC, Polk Family Connection and Habitat for Humanity and has completed a housing needs assessment for the Cedartown/Haralson target area.

Liberty County The Liberty County GICH team is focusing on increasing public awareness and assessing the current housing stock condition, including the location of substandard and dilapidated vacant properties. The team established a logo and a mission statement and began semiannual updates for residents and elected officials of all eight governments involved in GICH. The team forged partnerships with the Hinesville Housing Authority and Keep Liberty Beautiful, who will start semiannual cleaning days next year. The GICH team learned about the Georgia Dream Housing Program and also worked to provide continuing education credits for local real estate professionals. Housing assessment training was held in the cities of Riceboro, Midway, and Walthourville, and the survey was completed in the Riceboro. Live Oak Villas 1, was awarded Housing Tax Credits (\$745,920), and the 60-unit family development also

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received 20 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. Construction is scheduled to begin in spring 2016. The City of Hinesville CDBG Entitlement (\$225,004) was received for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation. The housing team began research on the potential benefits of a Vacant Property Registry.

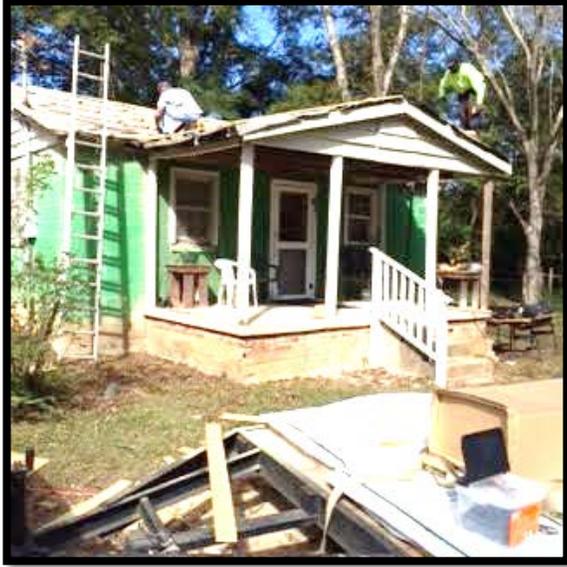
Madison The Madison GICH Team is focused on education and awareness. They have created a logo and a homepage: “Our GICH Experience”, as well as crafted a mission statement and established workgroups to lead efforts regarding existing building stock, neighborhood engagement activities, and future land use planning. The city adopted the International Property Maintenance Code and assumed Building Inspections and Code Enforcement duties, formerly under county auspices. City planners set the following priorities:



extension of the Urban Redevelopment Area, focusing future housing programs in an 520-acre area experiencing more than 33% poverty, expansion of the award-winning Transferable Development Rights Ordinance, permitting a tax-base neutral shift of potential dwelling units protecting greenspace and creating high-density housing options, and local promotion of Silver Lakes Court, the city’s first Low Income Housing Tax Credit senior-housing development with 44 units currently under construction. Finally, the GICH Team has developed a comprehensive, phased strategy and garnered the city’s financial support for a 2016 CDBG application to address housing needs. A series of eight educational work sessions were held last year, establishing contacts with local housing providers. These relationships have provided much needed in-kind support in dollars, materials, and labor for the target area and a stronger CDBG application. The GICH program is establishing strong communication between like-minded organizations, allowing everyone to maximize their potential for implementation and impact.

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Town of Pine Mountain The Town of Pine Mountain is focused on conducting a housing inventory and organizing volunteer rehabilitation assistance for seniors in need. The GICH team assisted in preparing grant applications for CDBG, as well as Wells Fargo and Home Depot Foundations. Although these have not been funded, progress has been made on implementing code enforcement activities and GICH team members have identified seniors with severe housing needs. Local contractors and citizens have donated labor and materials to repair/upgrade electrical wiring, roofing, flooring, and exterior paint for two homeowners. The Town is conducting a digital survey of

housing conditions and is preparing to submit a comprehensive revision of local ordinances next year.

Town of Trion The Town of Trion GICH team has focused on conducting a citywide survey of its housing stock to assess primary needs and set goals for improving the existing housing stock. Completed in 2015, survey results indicated several areas of concern: 15% of the 767 housing units in town are vacant and either abandoned or dilapidated, more than 30% are rental properties, and roughly 16% are within the floodplain. The survey was conducted digitally with assistance from the Department of Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics at UGA. Trion adopted the 2012 International Property Maintenance Code and with enforcement has issued citations on 10 properties, 7 of which are dilapidated structures in need of demolition. Seven of the 10 have been resolved or have work plans, resulting in 3 abatements and 4 yielded to the Town for demolition. With a \$6,000 grant from the Tillotson Foundation, Habitat for Humanity Coosa Valley built the first Habitat house in Trion in 10 years. Additionally, Trion applied for and received an \$800,000 CDBG multi-activity award to provide household water connections to low-to-moderate income households,



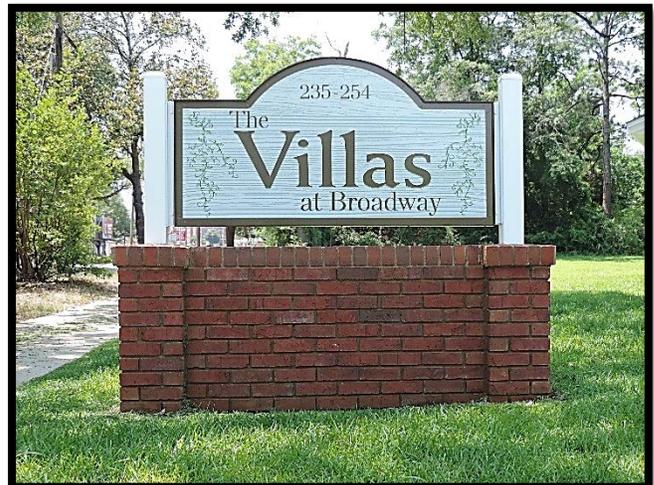
reconstruct 3 existing sub-standard houses and renovate one substandard house. The GICH team is working to brand the effort and educate local residents on housing programs and property maintenance, in addition to beginning to develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan.

SOPHOMORES



City of Albany The City of Albany GICH team is focused on creating lasting partnerships, providing community outreach, and implementing activities to improve housing in the city. The Broadway Street Senior Housing duplexes development was completed and provides 10 new units for low- to moderate- income seniors in East Albany. In addition, the team hosted a Reentry Partnership Housing (RPH) and Transitional Housing for Offender Reentry (THOR) Directory workshop. RPH provides short term financial

assistance to help stabilize an individual's re-entry process following incarceration, and THOR is an online directory of community-based housing assistance. Team members also participated in the annual Stand Up for Our Homeless Community Event, which provides information on available resources and services for the homeless. Call in To Connect, a telethon style counseling event, was also convened last year. The GICH team is assisting the city in support of a new Fight the Blight campaign in the City of Albany. In 2015, 23 housing units were demolished, and the city has allocated \$200,000 for blight removal this year. The city was selected as one of 28 cities nationwide to participate in the ConnectHome Program, an initiative sponsored by the White House designed to bridge the digital divide experienced in public and assisted housing. An application for Low income Housing Tax Credits was not selected but efforts continue for this development.



City of Douglasville The City of Douglasville's GICH team focused on building new contacts and partnerships, while continuing to work on ongoing housing activities. The team continued to meet monthly and agendas included speakers on topics such as tax credits for senior housing and community policing. The group also began conversations with World Changers, in partnership with LifeWay, River of Life, and representatives from the faith-based community. The city was awarded a CDBG award (\$462,200) in 2015 for housing improvements on Thompson Street. In partnership with the University of West Georgia and the Atlanta Regional Commission, a housing inventory app was created for an upcoming citywide housing assessment, which will determine the next target area. Following a presentation by Bruce Gerwig at the GICH retreat in February, the team took a field trip to Macon to learn first-hand about the housing initiatives they heard about.



Perry The City of Perry's GICH team has organized community clean-up efforts in multiple targeted residential areas and is proactively working to enhance community relations, awareness, and support for housing activities. Working with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission a community-wide housing assessment will take place January - July 2016. The outcome will be online database that allows the Perry Housing Team and others to view current housing stock city-wide or by planning area and will be particularly useful to advise Mayor and Council on housing-related matters. The team is working on a CDBG and a CHIP application for rehabilitation and reconstruction in the Sand Hill neighborhood. Community partners include: Perry Volunteer Outreach, Fuller Center for Housing, and Rebuilding Together. Homeowner rehabilitation is underway through a partnership with The Fuller Center for Housing and the Houston County Habitat for Humanity. In addition, one "blitz build" house was completed in 10 days through a partnership with the Perry Housing Team, Habitat for Humanity, and Parrish Construction. Working with the Perry Downtown Development Authority, the team is exploring the idea of carriage house apartments for "in-town" living.

Porterdale The focus of the City of Porterdale's GICH team continues to be increasing homeownership and improving housing conditions. With the "Home Buying Incentive Program: Your Guide to Buying a Historic Mill Home in Porterdale, GA" marketing brochure developed last year, 15 new homeowners are living in the city. Last year, the city adopted the International Property maintenance Code and has intensified code

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enforcement this year. An estimated \$1.2 million has been invested recently for home improvements and renovations in the city. For example, a home on Poplar Street was rehabilitated to the **Secretary of the Interior's Standards** for the Treatment of Historic Properties, and the owner is now serving on the Historic Preservation Commission. The homeowner used the previously mentioned assistance program providing free paint for the exterior. In addition, in coordination with Newton Trails and the Department of Natural Resources Recreation Trails grant program, the city is working to connect the city trails to the county trails system. Last year, 8 dilapidated houses have been removed and 5 individuals have received housing counseling. In addition, Porterdale was one of seven PlanFirst communities selected by Georgia Department of Community Affairs for 2016-2018.

Rincon The main focus of the City of Rincon's GICH team was completing housing 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. Since updating the Nuisance Ordinance, three property owners were ordered to municipal court to clean up their properties. A total of four properties have been cleaned up. Rincon City Council approved development incentives for both commercial and residential development. The new incentives were granted for two new projects, a 123,000 square foot Kroger Marketplace retail center and 84 new townhomes. 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 Habitat home is now under construction. The City is implementing water and sewer upgrades through a CDBG grant.

JUNIORS

Dalton A major focus of the City of Dalton's GICH Team last year was improving older housing stock on the east side of the city, which includes Housing Authority of the City of Dalton (HACD) owned properties and single family homes in surrounding neighborhoods. HACD was awarded funds from the city's 2014 CDBG Entitlement Program to rehabilitate a deteriorated one bedroom duplex. Improvements were made in 2015, which include handicapped accessibility modifications. The annual Dalton Area Project, conducted through the First United Methodist Church, is a youth volunteer program that brings both youth and supervisory adults to Dalton to improve the lives of low-income residents and their environment. The 2015 mission week focused on home repairs and resident outreach at Dantzler Avenue, 16 apartments for elderly residents, where many have no family interaction. This year, financial "coaching" was introduced to the traditional financial counseling program, which adds longer-term participation and meant to increase assets and improved housing conditions. Through GICH and the Housing Stability Coalition, plans are in place to create communities of hope by building strong families and supportive communities in neighborhoods with toxic stress to help prevent children from being placed in foster care.



Greensboro The City of Greensboro's GICH Team maintains their focus on continued and sustained collaboration. Team members learned a lot about various strategies for improving housing conditions and are working to implement many of these activities in the local community. The Mary Leila Mill redevelopment is now underway and when completed a key historic property will be rehabilitated and offer 71 new housing units to the community. The development is funded in part by Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Greensboro's GICH team studied the impact of LIHTC developments on a community through site visits, participation in GICH retreats, and collaboration with other GICH communities. In addition, in 2015, several new ordinances were adopted or updated: Corridor Overlay Ordinance, Vicious Dog Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance update to clarify restrictions on Personal Care Homes.

Lithonia The City of Lithonia's GICH team has continued to build on and expand team membership, strengthen outreach to the community for increased participation, and identify resources to support the housing initiatives of beautification and minor home repairs. This year, the team partnered with a private developer to construct Granite Crossings utilizing the Housing Tax Credits program (\$14 million) and 75 units of workforce housing to the city. The city also partnered with UGA's Department of Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics service-learning class to conduct focus groups with residents to understand the barriers to home ownership. The city was awarded three AmeriCorps VISTA positions through the Corporation for National and Community Service, and one of these positions will focus on individual asset building, including home ownership. Last year, an application was made to the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation for HomeBuild Lithonia, a minor home repair program but was not awarded. In addition, the city has formalized its relationship as a member of the DeKalb Regional Land Bank Authority.



Pembroke The City of Pembroke Housing Team is welcoming its first workforce housing, tax credit development, increasing code enforcement and developing an Urban Redevelopment Plan. Survey results of the citywide housing assessment made it clear that there was a need for a Code Enforcement Division within the Pembroke Police Department and also indicated the need for more affordable housing on all socio-economic levels. The division was added and has been actively working on community oriented enforcement, which increases compliance of ordinances among citizens. The team partnered with W.H. Gross to apply for a tax credit development for 60 town home units within the city. Sawmill Landing is scheduled to open summer 2016 and will provide housing for overburdened renters, increase recruiting capability for local industry, and will improve the local economy as the city continues to grow in population. The City of Pembroke has received a 50/50 Grant/Loan for \$2 million of a \$2.5 million water and sewer improvement project from USDA. In addition, the team has partnered with The Downtown Development Authority and City of Pembroke to purchase the closed Bryan County Elementary School as a potential Senior Housing development. An Urban Redevelopment Board was adopted during the December 2015 City Council Meeting.



Roswell The mission of the City of Roswell’s GICH housing team is to promote strategies that support the Roswell economy through workforce and lifelong housing options. The team continues to provide outreach to citizens and community groups, particularly regarding the issue of local housing affordability. This year, the team engaged several key community stakeholder groups in discussions about the

need for affordable housing: Roswell Rotary, Alpharetta Rotary, Roswell Inc., and the North Fulton Poverty Task Force. The team and its mission were also featured in two community newspapers and multiple affordable housing web-videos are currently in production to be featured on YouTube and the City's website. Importantly, the team solidified support to continue its work after graduation from the program. Last year, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits were awarded for a new senior’s residential development (101 units), Veranda Apartments, and the Roswell Housing Authority purchased a 29-unit apartment complex in the Historic Grove Way Neighborhood (Myrtle Street Apartments). In 2015, Homestretch Housing Initiative of North Fulton, purchased an 8 unit apartment (Forrest Street Apartments) building in the same area. Both acquisitions were crucial to preserving the City's dwindling workforce housing stock. Using CDBG funds, 130 homes were rehabilitated and 114 individuals received housing counseling.



The Initiative's Twelfth Year: Looking Ahead to Progress

In November 2015, GICH selected five very qualified communities to participate in the program: Athens-Clarke County, Evans County, Millen, Monroe, and Rockmart. Joining the other 10 participating communities, these cities will convene for two retreats in 2016: in Dublin (February) and in Gainesville (September). As always, communities continue to receive technical assistance in the intervening months to ensure forward progress on designing and implementing their housing plans. In addition, UGA has broadened the scope of community university engagement related to GICH. GICH communities now have the opportunity to partner with students in a housing and community development course, as well as an urban design studio. Furthermore, through a USDA NIFA grant, incoming freshmen continue to receive supplemental assistance related to digital housing conditions survey data and related mapping resources.

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The UGA Archway Partnership,
UGA Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and the
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