



Mike Beatty, Commissioner

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Five New Communities Chosen to Participate in GICH

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) announced the selection of five Georgia communities – Auburn, Berrien County, Eatonton, Sylvania, and Washington - to participate in a three-year program developed to assist them with their housing needs.

GICH is a collaborative initiative of the Housing and Demographics Research Center (HDRC) at the University of Georgia (UGA), the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). GICH is partially funded by the Georgia Power Company, the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development, and the Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation, and is supported by the Georgia Electric Membership Corporation and the University of Georgia Archway Partnership Program through in-kind services.

"The quality and appearance of a communities' housing sets the tone for the community. As you drive by the city limits, and see attractive homes and yards, you immediately form a positive image of the community as a whole," said Tom Rodgers, Director of Housing at UGA's HDRC. "It is our hope that GICH will help communities set a positive image for their community."

During GICH's three-year program, each community housing team will receive facilitation, instruction, and technical assistance as they design and implement a housing program to improve both the quality of life of its citizens and the communities' economic conditions. The centerpiece of the Initiative is a series of retreats, where each housing team will work separately with a facilitator/housing professional, as well as engage in cross-community sharing and collaboration. Communities will have access to technical assistance and receive continuous feedback throughout the three-year program.

"Affordable housing plays a key role in the economic viability and development of communities," said Mike Beatty, DCA Commissioner. "The cities and counties that are participating in the Initiative have taken an important first step in enhancing their communities by seeking viable and measurable options that will help them meet their unique housing needs."

Any city, county, or public housing authority in Georgia was eligible to apply, on behalf of a community housing team. The teams consist of about twelve members and include representatives from local government, business (banks, real estate, and builders/developers), nonprofit housing organizations, and the public housing authority. Other groups may include faith-based organizations, churches, development authorities, chambers of commerce, school system, major employers, and law enforcement agencies.

"Nothing is more important to a community's viability and quality of life than having an adequate supply of decent, safe and affordable housing," said Jim Higdon, GMA Executive Director. "We applaud the

local governments selected to participate in this program for their commitment to involve a broad cross-section of their community to address this critical issue."

The new communities join those entering the second and third years of the program: Americus/Sumter County, Covington, Gray/Jones County, Thomson/McDuffie County, and Winder and Brunswick, Hawkinsville, Rome, Sandersville/Tennille/Washington County, and Vienna respectively. Calhoun, Cordele, Douglas, Griffin, and Toccoa join sixteen other alumni communities that have completed the program.

For questions about this program, please call Karen Tinsley, Program Coordinator at 706.542.4949, or send email to klt@uga.edu. Additional information can be found at <http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hace/hdrc/gich.html>