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## Five Georgia communities receive housing designation

Georgia Initiative for Community Housing program to provide guidance, assistance

**ATLANTA (October 13, 2020)** – 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 program that helps communities strategically grow their economies through housing-related solutions. The cities of Blakely, Jonesboro, East Point, Covington and the Calhoun Housing Authority will begin the three-year program in February 2021. The communities were recognized at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) virtual fall conference on October 5.

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

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

Since the program's inception in 2005, 81 Georgia communities have benefited from the GICH program. The communities currently enrolled in the program are Arlington, Centerville, Conyers, Social Circle, Smyrna, Adel, Hartwell, Ocilla, Rossville/Lafayette and Statesboro. The cities of Byron, Cochran, McRae-Helena, Norcross and the joint collaborative of Troup County, Hogansville, LaGrange and West Point were recognized at the GICH Fall Retreat in September as 2020 graduates of the program.

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 housing assessment, and launching community clean-up programs.

Each year, GICH communities are selected to participate in the initiative through a competitive process. Communities are selected based on need and a 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 in August.

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](#), a voluntary, non-profit organization based in Atlanta that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to its 521 member cities.

Georgia Power funds the GICH program. Additional in-kind services are provided by [UGA Cooperative Extension](#) and [UGA's Archway Partnership](#) and the [Carl Vinson Institute of Government](#), both units of the UGA Office of Public Service and Outreach. Learn more about GICH [online](#).

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#### **About the Department of Community Affairs**

*The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) partners with communities to build strong and vibrant neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas through community and economic development, local government assistance, and safe and affordable housing. Using state and federal resources, DCA helps communities spur private job creation, implement planning, develop downtowns, generate affordable housing solutions and promote volunteerism. DCA also helps qualified Georgians with low and moderate incomes buy homes, rent housing and prevent foreclosure and homelessness. For more information, visit [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov).*

