



Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Mike Beatty, Commissioner

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**Five New Communities Selected To Participate In
DCA's Signature Community Program**

Atlanta, GA - Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Mike Beatty announced today the five newest communities selected to participate in DCA's Signature Community Program.

The communities selected were the City of Calhoun, City of Fayetteville, City of Jesup/ Wayne County, Cities of Valdosta/ Remerton and Wilkinson County/ Cities of Allentown, Danville, Irwinton, Ivey, Gordon, McIntyre and Toombsboro.

"Georgia's communities are DCA's number one customer. Communities applying for the Signature Community Program are providing a good quality of life for their citizens. This program supports DCA's efforts to provide resources in a targeted manner that helps the selected communities take their efforts to the next level," said Commissioner Mike Beatty.

With today's announcement, a total of 17 communities have been selected to participate in the Signature Community Program. Five were selected in 2005 and seven were selected in 2006. The communities selected in 2005 will complete their program participation at the end of 2007.

Months of Planning Recognized With Program Selection

All general-purpose local governments (cities and counties) are eligible to apply for the Signature Community Program. Joint, multi-government applications are encouraged. Each participating city or county must be in compliance with all applicable state laws and regulations, including maintenance of their Qualified Local Government Certification.

In early August 2007, DCA received nearly 30 applications from communities statewide.

Communities were evaluated on nine key "community indicator" criteria, including comprehensive planning, downtown revitalization, economic development, environmental management, infrastructure development, leadership programs, quality growth, safe and affordable housing and service and volunteerism.

Internal DCA staff conducted the initial reviews and narrowed the field to 15 communities. DCA's internal review team included experts from its Environmental Management, Financial Assistance, Housing, Regional Services and Planning & Quality Growth units. Internal reviews were followed by external reviews from experts from the Association of County Commission Governments, Georgia Municipal Association, Georgia Association of Regional Development Centers, Georgia Public Policy Foundation and the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute.

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“DCA wants to recognize each community that applied for this prestigious program. We also want to extend special congratulations to the leadership of the City of Calhoun, City of Fayetteville, City of Jesup/ Wayne County, Cities of Valdosta/ Remerton and Wilkinson County. Each of these teams worked very hard to develop a high-quality proposal that clearly outlined how participation in the Signature Community program would enhance their community. We look forward to working with them over the next two years to accomplish their goals,” added Beatty.

Communities “Raise Bar” Through Signature

The Signature Community Program is intended to "raise the bar," helping communities reach ever higher levels of community achievement and quality of life for their citizens. It is limited to communities that are serious about improving local quality of life through effective planning, implementation and taking a comprehensive approach to addressing community improvement issues. The program recognizes these communities and gives them specialized technical and financial assistance with implementing key initiatives identified in their comprehensive plans.

The 12 communities currently participating in the Signature Community Program's include the City of Barnesville, City of Colquitt/ Miller County City of Covington/ Newton County, City of Dublin, City of Flovilla/Butts County, City of Forsyth, City of Holly Springs, City of Rome, City of Snellville, Cities of St. Mary's, Kingsland, Woodbine/ Camden County, City of Tifton/Tift County and City of Toccoa/ Stephens County.

Communities selected for the Signature Community Program receive a number of benefits, including:

- Customized technical assistance to achieve key initiatives (i.e., vision elements, goals and/or implementation activities) selected from the local comprehensive plan;
- Access to a Signature Community grant to implement a community improvement strategy;
- Assistance in identifying other financial resources for implementing the identified initiatives; and
- Statewide recognition.

The Signature Community Program was officially launched in July 2005. After a community has worked with DCA and its partners to successfully implement its identified program goals, the community will be officially designated as a Georgia Signature Community. The first five Signature Community Program communities of Covington/Newton, Snellville, Forsyth, Tifton/Tift County and Camden County/ St. Marys/ Kingsland/ Woodbine will be eligible for official “Signature Community” designation at the end of 2007.

DCA officials plan to visit each new Signature Community Program participant over the next three months to discuss program implementation and other important preparatory steps. Communities that were not selected or did not apply for the program will continue to receive assistance from DCA through existing channels. For more information about DCA's Signature Community Program, please visit <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/communities/regionalism/programs/signatureComm.asp>.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. As outlined in its mission statement, DCA seeks opportunities that support "*partnering with communities to help create a climate of success for Georgia's families and businesses.*" DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs; serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development; promulgates building codes to be adopted by local governments; provides comprehensive planning, technical and research assistance to local governments; and serves as the lead agency for the state's solid waste reduction efforts. For more information, please visit the DCA website at <http://www.dca.state.ga.us>.

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