

Georgia[®] Department of Community Affairs

February 2016



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 5:

Braselton uses RDF to revitalize downtown

The Town of Braselton is a growing community located approximately 50 miles northeast of Atlanta and has the unique characteristic of spanning four counties: Jackson, Hall, Gwinnett and Barrow. Most noteworthy is that it is also home to the world-class Chateau Elan Winery and Resort.

In 2012, city leaders unveiled plans to renovate the Braselton Brothers Store, one of the town's most recognizable landmarks. In order to facilitate this renovation, town officials requested \$500,000 in Redevelopment Fund (RDF) assistance as a loan to Braselton's Urban Redevelopment Agency. The goal was to eliminate blighted conditions in the historic downtown area

IN THE NEWS

Plan your work, work your plan

DCA's Office of Planning & Environmental Management helps set communities up for success



Seven Georgia communities were honored recently for receiving statewide distinction in a program recognizing excellence in community planning. Columbus-Muscogee County Consolidated, 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 and were joined by Governor Nathan Deal (center, front) in a celebration on January 28 at the Capitol.

The *PlanFirst* 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

and to transform the landmark into a vibrant commercial hub.



Braselton Brothers Store Complex in revitalized historic downtown Braselton

Originally built in 1904, the Braselton Brothers Store was once home to a thriving retail business that sold everything from groceries to clothes. In 2003, it was reopened as the Braselton Antique Market. Prior to the renovations, the Braselton Brothers Store Complex project had three tenants in the building. Upon completion, there are now nine tenant spaces, eight of which are occupied by a variety of businesses including an antique store, dentist office, hair salon, clothing boutique, olive oil shop, deli and home décor store, the Downtown Main Street office, and a high-end steak house restaurant.

Downtown Manager Amy Pinnel says, "We are beyond pleased with the diversity of tenants and the activity and energy they have brought to our downtown."

Overall, the project contributed to the retention of 16 full-time jobs and the creation of 29 full-time jobs, with at least 57 percent of those jobs benefiting low- to moderate-income individuals. In addition to rehabilitation of tenant spaces, the project included façade and aesthetic improvements such as an outdoor terrace.

"The Redevelopment Fund is just one of the many resources that DCA has to offer in terms of financing community and economic development projects. Programs like this one can be a great tool in assisting communities in achieving their vision for revitalization," says DCA Region 5

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 their 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 designation will last for three years 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.

DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles said to the honorees at the Capitol event, "You've probably heard this saying -- and it's one of my favorites but it bears repeating -- 'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.' Today we celebrate the hard work of seven Georgia communities who have not failed to plan."

[The next deadline for PlanFirst applications is May 15, 2016. Click here for more information about the program.](#)

More communities planning ahead...

- In partnership with the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) and Georgia's Geospatial Information Officer Susan Miller, DCA hosted staff from 11 Regional Commissions on January 26 in Atlanta for training on a tool called Hazus. Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Hazus is a powerful risk assessment tool that estimates potential losses from floods, earthquakes, hurricane winds and tornadoes using state-of-the-art Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software.



- DCA's Office of Planning & Environmental Management conducted a training session for planning staff from all 12 Regional Commissions on Feb. 18 in Macon. Hosted by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission, workshop topics included Service Delivery Strategy, regional planning, contracts, audits, PlanFirst, and the Community Planning Institute. DCA and the regional commissions intend to make this an annual event.

Learn how your community can plan ahead...

DCA will hold the *Community Planning Institute*, in partnership with the Georgia Planning Association, March 11 and 12 at Unicoi

Community Services Division
Representative Beth Eavenson.

For more information on developments like this one as well as program opportunities offered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in Region 5, contact Beth Eavenson at Beth.Eavenson@dca.ga.gov.

IN OTHER NEWS

South Georgia family affair is agricultural small business success story

DCA's SSBCI program funding helps keep popular Vidalia onions cool

BG Williams Farms, LLC, one of Georgia's premier farming operations for Vidalia onions and other produce in Uvalda, is owned by 20-year farming veteran Brett G. Williams. Brett even worked the farm while he was in college at Georgia Tech earning his engineering degree. Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, he is taking the family business to new heights in the Montgomery County area. Currently, Brett, his mother, father, brother and grandfather are all active in the operations of the company.



But recently, the living legacy began experiencing growing pains - a good problem to have. Brett's farms were producing more crops than he was able to quickly ship to the nearest facility to freeze and package for selling. Without cool storage, the crops could rot before they

State Park and Lodge in Helen. This is a 2-day training called "Preparing and Implementing Your Comprehensive Plan." Registration deadline is March 7. Locally elected and appointed officials, citizen planners, and staff should attend to learn about their plan and how it can guide their future. For more information, contact Adriane Wood at Adriane.Wood@dca.ga.gov.

[Click here for registration information for the Community Planning Institute.](#)

Rome's Greystone benefits from Housing Tax Credits for recent upgrade



In Floyd County, right in the heart of downtown Rome, is the original 1880s Armstrong Hotel, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The hotel and a separate adjacent apartment building fell into disrepair and were vacant throughout the 1980s.

But since 1993 and using DCA's Housing Tax Credit program, the Armstrong Hotel was rehabilitated and is now the Greystone Apartments which house more than 70 low-income individuals with mental or physical disabilities as well as senior citizens. The Greystone residents enjoy art therapy and social entrepreneurship as a means to overcome their obstacles.

The most recent rehabilitation and upgrade of the Greystone building also utilized DCA's Housing Tax Credit program, and city leaders, developers and DCA Housing Division team members celebrated at the Grand Re-Opening on January 29.

A new Greystone Apartments resident, Mr. Freeman, has lived in Rome for 85 years. When his wife passed away recently, he thought he would have to leave Rome and sell all his furniture -- furniture that he built with his wife.

could be sold. He would have to bring in ice to help maintain the crops in storage until shipping. This was no longer cost effective for his operation as it continued to grow. Brett needed to obtain funding for a much-needed expansion and remodeling.

The Bank of Hazelhurst referred him to the Small Business Assistance Corporation (SBAC), an approved Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and Lender in the Georgia State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) Loan Program which is administered by DCA. SBAC was able to assist with \$1,408,000 in SSBCI funding on the \$2,853,000 project to build and refurbish two storage buildings and to purchase and install the hydro-coolers in the new refrigeration room.



This funding allowed BG Williams Farms to retain seven jobs and create three low- to moderate-income jobs. Along with providing employment opportunities, this financing project continues the development of rural Montgomery County as BG Williams Farms increases their business in exporting to Canada and other countries.

For more information on DCA's State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) program, contact Program Manager Holly Hunt at (404) 679-3144 or Holly.Hunt@dca.ga.gov.

Then he found Greystone. Mr. Freeman now gets to stay in his hometown and keep the furniture with his dearest memories.

This is another testament of the effectiveness of the Housing Tax Credit program as a key financial component for the development and redevelopment of housing communities that are able to keep rents at an affordable rate for their tenants across the state of Georgia.



The historic Greystone Apartments, formerly the Armstrong Hotel, in downtown Rome now serves as affordable housing in Floyd County due in part to DCA's Housing Tax Credit program.

2016 Keep Georgia Beautiful Day under the gold dome celebrates leaders against litter

The 2016 Keep Georgia Beautiful (KGB) Day at the Capitol on January 26 was an opportunity for affiliates, volunteers, and board members from Georgia's Keep America Beautiful affiliates to gather under the Gold Dome and to interact with their elected state representatives and senators while they are in legislative session. Each year the KGB Foundation promotes its signature events, including the Great American Cleanup and Bring One for the Chipper, through displays detailing the work of the affiliate network throughout the state.



Speakers at the 2016 event included KGBF Board President Kevin Perry, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, and Senator Frank Ginn. The speakers

City of Jefferson CDBG-assisted project wins American Public Works Association Project of the Year Award



The City of Jefferson's *Martin Luther King Jr. Sidewalk and Drainage Improvements Project* is the recipient of the Georgia Chapter of the American Public Works Association Project of the Year award, under the Small Cities/Rural Communities category. The award recognizes public works projects that provide the most benefit to local communities.

In this case, the \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds provided funding for sidewalk installation, along with other street and drainage improvements. The application made a compelling case that the proposed project would significantly address the health and safety of local residents by providing safe walking access from the CDBG project area to downtown Jefferson.

"Prior to the sidewalks, the street was dangerous and unsafe to walk," said retired Jefferson City Council member C. D. Kidd. "Having the sidewalks has helped promote the healthy activity of walking for the people in the area. We are grateful for the sidewalks."

celebrated the Foundation, its 77 state affiliates, and all of the volunteers for their countless hours of hard work over the past 38 years to help 'Keep Georgia Beautiful.'

"Our affiliates do so many things that help to make our state a better place, and the affiliate system offers a tremendous return on investment," said DCA Commissioner Knowles. "For every one dollar invested by DCA last year, Keep Georgia Beautiful and the affiliate network returned an amazing \$660 in benefits to the state. That is remarkable!"

Governor's Circle Award Winners were also recognized, honoring certified affiliates for their work in litter reduction, waste management, and community greening. KGBF also invited legislators to record a "Leaders Against Litter" public service announcement to bring litter awareness to their local communities and pledge to take a stand against litter here in Georgia.

In her accolades to the KGB affiliates, Commissioner Knowles added, "Last year, you worked to create over 100 edible community gardens, planted over 9,000 trees and seedlings, and helped to eliminate over 200 illegal dumpsites. You are truly leaders against litter and advocates for renewable communities."

For more information about the Keep Georgia Beautiful Foundation, visit www.keepgeorgiabeautiful.org or contact KGB Executive Director Sarah Visser at sarah.visser@kgbf.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

HomeSafe Georgia: March & April events

HomeSafe
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Free
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March events:

March 10: Veterans Spring Career Fair 2016 from 1:00 - 4:00 PM at the Department of Labor Valdosta Career Center, 221 South Ashley Street in Valdosta

March 23: Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce Job Fair from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM at the Gainesville Civic Center, 830 Green Street NE in Gainesville



GET to KNOW DCA February Topic of the Month

CDBG 2016 Annual Competition: Community Development Block Grant *Applications due April 1*

The State of Georgia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) annual competition is gearing up with applications due April 1. DCA is looking forward to the receipt of these applications from local governments, and we will also be assisting local governments that are seeking technical assistance in the preparation of their applications.

If technical assistance is needed, please contact Steed Robinson at (404) 679-3168 or by email at steed.robinson@dca.ga.gov or Glenn Misner at (404) 649-3138 or glenn.misner@dca.ga.gov.

Applicants are reminded of the new concentration map requirements and the importance of meeting the timeliness requirements for existing grantees.

April events:

April 1: Congressman David Scott's 13th Annual Job Fair from 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM at the Georgia International Convention Center, 2000 Convention Center Concourse in Atlanta

April 19: 1st Annual Spring Job Fair from 10:00 AM - 2 PM at the 12Stone Church, 2050 Sugarloaf Circle in Duluth

About HomeSafe Georgia:

It is a free, state government program to help homeowners who are unemployed, underemployed or face other types of financial hardships save their homes from foreclosure. There is no cost to apply and no fee if approved.

A homeowner who has experienced a financial hardship within the last four years -- such as the loss of a job or wages, military service, death of a spouse, or medical problems -- may be eligible for assistance.

For more information, visit www.HomeSafeGeorgia.com.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

January 2016 Financial Awards

Region 1: Dade County

The Dade County Industrial Development Authority was awarded \$1,000,000 in OneGeorgia EDGE funds to assist in the location of a manufacturing facility for Vanguard National Trailer Corporation. The Company has committed to create 400 new jobs and invest \$30,000,000 within 60 months. The total project cost is \$31,000,000.

Region 11: City of Nashville/Berrien County

The City of Nashville and Berrien County, joint applicants, were awarded \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)/Employment Incentive Program (EIP) funds to assist with the construction of public sewer improvements to serve the Willacoochee Industrial Fabrics, Inc. facility. Through an additional \$1,000,000 in private investment and \$317,000 in public investment, the project will create 50 jobs.

[Click here for further information about the annual competition and to access an application toolkit.](#)



Equal Housing Opportunity

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[Camila Knowles, Commissioner](#)

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