

April 11, 2006

Issue: Affordable Housing

To address affordable housing issues and to ensure balanced housing needs and quality growth, Camden County and the three cities have worked together to set housing goals and achieve two new initiatives.

Signature Community Program: Housing

In January '06, The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) selected Camden County and the cities of St. Marys, Kingsland and Woodbine as one of only five communities statewide to participate in the inaugural "Signature Community Program." The DCA will provide Camden County with a number of benefits in the Signature Community program, including:

- Two years customized technical assistance to achieve key initiatives from the local comprehensive plan.
- Statewide recognition as a community committed to improving the lives and livelihood of its residents through effective development of a comprehensive plan and efficient implementation of plan activities.
- Additional points under the Qualified Allocation Plan for rental housing developments that are most indicative of the community's affordable housing goals.
- Preference in selection under the Single Family Development Program and the Rural Rental Housing Development Fund.
- Down payment assistance funds for homeownership for local government employees that live and purchase a home in the Signature Community.

The **Georgia Initiative for Community Housing** offers communities a three-year program of collaboration and technical assistance. Camden County in collaboration with the three cities was chosen as a pilot site for this initiative in October 2005. The Community Housing Team was developed and began a three-year partnership with the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). The Team will work to ensure the strategic plan for affordable housing matches current needs and meets future population trends. Our community will:

- Create a community housing team.
- Gather data on current and future housing needs in the community.
- Develop new ideas about meeting local housing needs.
- Learn about creative approaches and available resources for our communities to proactively meet their housing needs.
- Produce a community-housing plan.
- Begin the implementation of their plan.

Housing is perhaps the biggest social challenge Camden County faces. Without a housing strategy with an objective of balancing housing development, there will not be an affordable housing market. The Community Housing Team is serving as a focus for gathering community involvement in the comprehensive plan process and also in helping to create overall vision for community housing in Camden County.

Action: None, for information only.

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