

Georgia's Housing Success Stories

A Closer Look at the 2001 Magnolia
Awards for Excellence in Housing





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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY





Georgia's Housing Success Stories —

2001 Magnolia Awards for Excellence in Housing

In 2001, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs established the Magnolia Awards for Excellence in Housing to recognize achievements in affordable housing. The awards were given in six categories: **Affordable Rental Housing, Creative Partnerships, Emergency Shelter/Services, Homeownership, Local Government Initiatives, and Special Needs.** In addition, a Housing Champion award was presented to Habitat for Humanity International for long-term achievement. The activities described here are recipients of the Magnolia Awards and the Special Achievement Awards, presented at the November 2001 Housing Georgia conference. They are the projects and programs judged to be outstanding examples of innovation and performance in Georgia. These success stories represent a small sample of the exciting work that is being done to create quality affordable housing across the state.

Affordable Rental Housing

The Magnolia Award for Affordable Rental Housing recognizes projects and innovations that provide safe, decent affordable rental housing. Types of activities included in this category are the creation of affordable rental developments through new construction or substantial rehabilitation, innovation in managing affordable rental housing and innovations in creating mixed-use, mixed price rental housing.

BreakOut™ Program — NuRock Housing Foundation

The NuRock Housing Foundation received the Magnolia Award for its BreakOut™ Program. In each of its complexes, NuRock's goal is to create a place that is much more than housing. Among the typical apartment amenities, the tenants also find a BreakOut™ center where the children gather for free after school care, tutoring, snacks and recreation. The center also serves as a gathering place for the adults to establish their own sense of community through everything from Tupperware® parties to computer classes. An example of NuRock's accomplishment can be found at the Riverwood Club Apartments, where NuRock transformed an area once known for gangs, prostitution and drugs into a haven for families with children, most who attend the school just a half-mile away. NuRock developments, on average, experience a 24% turnover in residents, about half the industry average for similar developments. This long-term residency is good for children, who stay in the same schools and activities, and their families who enjoy getting to know their neighbors and participating in activities.

For more information about the BreakOut™ Program, contact the NuRock Housing Foundation at 770-399-6200.



Columbia Gardens — Columbia Residential

Columbia Residential received a Special Achievement award for the construction of its affordable apartment community in Douglasville — Columbia Gardens. The amount of affordable rental housing has not kept up with the tremendous growth in Douglasville during the last decade. Columbia Residential's development helped to fill that gap. The \$9.6 million project resulted in the construction of 128 affordable garden style apartments, with 98% reserved for low-income tenants. Columbia Residential used the cash raised from the sale of the federal Housing Tax Credits for about 52% of the cost to build the development. Amenities include clubhouse, laundry room, tot lot, picnic areas, swimming pool, and a computer room. While the project may be affordable in pricing, Columbia Residential did not sacrifice quality of design, construction, and amenities. All of the apartments were leased within just four months and occupancy has remained at 100% since then.

For more information about Columbia Gardens, contact
Columbia Residential at 404-874-5000.

The Forest at Columbia — Green Forest Community Development Corporation

Green Forest CDC received a Special Achievement award for the \$9 million renovation of an affordable housing apartment complex in south DeKalb County. The development named The Forest at Columbia provides housing for 161 low- to moderate-income families. Greenforest Community Baptist Church created the Green Forest Community Development Corporation as a non-profit organization to address economic development, housing and social issues in the area. Green Forest is committed to creating a holistic community with support structures to enhance the quality of life. As a result, in addition to offering the usual amenities, the complex now provides job training opportunities, subsidized childcare, and social services. Green Forest CDC also provides home buyer education and financial literacy counseling to promote homeownership in the community.

To learn more about The Forest at Columbia, contact
Green Forest CDC at 404-284-4410.



Douglasville — Columbia Gardens

DeKalb County — The Forest at Columbia

Creative Partnerships

The Magnolia Award for Creative Partnerships recognizes outstanding examples of a creative partnership in affordable housing. These partnerships may result in innovative housing programs, support services, units for rental or homeownership, or financing arrangements. Whatever the result, the key factor is that multiple organizations created working arrangements that could become models for others in the state.

Gainesville — Lenox Park

Gainesville-Hall County Affordable Housing Initiative

The Gainesville-Hall County Affordable Housing Initiative received the Magnolia Award for Creative Partnerships. The Initiative brought partners together to address a wide range of housing problems by offering down payment and closing cost assistance, budget and debt counseling, forgivable loans for homeowner rehabilitation, affordable housing development and no-interest demolition loans. The City of Gainesville and Hall County, two of the partners in this venture, have assisted 80 first-time homebuyers through down payment and closing cost assistance. Gainesville-Hall County Neighborhood Revitalization, Inc. has counseled over 600 clients through budgeting and debt management classes, with Spanish-language classes conducted by the Consumer Credit Counseling Service. In addition to home buyer assistance, the Initiative is working to build affordable homes. The Gainesville Non-Profit Development Foundation has rehabilitated seven owner-occupied homes and has also partnered with a private developer to build a 112-lot affordable subdivision. All of these players have worked together to make the \$8.5 million project a success. This initiative is a model of local government teamwork.

For more information about the Gainesville-Hall County Affordable Housing Initiative, contact the City of Gainesville at 770-531-2693.

Beaver Springs Lane Revitalization — Gwinnett Housing Resource Partnership Inc.

The Gwinnett Housing Resource Partnership, Inc. received a Special Achievement award for the Beaver Springs Lane Revitalization Initiative undertaken in Norcross. With programmatic and technical support from 13 organizations, GHRP is revitalizing a neighborhood once plagued with drugs, debris and disrepair. GHRP has acquired and rehabilitated a 196-unit apartment complex and 42 nearby quadraplex and duplex units to provide housing at low rents to hundreds of families each year. In addition to the building rehabilitation, GHRP is working on community rehabilitation.

The *Neighbors Working Side by Side* program, sponsored with the Mexican Center of Atlanta, is a leadership development program that works with adults and youth who have come to the area from 22 different countries. Among the groups offering technical support and community services were Gwinnett County, Gwinnett Clean and Beautiful, Beaver Ridge Elementary School, Families First, Right From the Start Medicaid, The Mexican Center of Atlanta, and Traveler's Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta. The \$4.5 million project received programmatic support from the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and The Community Foundation for a Greater Atlanta and funding support from a host of other public and private partners.

For more information about the Beaver Springs Lane Revitalization, contact the Gwinnett Housing Resource Partnership Inc. at 770-448-0702.

The Villages at Carver — Carver Redevelopment Partnership I

The second recipient of the Special Achievement award for Creative Partnerships was Carver Redevelopment Partnership I — a unique mix of partners working together to transform the former Carver Homes public housing community into mixed income housing. In the first phase, the run down buildings of the old Carver Homes were demolished and replaced by three buildings with space for thirty-six (36) families. Ultimately, the 100 acre Carver development will include approximately 700 apartments. The combination of subsidized and market rate units in the development has helped spark new development in the area. The financing for this project was the first of its kind for a HOPE VI transaction because no HUD enhancements or HOPE VI cash collateral were used in the debt structure. The partners in the \$19.5 million development included SunTrust Bank, SunTrust CDC, the Atlanta Housing Authority, Atlanta Affordable Housing for the Future, Inc., The Integral Group, Atlanta Development Authority, Federal Home Loan Bank, and H.J. Russell and Company.

To learn more about the Villages at Carver, contact the Partnership at 404-224-1887.



Norcross — Beaver Springs Lane



Gwinnett Housing Resource Partnership Inc.



Atlanta — The Villages at Carver



Emergency Shelter/Services

The Magnolia Award for Emergency Shelter/Services Award is presented for achievements in providing short-term housing and services for the homeless, victims of domestic violence, runaways, abused and neglected children, and others with special emergency housing needs.

Supportive Transitional Housing — CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority


The Central Savannah River Area surrounding Augusta has more than 7,000 people who are homeless each year. The 2001 Magnolia Award was presented to the EOA Supportive Transitional Housing project. This program provides housing and supportive services to homeless families in an attempt to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency and gain access to permanent housing. While in the program, participants are required to work toward goals and attend life skill training. Upon entrance, a Self Sufficiency and Service Delivery Plan is developed. The Plan lists goals and objectives and time frames by which participants hope to achieve their goals. All clients have left with savings accounts and new tools for living, most have left with better jobs, and some have even left as homeowners.

For more information on Augusta's Supportive Transitional Housing program, contact the CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority at 706-722-0493.


Emergency Housing — Cobb Family Resources

The recipient of the Special Achievement award in this category, Cobb Family Resources, helps the homeless by providing 10 furnished apartments for families with children. Comprehensive case management helps the clients move on to a more stable living environment. When a family comes to Cobb Family Resources' apartments, they are greeted not only with shelter and safety, but also with the help they need to regain self-sufficiency. That help may come in the form of counseling, credit counseling, job readiness, literacy or life management skills. Last year, almost all of Cobb Family Resources' residents improved or stabilized their employment, while more than half moved directly into permanent housing. In addition, most opened or maintained a savings account.

To learn more about Cobb Family Resources' emergency housing program, call the agency at 770-428-2601.



Augusta — Supportive Transitional Housing



Emergency Housing — Cobb Family Resources

Homeownership

Homeownership is often referred to as the American dream. The Magnolia Award for Homeownership was created to recognize programs that promote affordable homeownership, whether through construction, renovation, financing, home buyer education or other efforts to assist low-and moderate-income home buyers.

The Rural Georgia Homeownership Partnership — Three Rivers Housing Foundation

The recipient of the Magnolia Award for Homeownership was the Three Rivers Housing Foundation for its work in promoting homeownership through the Rural Georgia Homeownership Partnership. The Partnership focuses on financing, construction and home buyer counseling in seven counties: Calhoun, Crisp, Decatur, Grady, Mitchell, Terrell and Upson. Three Rivers links public and private sector resources so that low income buyers can purchase a home with just \$500 down, no out of pocket closing costs and an affordable monthly payment. With its partners, Three Rivers is involved both in the construction of affordable homes and in the education of the first-time buyers who will purchase them. In the two years since the Partnership was formed, \$3 million dollars have been leveraged to finance 40 low-income families in the purchase of new homes. More than 60 people are working through the training and counseling process to prepare for homeownership.

**For more information on the Rural Georgia Homeownership Partnership,
contact Three Rivers Housing Foundation at 850-656-5669.**



Two homes by Three Rivers Housing Foundation



First-time Homeownership Programs — Macon Housing Authority

The Macon Housing Authority received a Special Achievement Award for homeownership for its efforts to promote inner city redevelopment and affordability. The Authority's first-time homeownership programs incorporate redevelopment programs, the mortgage revenue bond program and the work of their non-profit development entity, In-Fill Housing, Inc. The Housing Authority has provided — either through rehabilitation or new construction — 32 affordable homes, many of them sold to former public housing residents or Section 8 participants. The work continues with In-Fill Housing's commitment to building 37 more new inner-city houses for first-time homebuyers. In addition to construction and rehabilitation, the Authority has administered more than \$38 million in funds enabling 460 families in the City of Macon and Bibb, Houston, Macon and Taylor counties to become first-time home owners since 1995.

For more information about the Macon Housing Authority's homeownership program, contact them at 478-752-5060.


Rebuilding Together – Macon (Christmas in April)

Rehabilitation of homes owned by low-income elderly and disabled residents is the focus of Rebuilding Together – Macon, the second recipient of a Special Achievement Award for Homeownership. Rebuilding Together – Macon, formerly known as Christmas in April, helps those who are already homeowners but are living in substandard housing because they cannot afford the costs of repairs. Rebuilding Together gathers volunteers every April to make sure elderly and disabled residents who cannot afford repairs have homes that are safe, warm and dry. Over the course of the last 10 years, the total number of houses repaired has exceeded 450, volunteers have numbered in the thousands, and the market value of their work has exceeded \$2 million. Two years ago, Rebuilding Together started an additional service providing free emergency home repairs for elderly and disabled low-income homeowners. Both the annual Rebuilding Day and the emergency service are being emulated in communities across the state.

For more information about this volunteer housing rehabilitation program, contact Rebuilding Together – Macon at 478-744-9808.

Local Government Initiatives

The Magnolia Award for Local Government Initiatives recognizes achievements by cities, counties or development authorities. Eligible projects range from new construction and rehabilitation to planning and zoning or multi-activity initiatives designed to improve and promote housing in a community.



Valdosta — Fellowship Place subdivision

Fellowship Place Subdivision — City of Valdosta

The City of Valdosta received the Magnolia Award for Local Government Initiatives for its Fellowship Place subdivision. The City started by working with Valdosta State to identify substandard housing within the city limits. Partially as a result, a new emphasis was placed on inspections and enforcement services. This work led to the acquisition of property for a new affordable housing subdivision and the demolition of one structure on that property. Working with Habitat for Humanity, the City of Valdosta created the subdivision in a declining area and built 12 new homes for low- and moderate-income families. The construction of Fellowship Place subdivision revitalized the neighborhood on Valdosta's Southside. The project has already brought new life into the area and will continue to do so with the completion of a neighborhood park now under construction. The City used CHIP funds administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Habitat for Humanity sponsorships, and City funds to complete the project.

To learn more about Fellowship Place, contact the City of Valdosta at 229-259-3500.

Decatur Townhouses — Housing Authority of the City of Decatur

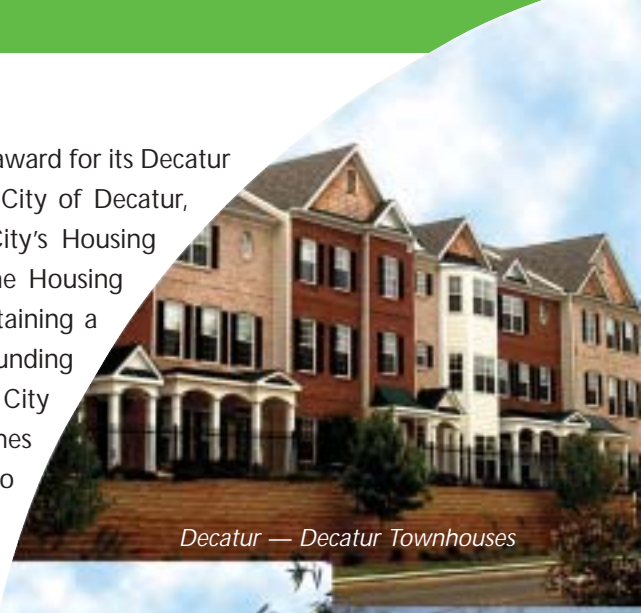
The Housing Authority of the City of Decatur received a Special Achievement award for its Decatur Townhouses. With population growth and increasing housing prices in the City of Decatur, many city employees cannot afford to live in the area they serve. The City's Housing Authority developed 20 new affordable townhouses to meet this need. The Housing Authority's challenge was to provide affordable housing options while maintaining a quality and design that would spur additional development and revitalize surrounding neighborhoods. The Authority deeply discounted 25% of the units for City employees. Four city school teachers and one city police officer now own homes in the development. None of these home owners would have been able to afford to purchase a home in Decatur without this special program. As expected, the neighborhoods surrounding the new development are now more desirable and are experiencing more rehabilitations.

For more information on Decatur Townhouses, contact the Decatur Housing Authority at 404-377-0425

South and East Rome Neighborhoods — City of Rome

The City of Rome also received a Special Achievement award for over 20 years of work addressing affordable housing issues. Since 1979, those efforts have included development and rehabilitation of affordable units, along with first-time homebuyer assistance. With \$7 million of investment over the last 22 years, the City of Rome and various partners have substantially rehabilitated 250 owner-occupied units and 75 rental units. In addition, the City built 18 new units of affordable single-family housing. The City helped an additional 40 families acquire 0% deferred payment loans for the down payment on their first home. All of these efforts have sparked investment and improvement in formerly declining neighborhoods in South and East Rome. The City has used Community Development Block Grants, DCA's Home Buyer and OwnHOME Programs, the HOME Investment Partnership Program, and City general funds. The City has also leveraged funds from local banks.

For more information on the City of Rome's housing programs, contact the City at 706-236-4477.



Decatur — Decatur Townhouses



Rome — 18 new affordable homes



Special Needs

The Magnolia Award for Special Needs Housing recognizes achievement in permanent or transitional housing for persons with special needs, such as the elderly, victims of domestic violence, migrant farm workers, or persons with mental, physical, or developmental disorders.

Rainbow Center/Diversity House — Central City AIDS Network, Inc.

The Rainbow Center and Diversity House, operated by Central City AIDS Network, Inc., received the Magnolia Award for Special Needs Housing. It offers affordable housing and support services for people who are HIV positive or have AIDS in Macon/Bibb County and 23 surrounding rural counties. The Rainbow Center is a day and resource center where patients can go for counseling, case management, and financial assistance. The Center offers support groups as well as an AIDS information hotline. The Diversity House is a 50-room SRO for people living with HIV/AIDS who would otherwise be homeless, whether they are single moms, drug addicts or former prisoners. In addition to a private room and bath, the Diversity House provides therapists, case management, food, and clothing. Central City AIDS Network has combined public funds with foundation funding, private donations, and local fundraising to make these services possible.

For more information on the Rainbow Center and Diversity House, contact the Central City AIDS Network at 478-750-8080.



Macon — Rainbow Center/Diversity House



A collage of three images. The top image shows a close-up of a green plant. The middle image shows the exterior of a house with a white door and a small porch. The bottom image shows a person in a library or bookstore, looking at books on a shelf.

Phoenix Project — Union Mission Inc.

Union Mission, Inc. received a Special Achievement award for its Phoenix Project. Phoenix Project provides residential, social services, and primary healthcare — in collaboration with the Chatham County Health Department for people living with HIV/AIDS in Savannah. Union Mission describes Phoenix Project as a *one stop shop* for medical and social services, including substance abuse treatment, counseling, case management, housing assistance, food, and transportation assistance. HIV/AIDS patients who find themselves homeless can use the Phoenix House 10 bed transitional facility, 10 bed semi-independent apartment units, or the tenant independence program (TIP), which provides 20 independent living units scattered through out Chatham County. Another component of the Phoenix Project's work is Project House Call, which sends a registered nurse and case manager to the homes of individuals who cannot come to the central location. This important outreach work sometimes offers the only social contact a client receives.

Savannah — Phoenix Project

Atlanta — Welcome Home SRO

To learn more about the Phoenix Project, call Union Mission at 912-231-0123.

Welcome House SRO — Progressive Redevelopment Inc.

The recipient of a Special Achievement award, Welcome House is a 209-unit SRO development located in downtown Atlanta. It serves residents with a variety of needs, including homelessness, mental health disorders, chronic physical problems, and substance dependency. More than half of Welcome House's residents move in from the streets, emergency shelters or hospitals. They not only receive affordable housing, but also social service support to help them stabilize their living environment. Welcome House's success is marked by the success of its tenants, who comprise a much larger and more varied population than most supportive housing developments. Most residents with mental health problems require fewer hospital visits. Most addicted residents remain sober for six months or more. The majority of unemployed residents return to jobs above minimum wage.

Contact Progressive Redevelopment Inc. at 404-524-2339
to learn more about Welcome House.





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April 2002



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