

## The Waycross-Ware County Community

**Housing Initiative** is a joint city/county team participating in a three-year program offered by the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) of collaboration and technical assistance related to housing and community development. The objective of GICH is to help our community create and implement a locally based plan to meet its housing needs.



We are a committee of individuals representing a variety of industries and commerce with a diverse background to bring many perspectives toward finding solutions to our community's housing needs. Our team attends biannual training retreats sponsored by GICH that provide training and education in methods and incentives to develop workforce housing.

**Mission:** Our mission is to strengthen, grow, and positively shape the future of our community by creating affordable housing and revitalizing neighborhoods through concerted efforts, partnerships with our citizens, and leveraging our unique assets in a manner that allows our community to prosper.

**Vision:** Our vision is making Waycross-Ware County a community where all citizens have access to safe and affordable housing to improve their quality of life which fosters the healthy development of our families and the sustained economic vitality of Waycross-Ware County overall.

### Our Objectives

- 1. Workforce Housing Options:** A variety of workforce housing solutions are available to meet the needs of low- to moderate-income families, seniors, and individuals with special needs. We want to make sure that housing is affordable for all people so that individuals and families are not burdened by housing costs that exceed 30% of their income.
- 2. Community Engagement:** Residents actively participate in housing initiatives and decision-making processes, ensuring that our community reflects their values and priorities.
- 3. Partnerships and Collaboration:** We foster strong partnerships between local government, non-profit organizations, businesses, and residents to maximize resources, share knowledge, and increase the effectiveness of our housing initiatives. We leverage existing public and private incentives to encourage qualifying housing developers to create affordable workforce housing in our community.
- 4. Sustainable Development:** Housing strategies incorporate environmentally sustainable practices that enhance our community's resilience and appeal.
- 5. Revitalized Neighborhoods:** We promote the revitalization of existing neighborhoods, enhancing property values and quality of life through thoughtful planning and development efforts.
- 6. Support Services:** We provide access to resources that support housing stability, such as financial literacy programs, job training, and social services, empowering residents to thrive in their homes and community.

We meet via Zoom on the first Monday of each month at noon. If you'd like to learn more about our team, email us at [waycrossgich@gmail.com](mailto:waycrossgich@gmail.com).

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit or LIHTC program was enacted in 1986 during the Reagan Administration by the Tax Reform Act and is the largest producer of affordable housing today. The LIHTC program allocates Federal and State tax credits to qualified developers to construct rental units for low to moderate-income renters. The program is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) program rather than a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program, and it is administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the state's housing and community development agency.

The Housing Tax Credit program can be a positive asset for a community as it has stringent accountability standards from application through the 30-year affordability period, a period of time in which the owner must keep the rent affordable and is subject to DCA inspection and compliance requirements. It addresses the need for available, attractive, and attainable housing for seniors, working families, and individuals with disabilities.

### **The basics of how the Housing Tax Credit program works**

1. The IRS allocates tax credits to each state.
2. The State Housing Finance Authority, DCA, sets rules for developers annually through the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The QAP development process begins in the summer months during public input and listening sessions and ends with the QAP workshop each February followed by approval of the governor.
3. Developers compete to win 9% tax credits.
4. If housing tax credits are awarded, private investors contribute equity to build the housing development and receive the benefits of the tax credits.
5. Housing is constructed, typically within two years of the award, and rents must remain affordable for at least 30 years. Usually, rents are 60% of the Area's Median Income.
6. The tax credit is distributed over 10 years and begins once the unit or units are inhabited.

### **DCA Community Initiatives**

Housing Tax Credits are awarded from the results of an extremely competitive point driven application with scoring defined by the annual QAP. DCA may award 1 point to an application that seeks to develop in a community that has undertaken planning through the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH). The local GICH housing team, current or certified alumni, may provide a letter indicating the majority of the members of the housing team support the project.

The letter must incorporate the following elements.

1. It must identify the boundaries of its GICH community.

2. It must identify the development as being within the community's stated GICH boundaries.
3. The letter must be executed (signed) by the GICH community's primary or secondary contact on record with the University of Georgia Housing and Demographic Research Center as of the date provided in the annual QAP.

The GICH housing team may issue only one letter for one project during each Housing Tax Credit competitive round. If the community issues multiple letters for submittal, no project within the community will receive the Community Initiative point. A letter from the Local Government agreeing to the issuance of the letter must also be provided.

Applicants are judged using a highly competitive, point-based scoring system developed by DCA. Project criteria and funding decision authority are determined at the State level. Nevertheless, as a GICH community, the Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative can provide input to DCA on proposed projects that would be located within the Waycross-Ware County limits. Any member organization (and/or their representative) on the Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative who has a vested interest in any LIHTC points request will need to abstain from any discussions or voting on the points allocation process.

DCA's funding award decisions are made on a point-based scoring system with specific criteria. Should they so elect, the Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative, may forward a letter of support endorsing one project for the current application cycle. Letters of support are highly coveted by project developers because it results in two scoring points being awarded to the application/project. Commonly referred to as the GICH Letter, the correspondence states that the project is located within the established boundaries and meets the communities affordable housing goals.

Due to the importance of such a letter of support from Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative, the following criteria shall apply to projects proposed for location within the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Waycross and Ware County.

Requests for a letter of support shall be submitted to the Community Development Department in the form of a GICH Letter of Support Application and shall include:

### **Development & Management Experience**

- History managing LIHTC projects, examples of past projects (ideally, with contact information), non-LIHTC affordable housing projects, staff experience with LIHTC or other affordable housing projects
- Prior development experience as it relates to the proposed project site
- Success with previous LIHTC projects in Waycross-Ware County or other communities

### **Proposed Development, Location & Consistency with Local Priorities**

- Description of how your LIHTC proposal is consistent with local affordable housing priorities and needs

- Proposed concept or site plan and a written statement highlighting specific design attributes and land uses
- Project budget to include funding resources
- Description of any energy efficient measures that will be used at the property

### **Community Engagement, Partnerships & Accessibility**

- Citizen input plan for obtaining input from residents affected by your proposed project (relevant groups may include: current residents in proposed site, residents of surrounding neighborhoods, community organizations, and any other relevant community stakeholders)
- Proposed site's proximity to public transportation, recreation areas, and other amenities
- Description of partnerships with local affordable housing stakeholders

### **References**

- Two references from previous developments and/or projects

### **Timeline**

1. From July – October, DCA conducts a series of listening sessions geared toward receiving input from segments of the population that have a stake in Housing Tax Credit development. The information gleaned from the sessions is used to develop the Qualified Allocation Plan for the upcoming LIHTC round.
2. In October, a draft QAP is published for comment.
3. The QAP workshop takes place, typically at a place of designation DCA, in February and the Governor signs the plan the next day signifying the official release of the QAP for the current round.
4. Once the QAP workshop ends, the application is available for use and DCA enters the “quiet period.” During this period, which lasts until the final results of the tax credit allocation are announced, DCA staff will not answer any project-specific questions. Programmatic questions and requests for clarification of the QAP must be done through the official Question form and on DCA’s website. Answers are provided online, typically on a weekly basis with notification provided through the e-newsletter.
5. December 2025  
Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative publishes Guide to Requesting the Letter of Support for the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The City of Waycross and Ware County websites should be updated to provide the most up-to-date application letter instructing developers on how to apply for the housing tax credit letter of support.

6. February 13, 2026  
The deadline for developers to apply for the Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative GICH letter of support is **February 13, 2026 at 5:00 PM**. The area selected in your proposal must be within the Ware County to be scored. The cover packet will be time and date stamped to indicate it was submitted prior to the due date.
7. February 16, 2026  
All or select group of developers will present their proposals to the housing team, which can be done via in-person or web option. Developer should tentatively reserve this date on their calendar, between the hours of 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The application scoring team will have met to score each application packet based on the scoring rubric.
8. February 20, 2026  
Waycross-Ware County Community Housing Initiative subcommittee will complete scoring proposals.
9. February 20, 2026  
The GICH Housing Team letter, *if* one project is determined to be an acceptable development, the “GICH Letter” is provided to the developer. All others are provided letters informing them of their status.
10. February 27, 2026  
Deadline to submit 9% Credit application for review prior to competitive round to DCA.
11. May 8, 2026  
Competitive Application due to DCA.
12. October 9, 2026  
Waiver Requests due to DCA.
13. December 11, 2026  
Threshold Submission.

## Submission

The completed and sealed application should be submitted not later than **5:00 p.m. on February 13, 2025**. Questions and completed applications need to be directed to:

Marc Hawkins  
Director of Community Improvement  
City of Waycross  
P.O. Drawer 99  
Waycross, GA 31502  
[mhawkins@waycrossga.gov](mailto:mhawkins@waycrossga.gov)  
912-490-2134



**Application for Letter of Support for the  
Georgia Initiative for Community Housing  
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit**  
December 2025

**APPLICANT**

Developer name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE**

Total number of developments: \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of units: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you apply for LIHTC credits in the previous year?  Yes  No

If awarded, where is the project located? \_\_\_\_\_

If not awarded, what was your application's score? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received a GICH point in the past?  Yes  No

If yes, list the community and year: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you currently have any developments in the City of Waycross or Ware County?

Yes  No      If yes, please list the property name & address(es)

below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT & CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PRIORITIES**

Property name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of units: \_\_\_\_\_

Tenancy: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the proposed development within a LMI census tract/area?  Yes  No

What is the proposed budget for this project and the funding sources? \_\_\_\_\_

Will your development use energy efficient measures (i.e. solar panels or LEED standards)?  Yes  No



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If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the materials and design attributes you anticipate using for this project. Please attach any renderings showing streetscapes, façades, frontage elements, and construction materials. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY**

How will you obtain citizen input from residents affected by your project? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your site near public transportation, recreation areas, or other amenities?

Yes       No

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

List & describe any partnerships with local affordable housing stakeholders. \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any partners who will be included in your LIHTC application:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **REFERENCES**

Please list two references from previous developments.

Property name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Property name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



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What is your self-score for this proposed development (without the GICH points factored in)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why should we award your development the GICH points? Please attach any supporting documents, renderings, letters, etc. that support your project.

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**DISCLAIMER & SIGNATURE**

I certify by signing below that my answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

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Signature

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Date

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

The completed and sealed application should be submitted not later than 4:00 p.m. on February 13, 2026. Questions and completed applications need to be directed to:

Marc Hawkins  
Director of Community Improvement  
City of Waycross  
P.O. Drawer 99  
Waycross, GA 31502  
[mhawkins@waycrossga.gov](mailto:mhawkins@waycrossga.gov)  
912-490-2134



**Application for Letter of Support for the  
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Scoring Rubric • December 2025**

## **GICH Letter of Support Proposal Scoring Rubric**

**Primary Applicant/Organization:**

**Contact Person:**

**Name of Reviewer:**

**Date Reviewed:**

### **1. Consistency with Local Priorities**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Scoring Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b>
20	The proposal is consistent with local affordable housing priorities and needs. The proposal is consistent with the GICH Work Plan, the Waycross-Ware County Comprehensive Plan, Network for Southern Economic Mobility (NSEM) Report, and other local plans and assessments.	
10	The proposal is consistent with some local affordable housing priorities and needs and cites some local plans and assessments,	
0	The proposal is not consistent with local affordable housing priorities and needs and cites no local plans or assessments.	
<b>Total Points for "Consistency with Local Priorities"</b>		<b>/20</b>

**Comments:**

### **2. History and Management Experience**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Scoring Criteria</b>	<b>Score</b>
20	Applicant has 10 or more years successfully managing LIHTC-funded projects and demonstrated success managing LIHTC-funded projects in Waycross-Ware County.	
15	Applicant has 1 to 9 years of experience successfully managing LIHTC-funded projects and demonstrated success managing LIHTC-funded projects in Waycross-Ware County.	



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10	Applicant has 1 to 9 years of experience successfully managing LIHTC-funded projects and demonstrated success managing LIHTC-funded projects in Georgia, but not Waycross-Ware County.	
0	Applicant has no experience managing LIHTC-funded projects.	
<b>Total Points for "History and Management Experience"</b>		/20

**Comments:**

**3. Local Partnerships**

Scale	Scoring Criteria	Score
10	Applicant has formal partnerships and involvement with affordable housing stakeholders in Waycross-Ware County. Applicant submitted evidence of formal partnerships and engagement.	
5	Applicant has partnerships and involvement with affordable housing stakeholders, but has no formal agreement describing partnerships.	
0	Applicant has no local partnerships.	
<b>Total Points for "Local Partnerships"</b>		/10

**Comments:**

**4. Community Engagement**

Scale	Scoring Criteria	Score
10	Applicant's Community Engagement Plan is thorough, identifies important and relevant stakeholders, utilizes best practices in community engagement, and has a reasonable timeline of completion.	



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5	Applicant's Community Engagement Plan identifies some relevant stakeholders, outlines some methods of community engagement, and has a reasonable timeline of completion.	
0	Applicant's Community Engagement Plan lacks detail, has an unreasonable timeline, outlines ineffective methods of community engagement, or was not submitted.	
<b>Total Points for "Community Engagement"</b>		/10

**Comments:**

  

**5. Overall Desirability and Location**

Scale	Scoring Criteria	Score
20	Proposed project site is in a high need area for affordable housing.	
10	Proposed project site is not in a current high need area, but documentation demonstrates current lack of affordable housing stock and market demand for more options.	
0	Inadequate or no documentation was provided to establish need.	
<b>Total Points for "Overall Desirability and Location"</b>		/20

**Comments:**

  

**6. Accessibility**

10	Project is accessible by public transportation. Project is located within one to two miles of amenities, including: grocery stores, schools, banks, churches, hospitals, entertainment, civic space, and shopping. Most amenities are within an easy walking distance.	
5	Project is accessible by public transportation. Project is located more than two miles from many amenities. Some amenities are within an easy walking distance.	



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0	Project is not accessible by public transportation. Project is not located within an easy walking distance of most amenities.	
<b>Total Points for "Accessibility"</b>		/10
<b>Comments:</b>		
<b>7. Commitment to Diversity</b>		
Scale	Scoring Criteria	Score
10	Applicant has demonstrated experience working with women and minority-owned businesses. Applicant has demonstrated Section 3 contracting experience. Applicant demonstrates a commitment to diversity.	
5	Applicant has some demonstrated experience working with women and minority-owned businesses. Applicant has limited or no Section 3 contracting experience.	
0	Applicant has no demonstrated experience working with women and minority-owned businesses. Applicant has no demonstrated Section 3 contracting experience.	
<b>Total Points for "Commitment to Diversity"</b>		/10
<b>Comments:</b>		
<b>Total Score:</b> /100		
<b>Comments:</b>		