

HOUSING ACTION PLAN & TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This table overviews all identified recommendations gathered through this housing study. This table can be thought of as a potential menu of strategies and actions to target the four key housing goals that arose from this planning process. Recommendations are ordered in sequential order for each sub-goal, ranging from lower-hanging fruit opportunities and escalating to longer term and heavier lift items.

Refer to the “housing needs, opportunities, and goals” section of Chapter 6 (page 54) for each recommendation item’s corresponding goal. The four housing goals are included here for reference:

- Goal 1: Develop policies and programs to address vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated housing units.
- Goal 2: Preserve existing housing stock.
- Goal 3: Support new housing development, with a focus on infill development in vacant and/or underutilized lots.
- Goal 4: Implement policies, programs, and procedures needed to support housing outcomes.

Goal 1: Develop policies and programs to address vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated homes.		
<i>Goal 1.1: Implement policies and programs to encourage rehabilitation of vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated homes, bringing them back into the active housing stock</i>		
Item	Recommendation	Potential partners
1.1.1	Establish a geospatial database of potentially abandoned properties and begin a concerted effort to contact property owners of those abandoned properties. Determine a threshold of contact attempts after which a property may be considered abandoned.	Ware County; City of Waycross
1.1.2	Apply for a Community HOME Investment Partnership (CHIP) Grant for rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes or construction of new affordable homes. Applicants may be municipalities (city or county), the Waycross Housing Authority, or the Waycross Land Bank.	Ware County; City of Waycross
1.1.3	Consider policy of tax abatement and/or removing outstanding property liens for rehabilitation of dilapidated homes.	Ware County; City of Waycross
1.1.4	Consider providing incentives for residential rehabilitation and/or redevelopment, such as density bonuses, tax credits, or administrative fast-tracking.	Ware County; City of Waycross
<i>Goal 1.2: Expand code enforcement and regulatory measures for properties confirmed as vacant and/or abandoned to bring them into compliance</i>		
1.2.1	Work with residents to establish and/or enhance code enforcement protocols that are appropriate for and supportive of the community's overall health.	Ware County; City of Waycross
1.2.2	Work with code enforcement to address dilapidated structures, with an eye in particular on absentee landlordism challenges. Identify funding opportunities to help property owners manage their properties and avoid displacement as a result of enforcement.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1.2.3	Consider imposing a blight tax on vacant or abandoned properties. A blight tax is a punitive tax on vacant or abandoned properties to encourage their return to productive use.	Ware County; City of Waycross

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Goal 1: Develop policies and programs to address vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated homes.		
Goal 1.3: Address underlying legal and regulatory barriers to rehabilitation, either through individual support or transfer of ownership to entities equipped to support housing rehabilitation efforts		
Item	Recommendation	Potential partners
1.3.1	Connect landowners to technical assistance for heirs property management assistance to help landowners establish clear legal titles as homes pass between generations. Encourage family estate planning to proactively reduce the occurrence of heirs property challenges.	Georgia Heirs Property Law Center, Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1.3.2	Support funding and expansion of the Waycross Land Bank, provide education to support land bank activities and expansion. A Land Bank Authority can, for example, help clear property title, hold properties tax exempt, and sell or develop properties for productive community use.	City of Waycross
1.3.3	Partner with the Waycross-Blackshear Housing Authority in acquiring dilapidated properties for rehabilitation. The Housing Authority is not currently exceeding its Faircloth Amendment limit, meaning it is able to take on more units under management if resources are available to do so. Offer option to donate land in lieu of paying liens.	Waycross-Blackshear Housing Authority; City of Waycross; Ware County
1.3.4	Support the Waycross land bank in acquiring rehabilitation. Prioritize the land bank in instances of property tax foreclosures to support a pipeline of properties through the land bank, rather than selling the property tax liens to purchasers - thus giving away any ability for the government to influence property upkeep. Offer option to donate land in lieu of paying liens.	Waycross Land Bank; City of Waycross; Ware County
Goal 2: Preserve existing housing stock.		
Goal 2.1: Address home maintenance needs to keep prevent existing housing stock functional and in active use		
2.1.1	Apply for a Community HOME Investment Partnership (CHIP) Grant for rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes or construction of new affordable homes. Applicants may be municipalities (city or county), the Waycross Housing Authority, or the Waycross Land Bank.	Ware County; City of Waycross
2.1.2	Organize volunteer service to provide free home maintenance work for the elderly and other vulnerable residents, focusing on home health and safety.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Waycross-Ware Development Authority
2.1.3	Provide support to low-income and/or elderly households to keep homes up to code through grants or tax rebates for home repairs, especially for elderly and low income owner and renter occupied homes.	Ware County; City of Waycross
2.1.4	Promote existing home repair and maintenance programs available for Waycross and Ware County residents, such as Rebuilding Together Waycross.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Rebuilding Together Waycross

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Goal 2: Preserve existing housing stock.		
Goal 2.1: Address home maintenance needs to keep prevent existing housing stock functional and in active use		
Item	Recommendation	Potential partners
2.1.5	“Support property owners in applying for retrofit and weatherization programs to address maintenance concerns and reduce energy costs, with a focus on low-income residents. There are a large range of programs offered statewide and federally, as well as a handful of private programs. A highlight of options to consider include: - Georgia Power EASE - Georgia Gas Light Rebate Programs - Fannie Mae Homestyle Energy Mortgage - GEFA's home Efficiency Rebates (HER) and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR)”	Ware County; City of Waycross; program administrators (see list)
Goal 2.2. Provide technical assistance and funding support to property owners to address property quality concerns, supporting renters and homeowners alike		
2.2.1	Offer homestead exemption workshops to help homeowners, particularly low-income and senior residents, apply for available tax exemptions. Partner with county tax assessor to organize these events.	Ware County Tax Assessor
2.2.2	Identify a sponsoring partner to create a low- to no- interest rotating loan fund for home maintenance and preservation of resident homes, particularly for elderly and low-income households. Potential sponsoring partners could include a CDFI or local land trust.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Waycross-Blackshear Housing Authority
Goal 3: Support new housing development, with a focus on infill development in vacant and/or underutilized lots		
Goal 3.1: Collaborate with private developers and landowners to support new infill housing development		
3.1.1	Collaborate with private landowners to support activation of vacant or underutilized lots.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Downtown Waycross Development Authority
3.1.2	Conduct outreach to better understand barriers for activation of vacant lots.	Ware County; City of Waycross
3.1.3	Directly support housing redevelopment pilot projects on key sites. Provide site preparation to support redevelopment, such as proactive zoning changes as necessary and solicit bids for development proposals. Work with technical assistance providers to conduct market analysis and plans to support redevelopment, as needed.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Downtown Waycross Development Authority
3.1.4	Utilize vacant publicly owned parcels for redevelopment opportunities, particularly residential redevelopment.	Downtown Waycross Development Authority; Waycross-Blackshear Housing Authority; Downtown Waycross Development Authority

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Goal 3: Support new housing development, with a focus on infill development in vacant and/or underutilized lots

Goal 3.2: Provide programmatic or regulatory support to infill development of vacant lots

Item	Recommendation	Potential partners
3.2.1	Develop and approve pre-approved designs for infill and/or Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) development.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Southern Georgia Regional Commission
3.2.2	Consider utilizing a Tax Allocation District (TAD) to support development of undeveloped properties in key districts. A TAD is a geographic area where, as property values rise over time, additional tax revenue is set aside to fund local infrastructure and reinvestment needs within the defined area. TAD funds may be used, for example, to support infrastructure investment for infill housing development. This item could also support vacant property rehabilitation efforts (see goal 1).	Ware County; City of Waycross
3.2.3	Develop low-cost loan funds to support local housing infill development activity.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Waycross-Blackshear Housing Authority

Goal 4: Implement policies, programs, and procedures needed to support housing outcomes

Goal 4.1: Amend administrative, governance, and regulatory policies and processes to be more supportive of housing

4.1.1	Using results from outreach regarding challenges building on vacant lots, amend potential regulatory barriers to housing development and redevelopment, including modifying local zoning and subdivision regulations, and streamlining the development approval processes. Ask for feedback on this process from developers.	Ware County; City of Waycross
4.1.2	In Waycross, create small-scale subdivision process to help small-scale development.	City of Waycross

Goal 4.2: Develop opportunities for education, training, and collaboration in support of housing goals and outcomes

4.2.1	Provide education for elected officials, municipal staff, and other key decision makers about housing needs and respective roles in moving housing solutions forward.	Ware-Waycross Development Authority; Waycross-Ware GICH Team
4.2.2	Promote collaboration and coordination between departments, municipalities, and administrative/regulatory entities to support housing outcomes.	Ware-Waycross planning commission and local zoning boards
4.2.3	Identify housing champions to help advance new development opportunities, embracing innovation and creative solutions to housing needs and opportunities. Cultivate a culture of innovation and collaboration to address housing challenges.	Ware-Waycross Development Authority; Waycross-Ware GICH Team
4.2.4	Work with local nonprofits to offer home ownership and educational training sessions, especially for young families and first-time home buyers.	Ware County; City of Waycross; Neighborworks America; Local Initiatives Support Corporation