



Report of the  
**Georgia City Solutions  
Task Force**  
to the  
**GMA Board  
of Directors**

May 2019

## **Georgia City Solutions Task Force**

Robert Reichert, Mayor, Macon-Bibb County (Chair)

Carolyn Bell, Mayor Pro Tem, Savannah

Matt Donaldson, Mayor Pro Tem, Twin City

Dorothy Hubbard, Mayor, Albany

Deana Holiday Ingraham, Mayor, East Point

Cynthia Jenkins, Mayor Pro Tem, Newnan

Evie McNiece, Commissioner, Rome

Kay Pippin, Mayor, Jackson

Paul Radford, City Manager, Sugar Hill

Matt Seale, Mayor, Ocilla

Keith Turman, Mayor Pro Tem, Royston

Blaine Williams, Manager, Athens-Clarke County

Vince Williams, Mayor, Union City

## **Introduction**

In 2016, the Georgia Municipal Association established Georgia City Solutions, Inc. (GCS) to serve as a vehicle for receiving tax-deductible donations to fund initiatives that will help build vibrant, economically prosperous and well-managed cities and improve the quality of life of municipal residents. GCS was designated as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization by the Internal Revenue Service in May 2018.

In the fall of 2018, GMA surveyed the Board of Directors and Member Services Advisory Council and engaged both bodies in roundtable discussions to seek input on issues GCS should attempt to address. See Appendix A for a copy of the survey document.

Among the priority concerns identified by these groups were blight and substandard housing; municipal leadership development; training and technical assistance to cities with limited resources; municipal government workforce development; business and workforce development; intergenerational poverty; crime, gangs and violence; substance abuse and addiction; broadband deployment in underserved areas; youth engagement and homelessness. Subsequently, GMA staff work teams participated in brainstorming sessions in late 2018 to identify the types of programs that could possibly be implemented to address some of these concerns.

In December 2018, GMA President Linda Blechinger appointed a 13-member task force and charged it with recommending specific initiatives that should be undertaken by Georgia City Solutions over the next several years. Mayor Robert Reichert of Macon-Bibb County was appointed as task force chair, and other members included a mix of mayors, councilmembers and city managers from across the state representing cities of various sizes. President Blechinger requested the task force to present its recommendations to the GMA Board of Directors for consideration at its spring meeting in May 2019. As the task force was organized, it was requested to make recommendations on three specific items:

1. **Phase 1 Initiatives.** Phase 1 Initiatives are the initiatives GCS should seek to launch within the next 12 to 18 months. Given the desire to demonstrate “early wins”, ease of implementation should be a key consideration when identifying Phase 1 initiatives.
2. **Phase 2 Initiatives.** Phase 2 Initiatives are the programs the GCS Board of Directors, once appointed, should consider undertaking after the Phase 1 initiatives have been launched.
3. **General Fundraising Strategies.** General fundraising strategies refer to strategies for attracting funds to support GCS programs and operations that go beyond applying for grants from foundations, corporations and other organizations.

The task force conducted three meetings – one in February, one in March and one in April.

At the beginning of the kickoff meeting in February, Dr. Kirby Godsey, former chancellor of Mercer University, delivered a keynote address that set the tone for the task force’s deliberations. He called upon task force members to provide leadership and hope by offering five inspirational observations:

- 1) Losing heart is not an option for public servants.
- 2) Progress in problem-solving begins with the willingness to “live forward.”
- 3) People are more important than ideologies.
- 4) The first requirement in facing challenges is to make your presence count.
- 5) Leadership is not a spectator sport.

Dr. Godsey concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of courage and imagination to conceive of new solutions. See Appendix B for a copy of his presentation.

By the conclusion of the first meeting, the task force had agreed that GCS should initially concentrate its efforts on the following **five focus areas**:

1. Support and encourage the development of city youth advisory councils and other youth engagement initiatives
2. Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth
3. Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies
4. Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing
5. Develop and support programs to assist with mental and behavioral health issues

Also at the February meeting, the task force engaged in a brainstorming session on initiatives GCS could potentially undertake to address these five focus areas. The group then charged the GMA staff with developing specific proposals, taking the task force’s ideas into consideration. Following the February meeting, staff met with various state agencies and organizations to explore ideas and possible partnerships. These meetings, in addition to internal staff discussions, resulted in more than 30 potential initiatives which were presented to the task force at the March meeting. The task force provided feedback on these ideas and also offered additional suggestions. In April, the task force finalized its recommendations which are presented in this report.

## **Task Force Recommendations**

The GCS Task Force applauds the GMA Board of Directors for its vision in creating Georgia City Solutions. As a non-profit organization, GCS provides the Association with a tremendous tool which, if used strategically, can attract funding to create and support a wide range of programs that will make a positive impact on the economic vitality and quality of life of cities and enhance the operation of municipal governments. While the opportunities are seemingly endless, the task force believes it is critical for GCS in its formative years to limit its focus to only a few of the challenges facing cities and invest in initiatives that can be implemented in the relatively near future. This approach will help GCS build its identity and establish its reputation as a credible, forward-thinking organization, while enhancing its fundraising efforts. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 initiatives being recommended by the task force are grouped in four categories and correlate to the five focus areas. These categories include:

- **Youth leadership development**
- **Workforce and economic development (including municipal government workforce development)**
- **Quality of life initiatives**
- **Research and innovation**

Recommended Phase 1 and Phase 2 initiatives for each of these four categories are provided below. The focus area to which each initiative relates is noted.

Other potential initiatives which the GCS Board of Directors may wish to consider exploring in the future are described in Appendix C.

A fundraising recommendation, along with a listing of potential fundraising strategies, follows the listing of proposed Phase 1 and Phase 2 initiatives.

### **Youth Leadership Development**

*(Phase 1 and 2 initiatives listed below track Focus Area 1 referenced on page 3: Support and encourage the development of city youth advisory councils and other youth engagement initiatives)*

#### **Phase 1**

##### **1. Grant Program for Establishing Youth Advisory Councils**

This competitive grant program would provide seed money to help establish Youth Advisory Councils sponsored by city governments. The grant funds could be used to help with a variety of start-up costs, including costs associated with sending the newly established youth council and its adult leaders to the Youth Council Symposium. As part of an effort to involve a diverse group of students in youth councils, a condition of the grant would be that recipients develop and document a plan to encourage the participation of all age-appropriate students regardless of their academic achievement level. GMA is aware of

approximately 20 city-sponsored youth councils that currently exist, so there is major growth potential for Youth Advisory Councils throughout the state. In developing this grant program, the task force recommends that GMA examine the Georgia Civic Awareness Program sponsored by ACCG's Civic Affairs Foundation.

#### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities
- Local school systems
- Local civic organizations

### **2. Support for Youth Council Symposiums**

GCS financial support for Youth Council Symposiums would be designed to cover event costs so that the symposium could be open to all interested Youth Advisory Council participants at no cost. GCS funding could also cover items such as honorariums for guest speakers; facilities and equipment rentals; participant and speaker lodging; and meals/refreshments. By removing a financial barrier to symposium participation, it is expected that a larger number of youth councils from across the state would become involved.

#### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities

### **3. Annual Awards Program for Youth Advisory Councils**

Each year during one of GMA's conferences, GCS would recognize a select number of Youth Advisory Councils for best practices and innovative programming. In addition to receiving an award, those recognized would be given a small grant to be applied to future youth council initiatives. This annual awards program would bring awareness to youth councils in general, as well as highlight best practices and innovative programming and share those examples widely. One condition of the grant might be that the recipients participate in a GMA conference/workshop session, webinar or written interview designed to highlight their Youth Advisory Council's best practices or innovative programming.

#### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities
- City-sponsored Youth Advisory Councils throughout the state
- Georgia Public Television

### **4. Continuing Education Program for Youth Council Advisors**

GCS would sponsor educational sessions designed specifically and solely for adult advisors to youth councils. These sessions would take place during Youth Council Symposiums and

would focus on best practices, lessons learned, mentoring, leadership and more. The sessions would also provide advisors a forum to share success stories and discuss issues/concerns they may be experiencing in their role as advisors. GCS financial support could cover costs of guest speakers, facilitators, meeting space, refreshments, etc.

#### Potential Partners

- City-sponsored Youth Advisory Councils across the state

### **5. Grants for Youth Advisory Council Intercity Programs**

GCS would provide funding to help Youth Advisory Councils cover the costs of travel associated with visiting cities throughout the state to learn about different economies, cultures, projects and more.

#### Potential Partners

- City-sponsored Youth Advisory Councils across the state

*Note: GMA staff have previously had a conversation with one potential funder who expressed interest in financially supporting Youth Leadership Development initiatives.*

## **Phase 2**

### **1. Municipal Government Honors Program**

*(This program also tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

GCS would sponsor a Municipal Government Honors Program that would invite rising high school juniors and seniors to apply for a week-long program during the summer. This program would provide an in-depth look at city governance, specifically how cities respond to the needs of residents by providing services and the types of careers that cities can offer. GCS funding would be used to develop the program and cover the costs for the students.

#### Potential Partners

- Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- Georgia City-County Management Association
- Professional associations (utilities, public safety, etc.)

# **Workforce and Economic Development**

## **Phase 1**

### **1. Community Workforce Development Collaboration Grants**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

In a pilot initiative, GCS would fund up to three, three-year community collaborative efforts that bring cities, counties, and school boards together, along with other appropriate partners (chamber, business community, local technical colleges, etc.), to map out a community workforce development strategy. GCS funding would be used to match local funds and assist the communities as they identify their workforce needs and map out a strategy to achieve identified workforce development goals and objectives.

#### Potential Partners

- Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- ACCG
- Georgia School Boards Association
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Technical College System of Georgia
- Department of Family and Children Services
- Regional Commissions
- Law Enforcement

### **2. Reading Campaign**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

Recognizing that literacy levels have a significant impact on employment and income, GCS would partner with an existing program that seeks to improve reading levels, particularly among young students. Through the partnership, GCS funds would be used to support the program, and participating cities would receive financial assistance to support their efforts, as well as recognition.

#### Potential Partners

- One or more non-profit organizations which promote literacy
- Georgia School Boards Association



- Head Start

### **3. Municipal Internship Program**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

The Internship Program would provide full-time internship experiences to undergraduate and graduate-level college students in city governments. Cities would submit internship proposals to receive funding. Based on the amount of funding available, GCS would fund a set number of internships. The goal is to provide internships in any number of city departments (finance, accounting, city administration, public works, parks and recreation, planning/zoning, utilities, community development, public safety, legal, etc.). The grants would cover the cost of employing the student. *This program differs from GMA's Local Government Practicum program, which is geared toward Master of Public Administration students who are generally not paid and are tasked with specific projects to be completed over the course of a semester.*

#### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities
- International City/County Management Association
- Georgia City/County Management Association
- Georgia Local Government Personnel Association
- Georgia's Regional Commissions
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Technical College System of Georgia
- Other professional organizations
- Georgia public and private universities

## **Phase 2**

### **1. K-12 City Career Opportunity Resources**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

GCS would provide funding to develop K-12 resources and curriculum to be used to stimulate interest in the wide array of jobs found in Georgia's cities. Age-appropriate videos, materials for guidance counselors, and curriculum/resources teachers could use to highlight city jobs (water/wastewater, utilities, planning, public works, public safety, etc.) would be developed to relieve school districts, teachers, and/or city officials from the need to develop their own resources.

### Potential Partners

- Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- Technical College System of Georgia
- Georgia School Boards Association
- Georgia School Counselor Association
- Professional Association of Georgia Educators
- Professional Associations (utilities, public safety, etc.)

## **2. Municipal Workforce Development Summit**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

GCS would sponsor a Municipal Workforce Development Summit designed to focus on best practices and workforce trends. Sessions would focus on how cities plan for succession planning, recruitment and retention practices, creating a positive workforce culture, outsourcing, working with educational partners, etc.

## **3. Municipal Fellowship Program**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

The Municipal Fellowship Program would be designed to place both MPA graduates and graduates with other degrees (finance, accounting, administration, engineering, planning, etc.) in smaller cities for one year. GCS would match funding from the city and/or other partners to pay for an individual's salary with a city. Two or more cities would also be allowed to work together to fund a position to work on specific projects that require assistance that current staff are unable to perform because of work load or expertise.

### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities
- International City/County Management Association
- Georgia City/County Management Association
- Georgia Local Government Personnel Association
- Georgia's Regional Commissions
- Other professional organizations
- Georgia public and private universities
- Local businesses

#### **4. Mentoring and Character/Soft-Skills Development Grant**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

Vulnerable children often come from low-income, high-unemployment communities, and/or come from stressful home environments (poverty, homelessness, lacking social/emotional supports, parental issues with drugs/alcohol, etc.) and are susceptible to dropping out of school, criminal behavior, and unemployment or acquiring low-paying jobs. GCS would provide grants to cities to begin city-led mentoring programs to reduce the risks experienced by those children in vulnerable situations. Grant funds would be used to identify children requiring mentoring, supporting and supervising mentors, defining goals and objectives, and implementing appropriate strategies.

Character development during childhood affects how a worker performs in his/her job in adulthood while the development of soft skills is also shown to be critical to positive career development. GCS would provide grants to cities to begin character/soft-skills development in the community. Grant funds would be used to initiate the program, develop appropriate benchmarks that define success, and to defray any associated costs for resources and materials.

##### Potential Partners

- Georgia Department of Education
- Georgia School Boards Association
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
- Georgia Chamber of Commerce

## **Quality of Life Initiatives**

### **Phase 1**

#### **1. Housing Assessments for GICH Communities**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCS would provide funding to assist communities participating in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) in conducting housing needs assessments. Such assessments could include the total number of housing units, housing types, age, condition/habitability, substandard units, occupancy type, vacancy rates, availability of housing units for rent or for sale, and buildable land availability. In addition, GICH communities should be encouraged to

analyze their housing stock based on property values as a means of helping determine housing needs.

Potential Partners:

- UGA Housing and Demographic Research Center
- UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences
- Georgia public and private universities
- Regional Commissions

**2. Housing and Redevelopment Conference/Summit**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCS would sponsor an annual conference or summit on housing, blight and redevelopment. The conference/summit could be conducted in conjunction with a future GICH Retreat, or it could be conducted as a stand-alone event. GCS funding would cover such items as honorariums for guest speakers; facility and equipment rentals; speaker lodging; and meals and refreshments. The full continuum of housing issues would be addressed, beginning with homelessness, and redevelopment sessions would focus on both residential and commercial property. Potential session topics include: code enforcement, land bank authorities, vacant land reuse, aging in place, using citywide planning to achieve neighborhood revitalization, finding capital to acquire and rehabilitate distressed properties, and breathing new life into historic assets.

Potential Partners

- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Power
- Georgia Small Business Development Center
- University of Georgia
- Georgia Cities Foundation

**3. Grants for Crisis Intervention Team Training**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 5 referenced on page 3: Develop and support programs to assist with mental and behavioral health issues)*

Public safety personnel and other local officials are frequently the first point of contact for populations with mental and behavioral health issues in cities but may also lack the appropriate training to improve outcomes of these interactions. GCS grants would help defray the cost of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training.

Potential Partner

- Georgia Public Safety Training Center

## Phase 2

### 1. Mental and Behavioral Health Summit/Workshops

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 5 referenced on page 3: Develop and support programs to assist with mental and behavioral health issues)*

Mental and behavioral health issues manifest themselves in a variety of ways in Georgia's cities and produce both immediate and long-term needs for affected populations. Although there is a broad range of empirically proven solutions, individual communities may not know which approach works best for them. For instance, how can they improve the social determinants of mental and behavioral health or build successful communities of practice? GCS would convene local officials as well as mental and behavioral health experts to survey the state of the field, help cities become more engaged, and find collaborative partners. These meetings would take the diversity of GMA's membership into account and could be planned as regional workshops.

#### Potential Partners

- GMA member cities
- Georgia Council on Substance Abuse
- Georgia Department on Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- Georgia Health Policy Center
- Georgia Health Foundation
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Atlanta Regional Collaborative for Health Improvement (ARCHI)
- American Psychiatric Association
- Community service boards

### 2. Housing and Redevelopment Resource Teams/Consulting (for cities not in the GICH program)

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCS would provide funding to develop a pilot program to provide on-site technical assistance to cities that are not in the GICH program, especially small cities. During a site visit, the resource teams/consultants would assess the situation and offer practical guidance. In addition to utilizing staff members from partnering organizations, the resource teams could also include city staff members, elected officials, consultants, attorneys, and other subject matter experts.

#### Potential Partners:

- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Power
- University of Georgia
- Georgia Cities Foundation

### **3. Blight/Redevelopment Workshops (one day)**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCS would sponsor a one-day workshop (similar in design to GCF's Heart & Soul Downtown Workshop) to visit cities in Georgia that have experienced success in the areas of blight and redevelopment. Representatives from the host communities would serve as the primary instructors for these six-hour workshops targeting municipal officials, key city staff, and other community leaders. Workshop participants would be provided opportunities to view actual plans and projects, with officials from the host city discussing their strategies, success stories, and lessons learned. The workshop would include formal presentations and walking/windshield tours.

#### Potential Partners

- Georgia Cities Foundation
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Host community

### **4. Blight/Redevelopment Workshops (regional, 2-3 hours)**

*(This recommendation tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCF would sponsor a series of short (2-3 hour) regional workshops designed to educate city officials and other community partners on topics pertaining to blight eradication and substandard housing. Sessions would be customized to focus on specialized topics, including housing assistance programs offered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (including the Community Home Investment Program (CHIP), Georgia DREAM program, HomeSafe Georgia program) and low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program and programs on other topics, including finding capital to acquire and rehabilitate distressed properties, and breathing new life into historic assets.

#### Potential Partners

- Georgia Cities Foundation
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- University of Georgia

# **Research and Innovation**

## **Phase 1**

### **1. Research Fund**

*(This recommendation is intended to support all five focus areas.)*

In light of its mission to establish and support new and innovative programs, GCS anticipates the need for research on any of the five areas of focus identified in this document. The organization would establish a fund to support research initiatives to benefit all cities. Members and partner organizations would be encouraged to suggest topics and research products.

The task force recommends that the first GCS research reports focus on the following areas:

#### Federal Workforce Funding

GCS should pay for research that would examine how much federal workforce funding flows to Georgia, where the money goes, how it is accessed, and how it is used. The report should also include recommendations on how cities can best utilize federal workforce funding.

#### Mental and Behavioral Health

While there are many initiatives to help populations with mental and behavioral health issues in Georgia's cities, research products on this topic are usually not written for local officials as the primary audience. GCS should fund research grants to help collect and disseminate information on scalable models, best practices, and case studies. Potential topics include:

- Street outreach
- Clinical co-responder programs
- Triage centers
- "Housing first" policies
- Multi-agency resource centers (MARC)s
- Diversion programs

#### Best Practices Toolkit – A Resource to Help City Officials Address Blight and Substandard Housing

GCS would provide funding to conduct research that documents the best practices of various cities in the areas of blight eradication and substandard housing. While much information on these topics is available on GMA's website, there is limited documentation of best practices. Research could be conducted to document and highlight the successful utilization of such tools as code enforcement, blight taxes, land bank authorities, anti-displacement strategies and Urban Redevelopment Plans.

#### Potential Partners

- Georgia public and private universities

## Phase 2

### 1. Innovation Grant and Awards Programs

*(This recommendation is intended to support all five focus areas.)*

To further the development of innovative ideas and approaches to challenging local issues, and to facilitate the sharing of effective initiatives, the task force recommends that GCS:

- Establish a competitive grant program to assist cities that desire to undertake a new and innovative program to address a local challenge. Priority would be placed on funding projects that could be scaled and replicated in other cities.
- Create a Municipal Innovation Achievement Program that would financially reward cities which have successfully implemented an innovative program or project to address a pressing community challenge or improve city government operations.

#### Potential Partners

- Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- Georgia City-County Management Association
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Trend magazine

## RECOMMENDED FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES

The task force recommends that GMA/GCS engage a fundraising consultant to work with staff to develop fundraising strategies, assist in identifying foundations and corporations whose mission aligns with the proposed GCS Phase 1 and Phase 2 initiatives and, as necessary, preparing grant applications.

Potential fundraising strategies to be considered include:

- Foundation Grants** – Many foundation grants are restricted to programmatic work. The strategy is to search for grants to support specific initiatives and topics. The plan is to seek out and develop relationships with those foundations that may provide unrestricted funds and/or focus on local government.
- Board Giving** – All current GCS Board members should give an annual gift at a level to be determined by the Board. This is a personal gift, separate and distinct from any corporate or matching gifts. All gifts (except for sponsorships) are anonymous (known only to Board Chair/GCS leadership) unless stated otherwise by the Board member.
- Individual Donors** – Donations in this category are less than the major donor minimum of \$XXX. These donations are usually received through an annual campaign, targeted



mail, social media, email, and/or phone solicitation.

- D. **Events** – This strategy could include a large “annual fundraising event” as well as small individual events scheduled throughout the year. Examples of events include (but are not limited to): gala; golf tournament or other sporting event; “fun run” or other distance runs/walks; festival; partnership with local businesses for a “% of sales” event. Other events that could be considered would be more regional in nature with involvement from strategic partners. Events should be evaluated from the point of view of input (time and money) and output (funds raised, greater exposure, new donors, and cultivation of relationships for future donors). At the end of each event, the Board leadership and/or Development Committee and GCS staff should evaluate the “success” of the event.
- E. **Major Donors/Gifts** - A Major Gift for GCS is \$XXXXXX and higher. These gifts are generated through a process of Targeted Identification, Relationship Cultivation, “The Ask”, and Thanking. The GCS Board members will play a critical role in this process.
- F. **Business/Corporations/Professional Organizations** – This strategy calls for a targeted approach to specific business/corporate sectors whose mission is naturally aligned and/or complimentary with GCS. Much like the Major Donor gifts strategy, this strategy requires thoughtful and intentional relationship/partnership cultivation and is intended to be on-going. Additionally, professional organizations associated with local government professions/services should be targeted. Donations from business, corporations or professional organizations may come in the form of a cash donation or “in-kind” of intellectual and technical resources to local governments.
- G. **Planned Giving** – A planned giving program for GCS will cultivate donors to consider long-term gifts through a number of financial instruments. A planned gift is any major gift made, in lifetime or at death, as part of a donor’s overall financial and/or estate planning. This option will require the services of an expert in the field of Planned Giving.

## **Appendix A**

### **Potential Georgia City Solutions Initiatives: Survey of GMA Board of Directors** (September 2018)

Georgia City Solutions, Inc. (GCS) is a new 501 (c)(3) organization created by GMA for the purpose of receiving tax-deductible donations to support new initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life and economic vitality of Georgia's cities, as well as improving the effectiveness and efficiency of municipal government operations. To help ensure that initiatives are responsive to the needs and concerns of the membership, feedback from the Board of Directors is being solicited.

Listed below are possible GCS initiatives that, depending on the initiative, could be implemented in a variety of forms, including demonstration project grants, training programs, technical assistance, facilitation, research, case studies and online tutorials, among others. Of these initiatives, please identify the five you believe should be most seriously considered and rank them 1 to 5, with 1 being your highest priority. You are welcome to add your own ideas about potential initiatives and include them in your top five.

**I believe Georgia City Solutions should seek to develop initiatives which, through strategic partnerships with public, private and non-profit organizations, will ...**

- ☐ help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies
- ☐ assist city officials in reducing crime, gangs and violence in their communities
- ☐ strive to improve relations between law enforcement and the general public
- ☐ provide additional law enforcement training to local police officers
- ☐ promote criminal justice and municipal court reforms aimed at reducing incarceration rates for minor offenses, improving police morale and effectiveness, and ensuring that municipal courts are properly administered
- ☐ foster the deployment of broadband in under-served areas of the state
- ☐ seek to reduce substance abuse and addiction
- ☐ seek to reduce levels of homelessness
- ☐ provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing
- ☐ provide training programs/scholarships/technical assistance to cities with limited financial resources
- ☐ strengthen local economies through workforce and business development
- ☐ help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty through holistic community revitalization strategies
- ☐ support and encourage the development of city youth advisory councils and other youth engagement initiatives
- ☐ promote/recognize/reward innovation in municipal government administration and service delivery
- ☐ promote greater citizen participation in city government and seek to assimilate new and growing ethnic populations into the civic life of the community
- ☐ build the leadership skills of municipal elected officials and staff
- ☐ other (briefly describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ other (briefly describe): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Keynote Address Delivered by Dr. R. Kirby Godsey to the Georgia City Solutions Task Force**

**Mercer University – Macon, Georgia  
February 6, 2019**

Thank you, Robert, for asking me to kickoff your gathering today. And thank all of you for what you do. Your work here in this Task Force reflects the increasingly challenging work of public service. I have seen firsthand that your service in your communities is often under-appreciated. It very often falls in the category of “no good deed goes unpunished”. So, thank you for gathering here at Mercer today and being willing to tackle difficult issues that gnaw at the fabric of all our communities.

This region of Georgia is known as the Fall Line. We are told that thousands of years ago, the ocean bed came up to this general area and from here the highlands began to emerge.

The Fall Line might be good metaphor for seeing what you have come together to do. You stand between the lowlands where our towns and cities are caught in the rip tides of poverty and drug abuse, of homelessness, of crime and failing infrastructures and you are trying to chart a course to the highlands where our communities can gain a foothold for making sustainable progress.

In the face of problems that do not lend themselves to simple remedies, I believe that perhaps your highest calling is to become a voice that says we can be better and we can do better. You have to light lanterns of hope.

Despair, after all, is not a strategy. Walking away from problems that threaten our progress is not an option. I do not discount the magnitude of our challenges. However, I actually believe that we know enough to solve most of our deepest problems. We know enough. The issue may be whether we are good enough. The destiny of our communities will ultimately not be determined by our great challenges. It will be determined by whether we have the competence and the courage to address those challenges. I think your work is about both narrowing the focus and deepening the resolve.

So, as you embark on your conversations here, let me make five observations about your work.

1. Losing heart clearly is not an option. While some problems seem intractable and finding solutions is mind-bending, this whole process is built on the simple belief that you collectively can make a difference.

I am a strong advocate for what I call the power of one. By that, I mean that each of us is a universe of one. Each of you has something distinctive to bring to this conversation. In fact, there is not another person in the world with your voice, your insight, or your singular presence – never has been, never will be. No one can see what you can see, or say what you can say. No one can think your thoughts or dream your dreams. Each of us is an unduplicated presence in the world. You are one of a kind. About everyone of you, I believe this: You can be what has never been. You can do

what has never been done. You have the power of one. But, it won't matter unless you believe that your being here, unless you believe that your voice and your insights can help shape creative solutions. For the Task Force to succeed, none of you can be exempted from being a part of setting priorities and conceiving better answers.

2. Progress in solving our most difficult problems in life and in our communities always begins with a willingness to live forward. It is tempting to become victims of yesterday's mistakes and preoccupied with yesterday's failures. Life in our communities is linear. We should not become consumed by roads not taken. We should not be paralyzed by words that should have never been spoken or policies that should have never been adopted. Always lean forward. We must not become stuck in yesterday. Harboring hurt, holding grudges is a total waste. There is no future in getting even. None of you will live long enough to get even. Feuds and divisions and suspicion and hyper-partisanship and resentment makes us smaller people.

We all know that the genre of issues you have gathered here to address will not yield to mantras or slogans or to outworn rhetoric. They are likely only to yield to new ideas, to fresh thinking even when the outcomes are not entirely clear. You have to be willing to let go of the way things have been. Live forward.

3. We have to remember that people are more important than ideology. Every person matters. Every person counts. There are no unimportant people in our communities, including those who voted against you. People are always more important than political or religious doctrines or prevailing ideas. I love ideas. I have written whole books about ideas. But ideas alone are dead. They come to life in the minds and spirits of people who believe in them, people who are willing to work at translating ideas into getting good things done.

If we are to solve any of the problems that are diminishing us, it will begin by taking people seriously. That includes the powerful and the powerless. It includes the in-crowd and the out-crowd. It includes our friends and our critics. Every person matters. The best evidence that you believe someone matters is simple: You listen to them. You have to listen the high and mighty. You have to listen to the down and out. Listening is the most basic form of respect. As leaders, we are often confident that we know what needs to be done. And perhaps we do. But when your speaking is grounded in listening, you will have a far better chance of your words being heard.

4. When facing our most stubborn challenges, the first requirement is to make your presence count. That is our one universal obligation. Otherwise, you become a bystander. It is easy enough to set aside really tough problems by thinking "this problem was here before I began and it will be here after I am gone." That may be true. But it is equally true that your presence in your communities can and should make an enduring difference. That is why you are on this Task Force.

You and I live between what I like to call the "not yet" and the "no longer". There was a time when you were not yet Mayor or Commissioner or City Manager or a member of this Task Force. And there will be a time when you are no longer in these positions. We all live and work in a small window of influence bounded by the "not yet" and the "no longer". In that window, make your presence count. In your fleeting frame of influence, what will turn out to matter, the only thing that will turn out to matter, between the "not yet" and the "no longer" will be:

What value did I add?

What problems did I solve?

What difference did I make?

5. I suspect one of the first lessons that we all learn when take on civic responsibilities is that leadership is not a spectator sport. Whether you are the Mayor of a great city, a single

Commissioner of a small town or a university president, the real definition of a leader remains the same. A leader is a person or a group of people who take initiative to identify and to solve problems. The truth is that leaders are not established by title or rank or position and certainly not by elections. It is possible to hold the highest office in the land and not be a leader. Either we take initiative to solve problems or we do not lead. Long before taking action, leadership is about listening and thinking and probing. Listening to one another. Thinking and challenging and conceiving new alternatives. I believe that is the reason you have come together.

A final word. I like to say that people in public service such as yourselves are always romancing the unknown. Over and over, you collide with unexpected setbacks. You cannot allow setbacks to set you back. You deal with entrenched interests that resist looking at anything in a different light. Keep looking for new light. To undertake the work of this Task Force, I am confident you will have to have staying power. You did not arrive here today and you will not gather in the future with duffle bags full of certainty. You do not gather here with a set of crystal clear answers to every dilemma. In truth, it might be better to say that you come together today and in the future with small satchels of hope and hunches.

As you undertake your work, I want to leave you with two words that I believe can turn the tide in your favor. The two words are courage and imagination. First, it takes courage to think the unthinkable or to question the unquestionable. It takes courage to look beyond socially acceptable remedies. It takes courage to innovate, to introduce new ideas, to set aside solutions that are no longer working. It takes courage to take risks knowing that sometimes you will fail. It took courage to even offer yourselves for public service knowing that your views will sometimes be rejected or unfairly criticized or even maliciously misrepresented. It turns out that there is no way forward, no solutions to our most daunting challenges without the courage factor. It is the one factor without which you dare not venture in the tough terrain of problem solving because you will encounter cynicism and skepticism, even suspicion and doubt. Your work requires a full cup of courage.

Alongside courage, I want to add the word imagination. The best road forward will not always be lighted by what you already know or already have experienced. Remain open to the power of the imagination. The best ideas have yet to be conceived. Albert Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge". Sir Isaac Newton had already explained how the world works. Einstein knew everything about Newton's description of the world. The genius of Albert Einstein was not what he knew. The genius of Albert Einstein was what he was able to imagine.  $E=MC^2$  changed the entire geopolitical world. One formula drastically changed the world. Turned it upside down. Before Einstein could think it, he had to imagine it. He imagined a new way of understanding matter and energy and gravity and space and time.

To the problems we face in our communities, we have to be bold enough to imagine better outcomes. You have to imagine new ideas and new possibilities. So, today I remind you: As you wind your way through what is possible, wander into the land of the impossible, the politically impossible, the socially impossible, the economically impossible. Then, as you wander through these fields of the impossible, pause - and wonder why not. Imagination.

Thank you for allowing me to meet with you this morning.

## **Appendix C**

### **Other Potential Georgia City Solutions Initiatives for Future Consideration**

During its deliberations, the task force discussed other potential initiatives which it believes have merit and should be considered for development and implementation by the GCS Board of Directors in the future.

#### **Workforce and Economic Development**

##### **City Managers School**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

City Managers School would be a one-week intensive training program for assistant city managers and administrators, as well as other city employees, who have demonstrated the interest and potential to be a city manager/administrator in the future. The school would be offered once a year and limited to a small number of participants (possibly 15) nominated by their city. One or two slots could potentially be reserved for outstanding MPA students who have expressed interest in pursuing a city management career. It is envisioned that current and retired city managers would provide the bulk of the instruction.

##### **Finance Certification Scholarship**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

GCS would fund a scholarship for a student earning an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited school in Georgia to participate in the CVIOG Local Certified Public Finance Officer program.

*Level 1 Certification requires the completion of seven classes for 101 hours at a cost of \$2,433. Level 2 Certification requires the completion of six classes for 79 hours and one project at a cost of \$2,213.*

##### **Top Municipal Workplaces Awards Program**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

On a periodic basis, GCS would sponsor a Top Municipal Workplaces Award Program. The program would solicit feedback from employees from cities that choose to participate, assessing information about workplace culture, employee engagement, leadership, pay, benefits, training, etc. Winners would be selected based on city size.

### **City Camps**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

To promote the activities that cities undertake, and the jobs necessary to conduct those activities, GCS would fund the development of resources and best practices for cities to use in summer camps offered to school-aged children. Resources could be developed for camps that have a primary purpose of educating students on city services and career opportunities, or for already established camps that could incorporate city career activities.

### **Municipal Service Certifications through Technical College System of Georgia**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 3 referenced on page 3: Help cities fill critical positions and encourage careers in municipal government through internships, work-study programs and/or scholarships, as well as through other strategies)*

Through a partnership with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), GCS would work to create various Municipal Service Certifications that would provide recipients a “package” of courses and skills that lend themselves to a career in Georgia’s cities. Certifications could be grouped by function, such as Front Office, Finance/Purchasing, Motor Pool/Fleet, Public Works, Utilities, and so on. In some instances, current course offerings could be grouped together to form the basis for the certification, while other more specific courses would need to be developed to meet the needs of Georgia’s cities.

### **One-Stop Shop for Business Recruitment and Retention (workshop)**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

GCS would sponsor a workshop(s) designed to educate cities on how to establish a “one-stop shop” for business recruitment and retention. Workshop sessions would focus on coordinating activities between a city’s community development and economic development departments, the benefits of training staff to do in-house reviews, best practices on synching city and county development codes, etc.

### **One-Stop Shop for Business Recruitment and Retention (consulting)**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

GCS would provide funding to help cities establish “one-stop shops” for business recruitment and retention. Funding could be used to assist cities in coordinating activities between community development departments and economic development departments, train city staff to do in-house plan reviews, undertake business analysis studies to help in business recruitment, synch city and county development codes, etc.

**Business Development Plan (workshop/guidebook)**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

GCS would sponsor a workshop and/or creation of a guidebook designed to educate city officials on how to establish local programs that educate local residents and entrepreneurs on how to develop a business plan and the steps needed to effectively navigate local rules and regulations.

**Business Plan Development (consulting)**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

GCS would provide funding to assist cities in establishing programs that would educate local residents and entrepreneurs on how to develop a business plan and the steps needed to effectively navigate local rules and regulations.

**Local Investment Networks**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 2 referenced on page 3: Strengthen local economies through workforce and business development to prevent brain drain, especially among youth)*

*(Local Investment Networks (LIN), also known as Local Investment Opportunity Networks (LION), are community-based investment groups with a hyper-local focus. They allow residents to invest in small, locally owned businesses.)*

**(a) Local Investment Network Workshop**

GCS would sponsor a workshop(s) designed to educate city officials and other community partners on Local Investment Networks. Sessions would focus on how a LIN works, how loans are made, rules the LIN must follow, and how LINs have been used in other communities.

**(b) Local Investment Network Grant**

GCS would provide grants to cities that want to establish a LIN. Funding would be used to educate local officials and other community partners on what a LIN is, how it works, community engagement efforts, and establishing a network.

**Quality of Life Initiatives****Housing and Redevelopment Resource Teams/Consulting (for GICH communities)**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*



GCS would provide funding to provide on-site technical assistance (resource teams, consultants, etc.) to GICH communities on an as-needed basis. Between GICH Retreats, a resource team/consultant would provide a site visit to offer practical guidance to the community's GICH team. In addition to utilizing staff members from partnering organizations, the resource teams could also include city staff members, elected officials, consultants, attorneys, and other subject matter experts.

### **Hub Cities Blight and Redevelopment Tours**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 4 referenced on page 3: Provide tools to eradicate blight and substandard housing)*

GCS would sponsor a networking trip similar in design to the Atlanta Regional Commission's LINK trip, which would take representatives from Georgia's 13 hub cities to visit hub cities in other states to learn about new ideas and approaches for addressing the issues and challenges facing their communities regarding blight, substandard housing, and redevelopment. During each trip, leaders from Georgia's hub cities would have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with their counterparts from other regions. They would explore solutions and exchange ideas for improving their local communities and fostering positive community change.

### **Pilot Program Grants – Mental and Behavioral Health**

*(This initiative tracks Focus Area 5 referenced on page 3: Develop and support programs to assist with mental and behavioral health issues)*

Based on the outcomes of workshops and research efforts, GCS would fund pilot programs for initiatives that are either not yet practiced in Georgia or have only been implemented in larger metro areas. Depending on the scope and complexity of the project, a pilot program may involve regional partners to provide physical infrastructure, staffing, and service levels.