



STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

- WHEREAS:** The Governor's Rural Development Council commissioned the UGA Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development to complete a statewide Economic Vitality Index based on a variety of indicators to assess the economic health of Georgia's counties; and
- WHEREAS:** Steady progress has been made in rural Georgia through innovative policies and programs which have championed Georgia's successes and have set the stage for creating competitive local communities; and
- WHEREAS:** Although Georgia has experienced significant growth in the recent decades, study data confirms that the state's growth has not always translated into economic vitality in rural areas; and
- WHEREAS:** A comprehensive assessment is needed based on a community's strengths and weaknesses, highlighting key indicators such as education, workforce readiness, leadership, health care access, economic development, entrepreneurship opportunities, housing, infrastructure and other relevant measures; and
- WHEREAS:** Recognizing these needs, the Georgia Rural Development Council has recommended a community development initiative be undertaken to develop a comprehensive process in order to improve local communities; and
- WHEREAS:** Successful and innovative community development should be rewarded and recognized; and
- WHEREAS:** Such an initiative will invite and encourage local leaders to demonstrate their commitment to the community's success; and
- WHEREAS:** Such an initiative is a long-term effort that will transform community development into a comprehensive development strategy by rewarding communities for coordination and comprehensive planning and position Georgia as a regional and national leader.

NOW, THEREFORE, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME AS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA, IT IS HEREBY

- ORDERED:** That the Governor's Rural Development Council shall launch a community development improvement process to be called the Communities of

Opportunity Initiative by working with state agencies, local leaders, and community stakeholders.

IT IS FURTHER

ORDERED: The Georgia Department of Community Affairs shall administer and support the Communities of Opportunities Initiative.

IT IS FURTHER

ORDERED: All state agencies and departments shall work in conjunction with DCA to support the success of the Communities of Opportunity Initiative through collaboration and resource sharing.

IT IS FURTHER

ORDERED: Local communities that seek to demonstrate their commitment to this initiative shall do so by executing a contract with Georgia and developing a specific community improvement strategy.

IT IS FURTHER

ORDERED: A progress report shall be presented by April 2008 to determine requirements for a statewide rollout.