

2026 ANNUAL FALL AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONFERENCE & AWARDS PROGRAM



Rooted in Home:
Grounded in Community



October 1st, 2026



8:00 AM – 4:00 PM



**Atlanta Metropolitan State College Charles Easley Conference
Pavilion, Building 800 1630 Metropolitan Parkway, SW Atlanta,
Georgia 30310**

Greetings!

Welcome to the 2026 Annual Fall Affordable Housing Conference & Awards Program!

On behalf of Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc. (Georgia ACT), it is my sincere pleasure to welcome you as we gather under this year's theme, "Rooted in Home, Grounded in Community."

Home is more than a place. It is the foundation for stability, opportunity, dignity, and belonging. Strong communities are built when people have access to safe, healthy, stable, and affordable housing, and when residents have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of their neighborhoods.

Today, we bring together residents, advocates, housing professionals, nonprofit leaders, public officials, community partners, and other stakeholders from across Georgia to learn, connect, and strengthen the work happening in communities throughout our state. At Georgia ACT, we believe lasting change happens through strong partnerships, informed leadership, and community-centered solutions. This conference provides an opportunity to share ideas, build relationships, and identify practical strategies that can move our communities forward.

We are also honored to celebrate our 2026 award recipients, whose leadership, service, and commitment continue to make a meaningful difference. Their work reminds us that progress is possible when people lead with purpose and remain connected to the communities they serve.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our speakers, sponsors, partners, members, staff, board members, volunteers, and everyone who helped make this gathering possible. As we move through today's program, I encourage you to connect with someone new, share your perspective, and leave inspired to turn today's conversations into action. Thank you for joining Georgia ACT and for your continued commitment to building stronger communities across Georgia.

Together, we remain Rooted in Home and Grounded in Community.

For more information, visit Georgia ACT:

Web: www.georgiaact.org

 [Georgia Advancing Communities Together](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaAdvancingCommunitiesTogether)

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Yours in People, Place, and Policy,



Bambie Hayes-Brown, ThD, PhD President
& Chief Executive Officer



Georgia ACT Staff Members



Dr. Bambie Hayes Brown
President and CEO



Desiree Jones
Operations Manager



Xinyuan Zheng
Policy & Program Analyst



Matthew Harmon
Community Impact and
Policy Organizer

Letter from the Chair of the Board of Directors

Welcome Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc. (Georgia ACT), it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 Annual Fall Affordable Housing Conference & Awards Program.

This year's theme, "Rooted in Home, Grounded in Community," speaks directly to the importance of home as the foundation of strong, thriving communities. It also reflects Georgia ACT's continued commitment to bringing people together around the policies, partnerships, and community-driven solutions that shape housing opportunities across our state.

As Board Chair, I am proud to serve alongside a Board committed to supporting Georgia ACT's mission and its work throughout Georgia. Today's program reflects the breadth of that work, with conversations addressing housing policy, federal and state housing issues, rural communities, civic engagement, community development, and the perspectives of the next generation of leaders.

This conference is also an opportunity to recognize individuals and organizations whose leadership, service, and commitment continue to make a difference in communities across Georgia. We are grateful for the speakers, award recipients, sponsors, partners, volunteers, and attendees who have contributed their time, expertise, and support to this year's gathering.

On behalf of the Georgia ACT Board of Directors, thank you for joining us and for the work you do in your own communities. I hope today provides meaningful opportunities to learn, connect, exchange ideas, and strengthen the relationships that will carry this work forward.

Sincerely,

Sherrell Byrd

Sherrell Byrd, Chair, Board of Directors



Georgia ACT Board of Directors



Sherrell Byrd
Board Chair



Sean Dacey
Vice Chair



Eula Parker
Treasurer



Jarrod McCarthy
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Board Member



**Dr. Sharon D.
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Board Member



Diana Brown
Board Member



Hayden Raffield
Board Member

Georgia ACT Board of Directors



Lethia Kittrell
Board Member



Archie Emerson
Board Member



Thomie Venisee
Board Member



Bodua Gordon
Board Member



Dana Ingram
Board Member



Sabrina Newby
Board Member

2026 Annual Fall Affordable Housing Conference & Awards Program

8:00 AM

Continental Breakfast & Networking

Registration, Breakfast, and Networking

Opening Session

Welcome, Greetings, and Opening Remarks

8:20 AM

- Sherrell Byrd – Board Chair – **(Opening Remarks)**
 - Lethia Kittrell – Board Member - **(Invocation)**
 - The Honorable Mayor Andre Dickens - City of Atlanta - **(Greetings)**
 - The Honorable Senator Jon Ossoff - **(Video Greetings)**
 - The Honorable Senator Raphael Warnock - **(Letter to be Read by Sherrell Byrd, Board Chair)**
 - The Honorable Georgia State Senator Kenya Wicks (D) – District 34 **(Remarks)**
 - The Honorable Representative Derrick Jackson (D) – District 68 **(Remarks)**
 - Ahsaki Thurman - United State Department of Housing & Urban Development – **(Remarks)**
-

2026 Legislative Recap and Looking Ahead to 2027

State Legislation

9:10 AM

- Matthew Harmon - **Georgia ACT Community Impact and Policy Organizer**

Federal Legislative Update & ROAD to Housing Act

- Xinyuan Zheng - **Georgia ACT Policy and Program Analyst**
-

Federal Business Services

Federal Contracting 101: Preparing to Do Business with the Federal Government

10:10 AM

- Kimberly Knight - **U.S. Small Business Administration**
-

Voting Rights and Legislation

Georgia Voting Legislation and Its Impact on Voter Access & Engagement

10:30 AM

- Tamieka Atkins – **ProGeorgia**

10:50 AM

Break and Georgia ACT Marketplace
Attendees Visit Vendor Tables

11:05 AM

Georgia Housing Assistance
Program Updates

- Maureen Freehill, Deputy Commissioner, Housing Assistance and Development
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
-

11:20 AM

Project Spotlight
Innovation of Housing in Rural Georgia / OneGeorgia Authority

- Councilwoman Annette Higdon – **City of Cairo**
 - Fenika Miller- **City of Cairo**
-

12:00 PM

Networking Lunch

- Minister Lethia Kittrell – Grace

12:30 PM

Introduction of Speaker
Introduction of Speaker from Rooftop Sponsor

- Kelly Harper Lee, Executive Director, Community Relations Senior Lead |
Metro Atlanta & North Georgia - **Wells Fargo**
-

12:35 PM

Keynote Address
Fireside Chat on Building Community in Georgia

- Nathaniel Smith, Founder and Chief Equity Officer - **Partnership for Southern Equity**
- Dr. Bambie Hayes- Brown, President/CEO - **Georgia ACT**

Networking Break

1:15 PM

Awards Program

1:30 PM

Unsung Hero Award

- Monica DeLancy - **We Thrive on Riverside Renters Association**

Unsung Hero Award

- Sherri McCoy - **Blessing Bags of Warmth**

President's Award

- Thomas Dwain Smith - **NAACP DeKalb Voter Engagement**

Legislator of the Year Award

- The Honorable Senator Rick Williams (R) - **Georgia State Senate, District 25**

Legislator of the Year Award

The Honorable Representative Mary Ann Santos (D) - **Georgia House of**

- **Representatives, District 117**
-

Youth Panel

Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Housing & Community Development

2:00 PM

- Reggie Holloway - **Georgia EmpowerMENT**
- Tyee Washington - **Georgia EmpowerMENT**

Moderated by Hayden Raffield , **Georgia ACT Board Member**

Affordable Housing Gauntlet

Participants Break Out into Groups to Solve Simulated Housing Issues

3:00 PM

Participants will work in groups to develop creative solutions to real-world affordable housing challenges. Each group will present its proposed solution, encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and innovative thinking.

*Desiree Jones - **Georgia ACT***

3:35 PM

Closing

Dr. Bambie Hayes- Brown, President/CEO - **Georgia ACT**



Rooftop Sponsor

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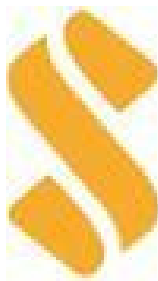


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Award Winners

Housing and Community Development Unsung Hero Award

Monica DeLancy, We Thrive on Riverside Renters Association



Monica DeLancy is a longtime housing advocate and community leader who has dedicated 17 years to serving renters and families in South Cobb. Drawing from her own experiences with housing instability, she founded We Thrive on Riverside Renters Association to ensure residents have access to support, resources, and a voice in their communities.

Under Monica's leadership, the organization has provided tenant rights education, legal aid navigation, resident leadership programs, resource fairs, food assistance, and youth initiatives. Her advocacy and civic leadership have earned her more than 20 community awards and honors, reflecting her continued commitment to housing stability and empowering local families.

Sherri McCoy, Blessing Bags of Warmth



Sherri Elaine McCoy is the founder and CEO of Blessing Bags of Warmth, a Metro Atlanta nonprofit that supports families facing homelessness, housing instability, and other crises. Through emergency assistance, resource navigation, and community partnerships, Sherri helps families meet immediate needs while working toward greater stability. She is a passionate advocate for practical, compassionate responses to housing insecurity.

President's Award

Thomas Dwain Smith - NAACP DeKalb Voter Engagement



Thomas Dwain Smith is a communications professional, REALTOR, and civic leader with decades of experience across nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors. A graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism, he founded TDS Communications Group, Inc. in 2007 and has been a REALTOR since 2006.

Mr. Smith serves as Third Vice President of the NAACP DeKalb County Branch and as a Political Action Committee Team Lead, supporting voter registration, voter education, and community outreach. He is also a Silver Life Subscribing Member of the NAACP and a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Legislator of the Year Award

The Honorable Senator Rick Williams (R) - Georgia State Senate, District 25



Senator Rick Williams has represented Georgia's 25th Senate District since 2022, following service in the Georgia House of Representatives. A longtime public servant and business owner, he previously served on the Baldwin County Commission and as Baldwin County Chief Registrar. He is also active in numerous civic and community organizations throughout Middle Georgia.

The Honorable Representative Mary Ann Santos (D) - Georgia House of Representatives, District 117



Representative Mary Ann Santos represents Georgia House District 117. A longtime McDonough resident and graduate of Henry County High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Leadership from Mercer University and a Master of Public Administration from Clayton State University.

Representative Santos has a background in public service and nonprofit work and has been involved in mentorship and community initiatives throughout metro Atlanta. She was elected to the Georgia House in 2024 and currently serves on the House Committees on State Properties, Code Revision, and Judiciary Juvenile

Speaker Directory



Nathaniel Smith,

**Founder and Chief Equity Officer, Partnership
for Southern Equity**

Nathaniel Smith is a nationally recognized equity leader and Founder and Chief Equity Officer of the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE). The son of Southern Freedom Movement activists, Smith was introduced to the work of social justice at an early age.

A graduate of Morehouse College with a degree in Urban Studies, he has dedicated his career to advancing racial equity, affordable housing, economic inclusion, transportation equity, and environmental justice throughout the American South.

Before founding PSE, Smith helped establish Georgia's first anti-predatory lending ordinance, Fulton County's first inclusionary zoning policy, and Atlanta's first local housing trust fund. His advocacy also helped secure a 15% set-aside of Atlanta BeltLine Tax Allocation District funding for affordable workforce housing. At PSE, he has led efforts including the Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas, transportation equity initiatives, community-based climate justice work, and the Justice40 Accelerator.

Smith's work extends nationally through his service as an advisor to philanthropic, policy, and community organizations. He has also served on the boards of organizations focused on philanthropy, sustainability, climate, and community development.

His leadership has earned recognition from Georgia Trend, which named him among its 100 Most Influential Georgians, The Atlanta 500, the Atlanta Business Chronicle, the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, and numerous other organizations. Throughout his career, Smith has remained committed to building communities where opportunity is shared more equitably, guided by his philosophy: "Equity is love in action."

The Honorable Mayor Andre Dickens City of Atlanta



Andre Dickens is the 61st Mayor of the City of Atlanta and a lifelong Atlantan committed to expanding opportunity, equity, and prosperity throughout the city. A product of Atlanta Public Schools and graduate of Mays High School, Mayor Dickens earned a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Master of Public Administration from Georgia State University. He was first elected mayor in 2021, took office in January 2022, and began his second term in January 2026.

Prior to becoming mayor, Dickens served eight years as an at-large member of the Atlanta City Council, where his work focused on public safety, transportation, affordable housing, workforce development, educational opportunities, and services for senior residents. His efforts on the Council included helping establish the Atlanta Department of Transportation, advocating for higher wages for City employees, supporting BeltLine inclusionary zoning for affordable housing, and advancing a \$40 million Housing Opportunity Bond.

As mayor, Dickens has prioritized affordable housing and homelessness, public safety, youth development, infrastructure, and economic opportunity. His housing agenda includes a goal of creating or preserving 20,000 affordable housing units by 2030. Before becoming mayor, Dickens worked as an entrepreneur and leader in Atlanta's technology and nonprofit sectors. He also served at Georgia Tech, supporting student achievement and leadership development, and later as Chief Development Officer for TechBridge.

Mayor Dickens has served in numerous civic and regional leadership roles and is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., a deacon at New Horizon Baptist Church, and an alumnus of Leadership Atlanta. A lifelong Atlantan, he remains focused on strengthening neighborhoods and expanding opportunity across the city.



The Honorable Senator Jon Ossoff

United States Senator for Georgia

Jon Ossoff is the Senior United States Senator from Georgia. Born and raised in Atlanta, he was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2021 and became the youngest senator elected from Georgia as well as the first Jewish person to represent the state in the Senate

Before his election to the Senate, Senator Ossoff worked in investigative journalism, leading a media production company that investigated corruption, organized crime, human trafficking, and war crimes. Earlier in his career, he served as a legislative assistant specializing in foreign affairs and defense policy for U.S. Representative Hank Johnson. He earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a master's degree from the London School of Economics.

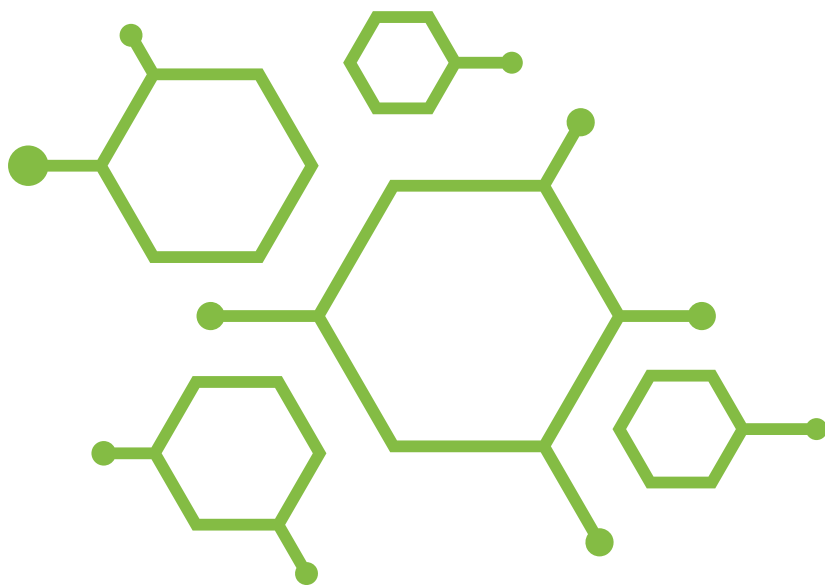
In the Senate, Ossoff's work has included infrastructure and economic development, health care, veterans and military families, public safety, civil rights, housing affordability, and government oversight. He has worked on bipartisan legislation addressing issues ranging from veterans' mental health care and online child protection to infrastructure investment and investigations of unresolved Civil Rights-era murders.

Senator Ossoff has also focused on bringing federal resources to communities throughout Georgia, including investments in transportation, broadband, water infrastructure, health care, education, and economic development. His Senate work has included oversight investigations involving military housing, federal prisons, foster care, and the treatment of individuals in federal custody.

Senator Ossoff lives in Atlanta with his wife, Dr. Alisha Kramer, and their two daughters.

The Honorable Senator Raphael Warnock

United States Senator for Georgia



Senator Reverend Raphael G. Warnock is a United States Senator representing Georgia and the Senior Pastor of Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church. Raised in public housing in Savannah as the eleventh of twelve children, Warnock was the first in his family to graduate from college. Inspired by the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he attended Morehouse College and later earned his doctorate from Union Theological Seminary.

Since 2005, Senator Warnock has served as Senior Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, the former pulpit of Dr. King. Before entering the Senate, his ministry and advocacy included work focused on health care access, nutrition, voting rights, and criminal justice. Warnock was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2021, becoming Georgia's first Black United States Senator. He was elected to a full six-year term in 2022. In the Senate, his work has included health care, housing, agriculture and rural communities, economic opportunity, voting rights, and support for Georgia families. He currently serves on the Senate Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Finance; and the Special Committee on Aging.

Throughout his career in ministry and public service, Senator Warnock has emphasized service, civic engagement, and expanding opportunities for communities across Georgia



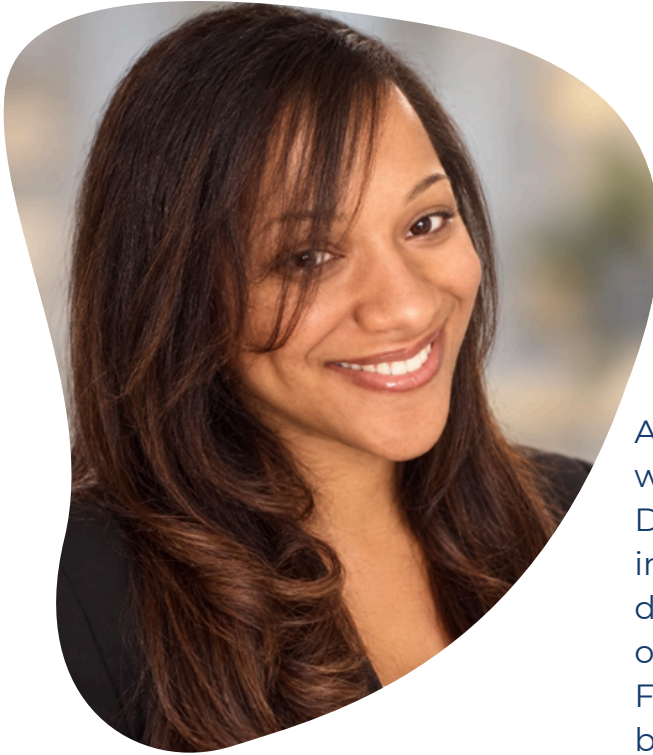
The Honorable Georgia State Senator Kenya Wicks (D) - District 34

Senator Kenya Wicks represents Georgia's 34th Senate District, which includes portions of Clayton and Fayette counties. A Democrat, she was elected to the Georgia State Senate in November 2024 and currently serves as Deputy Whip for the Senate Democratic Caucus and Vice Chair of the Clayton County Senate Delegation.

A Louisville, Kentucky native, Senator Wicks is a retired U.S. Army Major who served for 30 years, rising from enlisted soldier to officer. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of Alabama. Following her military career, she continued her commitment to public service as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate for children in foster care in Clayton County.

In the Senate, Wicks serves on committees addressing government oversight, public safety, science and technology, urban affairs, and veterans, military and homeland security issues. Her community involvement also includes service with veterans organizations, the Fayette NAACP, the Eden Project, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

Senator Wicks is the mother of three sons, all graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and is a member of The Olivet Church.



Ahsaki Thurman

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

Atlanta Regional Office - Region 4

Ahsaki Thurman is a seasoned housing professional with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), bringing extensive experience in public housing, community planning and development, financial management, and field operations. She began her HUD career in 2011 as a Financial Analyst and has held leadership roles in both HUD headquarters and regional field offices, including serving as Field Office Director in Kentucky.

A graduate of Howard University with a degree in Finance, Thurman previously worked with the District of Columbia Housing Authority in the Housing Choice Voucher Program and financial operations. A native of New Orleans, she is also committed to higher education and community service, including providing career counseling to underserved families.



The Honorable Georgia State Representative Derrick Jackson (D) District 68

State Representative Derrick Jackson represents Georgia's 68th House District. He is a retired military officer veteran with the U.S. Navy, corporate general manager, adjunct professor, non-profit board member and a community leader. Rep. Jackson is known for his integrity, honesty, enthusiasm, compassion and solid commitment to serving his constituents.

Derrick also has strong business acumen. He has worked with General Electric as the senior marketing manager for the industrial growth vertical and business development. During his nearly seven-year tenure with the company, Derrick was influential in identifying \$1 Billion in global market opportunities and managing international strategic partnerships.

Derrick was “born to serve” and has no problem rolling up his sleeves to work hard to improve quality of life throughout Georgia. He continues to be recognized for his inspiring community leadership and has received several awards, including the 2013 Fayette County Citizen of the Year from the Theta Lambda Lambda Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He was also the recipient of the 2019 Civil Servant of the Year RICE Award. Additionally, he was awarded the 2019 Georgia House Democratic Caucus Chairman's Award for his leadership and recognized as one of Atlanta Business Journal's 2019 Top 25 Extraordinary Atlantans.

Additionally, this public servant and doctoral candidate has no idle time as Rep. Jackson is currently enrolled in Walden University's Ph.D. program for public policy. He was inducted into the Golden Key International Honor Society and Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. He is married to CaMia Jackson, former state representative of House District 153. Their family consists of seven amazing young adults and one grandson.

Kimberly Knight

Business Opportunity Specialist

Georgia District Office, U.S. Small

Business Administration



Kim Knight is a business opportunity specialist with the US Small Business Administration, where she helps small businesses navigate the federal contracting landscape.

Ms. Knight's experience spans more than 30 years across multiple disciplines and entities, to include time as an award-winning journalist, a stint in the electronic payments industry, and more than 20 years with the state of Georgia in multiple roles and capacities to include director of the small business development center at Clayton State University. Ms. Knight also worked briefly with the city of Atlanta and the nonprofit sector as a program manager prior to joining the Small Business Administration.

A native of Alabama, Ms. Knight is a graduate of Auburn University and Troy University where she earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in business management, respectively.



Tamieka Atkins

Chief Executive Officer, ProGeorgia

Tamieka Atkins is the chief executive officer of ProGeorgia, a nonpartisan coalition of 61 organizations working across all 159 Georgia counties. She's led the coalition for nearly a decade, growing it from 13 partners and helping build Georgia's election protection work into a statewide operation. Before ProGeorgia, she founded the Atlanta chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

She serves on the board of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and is a Certified Impact Philanthropy Advisor. In 2025 she received the Power Building Award from Grantmakers for Southern Progress. She writes about coalition governance and the conditions of nonprofit work at tamiekawrites.substack.com. She lives in Atlanta with her two children.



Maureen Freehill

Deputy Commissioner, Housing Assistance and Development
Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Maureen Freehill serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Housing Assistance and Development, where she oversees critical programs addressing Georgia's housing needs, including the Housing Tax Credit program, Housing Choice Vouchers, homelessness prevention, and supportive housing initiatives. With over two decades of experience in affordable housing, Maureen began her career as a Section 8 caseworker with Rural Ulster Preservation Company in New York's Hudson Valley, where she launched a scattered-site supportive housing program and expanded the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

She later served as a Special Needs Housing Policy Analyst for New York State Homes and Community Renewal, where she developed the award-winning Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD) Housing Subsidy Program.

After relocating to Atlanta in 2012, Maureen worked as a multifamily developer leveraging LIHTC and public-private partnerships, most recently serving as Director of Affordable Housing at National Church Residences.

She is President of the Atlanta Women's Affordable Housing Network, a graduate of the 2022 ULI Center for Leadership, a member of the ULI Health Leaders cohort, and was named a 2025 HouseATL Housing Preservation Leader. She also serves as Volunteer Coordinator for Neighbor in Need East Lake/Kirkwood and leads a Girl Scout troop of 18 superstars. She is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz.

Councilwoman Annette Higdon City of Cairo



Apostle Annette Higdon is married to an incredible and supportive husband, Deacon Wesley Higdon, Sr. and they have three beautiful and amazing children Fontabian (Apostle Sonja Donalson), Elder Sherika Hubbard and Wesley (Toni) Higdon, Jr. They are also blessed with 12 adorable and awesome grandchildren and three beautiful and lovable great-grandchildren.

Apostle Higdon is the Founder and Sr. Pastor of Fresh Start Global Outreach Ministries Inc., which God birthed on June 23, 2013. She is an anointed vessel of God and will preach the unadulterated word without compromising her character or integrity. Her deepest desire is to help God's people become all that God has purposed for their lives one soul at a time and to help them birth out every gift that God has placed inside of them in spite of their past or the opinions of others.

Apostle Annette Higdon holds a Masters in Christian Marriage and Family Counseling and is the Director of Pastoral and Marriage Family Counseling at Women of Purpose Behavioral Health & Wellness Center. She is a social justice advocate for her community and serves as the First Black Female Councilmember and Mayor Pro Tem. She serves as a Board Member of Family Connections, Grady County Mental Health Initiative, Leadership Grady, Feeding for Christ, and SWGCOA.

Apostle Higdon is the Founder of Women of Purpose Global Ministries and Fresh Start Apostolic Fellowship. She is the first Female NE District Overseer of the State of Florida Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, and she serves with the Grady County Ministerial Association.

She is also the co-owner of Fresh Start Variety Shop and Seasons Event Center in Cairo, GA. She is renowned locally and globally as she has churches and outreach ministries in S. Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Dubai. She is committed to serving the whole man - mind, body and soul.



Fenika Miller Consultant and Organizer

Fenika Miller is a Southern Black woman organizer, w/over 25 years of experience as a political strategist and economic development practitioner. She currently serves as the National Field Co-Director at Black Voters Matter Fund, where she leads multi-state field operations across Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, key battlegrounds shaping the future of Black political power in the south.

Fenika also serves as an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, one of only 65 leaders selected nationally to partner with the U.S. EDA and the International Economic Development Council in support of equitable development in clean energy and housing. She is a graduate of Fort Valley State University with a degree in Political Science and holds an MBA from Wesleyan College.



Kelly Harper Lee

Executive Director, Community Relations Senior Lead, Metro Atlanta & North Georgia, Wells Fargo

Kelly Harper Lee serves as Executive Director and Community Relations Senior Lead for Metro Atlanta and North Georgia at Wells Fargo, where she leads regional strategies focused on philanthropic investment, cross-sector partnerships, financial opportunity, small business growth, and affordable housing.

Prior to Wells Fargo, Kelly held community impact and social responsibility leadership roles with McDonald's Corporation, the WNBA's Atlanta Dream, and McKinsey & Company. She began her career as an educator and was named District of Columbia Teacher of the Year and The Washington Post Teacher of the Year.

Kelly has been recognized by the Atlanta Business Chronicle, Georgia Trend, Atlanta Business League, and Spelman College for her leadership and community impact. She holds a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor's degree in English from Spelman College and is currently completing her MBA at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.



Reggie Holloway

Georgia EmpowerMENT

Reggie Holloway is a Lived experience expert with close to 17 years of lived experience in Georgia's Foster Care system. He is a graduate of the University of West Georgia with a degree in Communications and a Minor in Sociology. Reggie is a member of Georgia EmpowerMENT and also works with different nonprofits and organizations across the state of Georgia and across the US working as a panelist, speaker and advocate. His work consist of advocating for transition, age youth surrounding education, Housing, Access to healthcare among the many other things.

Some notable organizations that Reggie has worked with include: Conrad N Hilton Foundation, United Way Youth Advocacy Initiative, Embark, Selfless Love, and CARES (Creating Actionable and Real Solutions) with the Center for Study of Social Policy, Child Trends and the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education.

He is also a communications specialist as a Creator, Producer, and Host of Outreach with Reggie that highlights stories of Foster Care and Mental Health.



Tyee Washington

Georgia EmpowerMEnt

Tyee Washington is a Financial Literacy Liaison, Life Skills Trainer, and EmpowerMEnt Advocate dedicated to supporting youth in care and system-impacted young people.

Drawing from lived experience within the foster care system, Tyee uses that perspective to help guide young people through critical life transitions, such as financial independence, housing readiness, and career planning. Through education and mentorship, Tyee equips young people with practical tools to navigate adulthood with confidence and intention. They work closely with community organizations to expand access to resources that promote stability and self-sufficiency.

As a Policy Council Member & EmpowerMEnt Advocate Leader, Tyee contributes to advocacy and reform efforts focused on improving the experiences of youth in care and ensuring their voices and real-life experiences are reflected in the systems and policies that impact them. At the heart of Tyee's work is a commitment to helping young people move beyond survival and into leadership, equipping them to confidently navigate adulthood and build lives shaped by their own choices, goals, and potential.



Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown

President and CEO, Georgia Advancing Communities Together Inc.

Raised by her maternal grandparents, Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown is a native of rural, Cordele, Georgia and holds a Bachelor's in Business Management, a second Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Leadership, an MBA, a Doctor of Theology, a PhD in Biblical Studies, and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management. She is the President and CEO of Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc., a statewide membership organization of housing and community development agencies. Formally homeless and a former public housing resident, Dr. Bambie advocates through the lens of her and other's lived-experiences of housing insecurity.

Dr. Bambie is a registered lobbyist and Real Estate Broker. Dr. Bambie serves as the Board Chair of the National Low Income Housing Coalition and on the Boards of Alliance 85, Community Opportunity Alliance, Up for Growth Action, HouseATL, GEORGIA Rising, Policing Alternative & Diversion Initiative, and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. She serves on numerous advisory committees including the Enterprise Community Partners Southeast Advisory Committee, Housing Justice League, Self-Help Credit Union and Huntington Bank.

Dr. Bambie's civic involvement includes: the Morris Brown College DeKalb County Alumni Association, Women for Morris Brown College, the NAACP DeKalb County Branch, National Action Network, Rainbow Push Coalition, Order of the Eastern Star-Prince Hall Affiliated, Daughters of the Imperial Court, Kiwanis Club, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., National Council of Negro Women, American Legion Auxiliary and Riders, National Action Network, and the Empire Board of Realists.

Dr. Bambie is a sought-after speaker who testifies before the United States Congress, the Biden-Harris Administration, the Federal Reserve Bank, and the Georgia General Assembly on lived-experience homelessness and affordable housing. Dr. Bambie is a licensed and ordained Minister and enjoys her grandchildren and splitting her time between Metro Atlanta and South Georgia.