Hart County Archway Partnership Project:

Steering Committee Meeting Report

September 30, 2008
Introduction
The initial meeting of the Steering Committee of the Hart County Archway Partnership Program was hosted at the Adult Learning Center at the Hart County Library. The Hart County Archway Steering Committee includes individuals from a variety of groups and diverse interests within the community. The Steering Committee’s role is to provide feedback and input to the Archway Executive Committee. Meeting attendees included members of the Steering and Executive Committees. The goal of the initial meeting was to identify specific challenges confronting Hart County, discuss desired outcomes, and identify existing assets, partnerships, and efforts surrounding the issues identified.

The Archway Partnership Project delivers the full range of university resources to cities and counties facing significant issues, especially those related to growth. Archway provides access to subject matter, programs, and resources not traditionally addressed by Cooperative Extension’s core program areas or Public Service and Outreach units. It implements priorities identified by communities, in meetings such as this one, by providing a single access point to UGA, other University System of Georgia institutions, and other agencies and organizations in the state. Archway also provides an arena for faculty and successful business people to serve as both teachers and learners, and opportunities to engage students in active roles addressing community needs. The Archway partners collaborate with local community entities as well as state government entities on a sustained, long-term basis to create solutions to community problems.

In an attempt to identify issues confronting Hart County, facilitators from UGA led discussions of 4 questions by small groups of participants. The following report presents the results of the session. The first section presents a summary of the discussion results, and appendices share the results captured by facilitators and a transcription of individual written comments.

Discussion Summary

The first question asked participants to share their long-term goals for Hart County.

1. Ten years from now, what would you like the headline to read in the Hartwell Sun?
   - 100% graduation rate (3)
   - Economic growth/boom (2)
   - Consolidated government (2)
   - Conference center (4th)/ Hilton on Lake Hartwell(2)
   - Industrial park development
   - Low unemployment (lowest in state)
   - Green industry
   - Best overall community in Georgia
   - Agricultural/industrial linkages
   - Corps of Engineers recognizes economic growth
   - Outstanding workforce
   - Outstanding infrastructure
   - Leader in NE Georgia region
   - Parks/Greenspace
   - Visitor center welcomes millionth tourist
   - Recreation department wins state award
2. **What are the 5-8 most important issues this community must address to make those headlines occur?**

This question asked participants to think about the headlines they had written and to identify issues that need to be addressed to make the headlines reality. After brainstorming and a discussion of the issues, each participant was asked to vote on the most important issues. The issues and the votes received are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning - balanced growth, long-range, vision, land use, industry, tourism</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Development</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water - Lake Hartwell, federal policies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Community</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **What are the specific challenges and desired outcomes in addressing the issues?**

To answer this question, each table of participants discussed one of the top 5 challenges voted upon by the group: education, planning, funding, leadership, and infrastructure. Challenges are shown in italics below, followed by desired outcomes. Following their discussions, each table presented the results to the larger group, giving all participants the opportunity to add additional challenges and outcomes to the lists.

**EDUCATION:**

*Educational Funding*

- Analyze funding by amount spent per child rather than by millage rate
- Adequate staff
- Prudent use of taxpayer money
- Board of Education sets policies and administrators manage
- Increased technology
- Higher academic scores and achievement
- Understanding other comparable systems (best practices)

*Family Involvement/Education*

- Understanding of the value of education and school attendance
- Families make education a priority in their homes
- Higher academic scores and achievement
Early Childhood Programs/Reading Readiness
   Imagination Library continued
   Increase in grant funding

Graduation Rate
   Better qualified workforce
   Better jobs available
   Increased tax base

Community Involvement/Mentoring
   Increased graduation rate
   Increased awareness within the community of education issues

Adult Education
   Retraining of the workforce
   Assistance for those impacted by layoffs

Board of Education Governance
   Public Awareness of Education-Related Issues

PLANNING:
Community Consensus & Vision for Growth/Planning
   Organized growth plan that considers community’s “whole” input

Infrastructure – Electrical, Water, Sewer
   Have in places all resources needed for growth plan

Local & Area Governments Working Together/Cooperation
   Education/Infrastructure in place to support growth (desired)

Finances
   New business growth that would support tax base

FUNDING:
Public Awareness
   More informed general public, with “ambassadors”
   Majority commitment to funding needs and funding mechanisms
   More buy-in to SPLOST because it offsets property tax
   Keep citizenry educated on unfunded mandates and local funding challenges
   Keep retirees in the "know”

Additional Revenue Streams
   Tax burden balance and partially exported
   Changes in state law around what we can do locally

Tourism Efforts
   Convention and Visitors Bureau
   Additional exploration of tax burden
   25,000 additional visitors
   Targeted marketing efforts in surrounding area

LEADERSHIP:
Education – Skills, Processes, Efficiency
   100% trained – initial and ongoing
   Ongoing, annual training
   Individuals to be trained are picked by ??

Cooperation – Break Down Parochial Views, Remove Personal Agendas
   Improved progress on addressing key community issues
   United we stand

Public Awareness/Communication/Apathy
Long-Term, Cohesive Vision

Task force – diverse group – rotate every 3 years – focus on key community issues and drive community input to lead politicians

INFRASTRUCTURE:
Infrastructure – electrical, water, sewer
Private sector will address increased electrical capacity for industrial growth
Bond secured to fund development of water & sewer infrastructure – do by Fire District to leverage insurance savings

Public Support/Awareness
Ordinance that all citizens will pay tap fee

Governmental Cooperation
Creation of a joint city/county water authority
Spec building

Planning - Prioritization
Prioritize what to focus on first/parallel – roads, water, sewer, etc
Advancement of sewage treatment to strategic locations
Rails spur for economic development

Roads
Address road intersection problems, site distance issues – fewer DOT resources

4. What are the Assets, Partnerships, and Efforts That Will Contribute to Success?
The final question asked participants to identify existing assets, partnerships, and efforts that

EDUCATION
- ESPLOST
- Equalization/property taxes – from state
- PTO
- Community Action team
- School counselors
- Imagination Library
- Hart Partners
- 9th District Opportunity, Inc.
- Head Start
- Grad Dog program
- Rule about not being allowed to walk in ceremony if student doesn’t complete requirements
- Graduation coaches
- Kiwanis – Reading is Fundamental
- School system mentoring program
- Hart Partners
- VISTA
- School web sites
- America Reads
- Communities in Schools

PLANNING
- Existing ordinances – could be presented to the public
• Very cooperative media – TV, radio, newspaper
• Some water line
• Good roads
• Potential power
• Some natural gas
• Some rail
• Better dialogue between all local government
• Cross-county conversation occurring
• Sound financial system
• All government is within budget

FUNDING
• Re-evaluation of property across county
• SPLOST
• Federal/State grants
• Knowledge of how to do it (Bill Chafin, etc)
• Alternative fuels being looked at by the city
• Tourism Taskforce
• City-County-Chamber-Downtown Development Authority: CVB
• Mega ramp project
• Liquor by the drink ordinance in Hartwell

LEADERSHIP
• Hart County Education Summit
• Archway Partnership
• Underutilized resources
• Revive Leadership Hart

INFRASTRUCTURE
• Water/Sewer has already been extended to Industrial Park
• County Water Authority in place but lacks funding/independence to get
• Volunteer Fire Departments have significant cultural/political capital
Appendix A

Table Responses
What are the 5-8 most important issues this community must address to make those headlines occur?

Education
Tourism
High-Tech Industry Recruitment
Infrastructure Development
Land-Use Planning
Fiscal Resource Generation
Non-Partisan Approaches to Progress

Increase tax rate/millage rate – need funding to move forward
Advance education – recruitment/funding essential to workforce and growth of community
Federal priorities established for use of lake
Land-use planning and enforcement
Water/sewer throughout county needed to advance economic development – joint city/county authority – fund with bonds
Maximize lake resource, advance tourism/retiree recruitment
Advance healthcare through establishment and growth of regional healthcare center

Education – high emphasis on technical education prepares workforce for all types of employment – high grad rate
Job development – high tech – strata to low tech so all can work – attracting small business and other so 1 closing won’t devastate
Retirement – cater to services – attracting more
Recreation – At this time, it is limited for all. We have adequate but could see opportunity for all ages.

Long-range planning/vision – vision, be proactive, multiple areas
Education
Economic development, especially using Lake Hartwell as an asset
Healthcare
Land-use planning
Infrastructure

Leadership – small group of highly motivated individuals to champion cause
Balanced growth plan – land use (industry, commerce, agriculture, residential), targeted industry (technology, skills, energy, “indigenous population,” tourism
Funding – utilize Archway to help research and locate grants
Infrastructure – water, sewer?, based on land-use plan
Tourism – long-term, strategic plan, trained professional, private/public partnership for hotels and conference center)
What are the Assets, Partnerships, and Efforts that Will Contribute to Success?

EDUCATION

Funding
- ESPLOST
- Equalization/property taxes – from state

Family Involvement/Education
- PTO
- Community Action team
- School counselors

Early Childhood Programs/Reading Readiness
- Imagination Library
- Hart Partners
- 9th District Opportunity, Inc.
- Head Start

Graduation Rate
- Grad Dog program
- Rule about not being allowed to walk in ceremony if student doesn’t complete requirements
- Graduation coaches

Community Involvement/Mentoring
- Kiwanis – Reading is Fundamental
- School system mentoring program
- Hart Partners
- VISTA

Other Education-Related Assets
- School web sites
- America Reads
- Communities in Schools

PLANNING

Consensus From Community to Vision Where to Go
- Existing ordinances – could be presented to the public
- Very cooperative media – TV, radio, newspaper

Infrastructure
- Some water line
- Good roads
- Potential power
- Some natural gas
- Some rail

Local/Area Governments Working Together
- Better dialogue between all local governments
- Cross-county conversation occurring

Finances
- Sound financial system
- All government is within budget

FUNDING

Public Awareness
- Re-evaluation of property across county

Additional Revenue Sources
- SPLOST
Federal/State grants
Knowledge of how to do it (Bill Chafin, etc)
Alternative fuels being looked at by the city

Tourism Efforts
Tourism Taskforce
City-County-Chamber-Downtown Development Authority: CVB
Mega ramp project
Liquor by the drink ordinance

LEADERSHIP
Hart County Education Summit
Archway Partnership
Underutilized resources
Revive Leadership Hart

INFRASTRUCTURE
Water/Sewer
Has already been extended to Industrial Park
County Water Authority in place but lacks funding/independence to get
Volunteer Fire Departments have significant cultural/political capital
Appendix B

Individual Written Responses

(Note: All written responses were not captured.)
Ten years from now, what would you like the headline to read in the Hartwell Sun?

- “Unemployment Hits All-Time Low in Hart County”
- “New Industry Brings 1,000 Jobs to Hart County: Company CEO Attributes Location to Outstanding Work Force Available, Infrastructure, and City/County Cooperation”
- “Fourth Major Conference Center Opens; Newest Greenspace City Park Dedicated”
- “Hart County Reaches Lowest Unemployment Rate in Northeast Georgia”

What are the 5-8 most important issues this community must address to make those headlines occur?

- Development of travel industry requires focus, funding, and a central source of information
- County-wide utility service i.e., water, sewer, cable
- Improved road net, i.e., widening of certain roads, curve and hill modification
- Local public education must become a priority
- Education becomes a priority for all families
- Differing political views merge for sake of community
- All resources are aligned toward common goals
- Jobs
- Better educated workforce
- County-wide water/sewer system
- Acquire more land for industrial growth
- Available housing
- Education rate must improve
- Improve opportunities locally for advanced education
- Add amenities to attract more tourists
- Recruit higher tech industry with high wages
- Create tourism entity with CVB
- Realize that tourism is economic development
- City parks - get property and financing
- Tourism: a driving engine of economic development
- Funding: tax base, ESPLOST
- Educational funding
- Increasing tax base
- Community education re: duplicating of services by city and county
- Maximize the lake opportunities
- Graduation rate needs to improve
- Land-use planning
- Better infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, etc) – spend more on infrastructure
- Advertising and promotion of tourism on a greater scale
- Increased teacher pay and recruitment of top educators
- Centralized agency to promote tourism funded by local governments and commercial
- Work force development
- Focus on agricultural assets for economic development
- Focus on green industries and tie into agricultural
• Education – K-12, technical school, beyond
• Consolidated government
• Long-range planning implementation
• Health care
• Governmental communications give/take
• Job growth
• Lake, lake, lake
• Community/school work, etc.
• Educational funding
• Increased teacher salaries, recruitment of enthusiastic teachers
• Funding – tax base, ESPLOST
• Long-range planning – balanced growth, land-use, economic development, tourism, Lake Hartwell
• Leadership
• Infrastructure development
• Economic growth
• Land-use planning
• County/City governments working together
• Funding
• Marketing, selling, land-use
• Leadership
• Infrastructure/ water, sewer
• Tourism plan
• Land-use perception
• Quality leadership
• Zoning
• Water
• County building inspector
• Purpose of Hartwell Lake
• Education
• Consolidate parts of government
• Vision
• Economic development
• Education
• Land-use planning
• Infrastructure development
• Health care system
• Fully utilize Lake Hartwell
• Enhance tourism
• Funding – grants
• Sell idea to community
• Qualified leadership: training, buy-in by local government
• Infrastructure/land-use: water/sewer based on land use
• Tourism
• Balanced growth plan – technology-based businesses
What are the specific challenges and desired outcomes in addressing the issues?

FUNDING
Reappraisal
Project underway – result?

Present Economy
See the economy turn around
At Current Max as Far as Outstanding SPLOST Issues?

Slowly Growing Tax Base/Expand Tax Base
New industry or tourism
Concentration on increasing commercial and industrial opportunities
Increased employment and taxes (property and sales) to pay for desired services

Underfunded Mandates
Relax mandates or increase funding

State Decreases in Funding
Increased funding

Investments Now in the Future of Economic Vitality
Increased industrial tax base

Public Resistance to Additional Taxation

Public Mistrust of Public Officials

Perception of Waste at Every Level & Department of Local Government

Public Misunderstanding of Spending Goals
Majority of community committed to both financial needs & funding methods
Town Hall discussions

Develop Additional Tourism Opportunities/Pinpoint Desired Market
Increased revenues for local businesses
Increased taxes for local governments
Little additional infrastructure required
Tax burden can be exported

Additional Funding Sources/Finite Sources - Digest
Identify and promote additional revenues – everything can’t be funded by property taxes
Energy & Infrastructure Revenue Stream

Keeping Pace With Needs – Planning Outside Typical Parameters

INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding

Public Awareness & Support

Cooperation of City/County/Hart County Water & Sewer Utility Authority

Planning – What to Put in First

Location

What are the Assets, Partnerships, and Efforts that Will Contribute to Success?

FUNDING

Public Awareness

- Civic clubs, churches
- Newspaper submission
- Public hearings
• Non-existent
• County-wide appraisal underway – this may help the public awareness of fairness!

**Additional Revenue Streams**
• Stakeholders contribute
• SPLOST
• Federal/State grants – not enough
  Discussions with MGAG regarding natural gas vehicle fuel
• Tourism – advisory board, mega fishing ramp, local liquor law/tax

**Tourism**
• Tourism Advisory Board has been created
• Tourism Task Force currently working on this
• Tourism Task Force