In order to feel more connected to the student and faculty members of the local colleges, the city of Americus is currently working towards strengthening the “town and gown” relationship. With the help of the University of Georgia’s Archway Partnership, the city has surveyed the community, created committees dedicated to town and gown relations, developed town-enhancing projects, and received state funds to improve the city and its relations to its colleges.

As a way to strengthen student support of Americus, the city joined together with UGA’s Master of Public Administration program to create a survey for students at both Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) and South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) to determine their expectations of a “college town,” and what recreational and entertainment amenities students look for in a town. The results showed that students were interested in more affordable entertainment and community events to be held downtown.

In response to this survey, Americus and the Archway Partnership created a committee that specifically addresses issues regarding the relationship between the city and the local colleges. The Bridging Campus to Community (BBC), now supported by the City of Americus, Georgia Southwestern State University and South Georgia Technical College, is a work group that brainstorms initiatives, projects, and activities to address community-identified needs related to the “College Town” goal.

So far this year, the BCC has coordinated numerous activities to make Americus more college friendly, including several block parties, a community cleanup day, and a business fair held at GSW.

In order to give Americus the look of a college town, the Archway Executive Committee and the City of Americus collaborated with UGA’s Fanning Institute and GSW administrators to create a revitalization plan for the entryway corridor to GSW. The new entryway plans provide options in street-scaping and landscaping, as well as alternatives in government ordinance recommendations like traffic flow and signage. The ultimate goal of the new entranceway, which is the downtown and business community entrance, is to make this the main entrance to GSW for the community, helping to blend GSW into Americus.

To finance these proposed changes, the City of Americus applied for $500,000 in state funding from the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT). In May of 2011, Americus was awarded the full $500,000 by the Georgia DOT in Transportation Enhancement funds. The city was one of 144 Georgia cities to receive funding from this grant opportunity. A majority of these funds will go towards the implementation of the GSW entryway, while the rest will go towards the revitalization of sidewalks, scenery, and enhancing the roadways and aesthetic appeal of Americus. The city had received approximately $500,000 in funding from the DOT for various projects from previous years, meaning Americus has close to $1 million in funding to go towards revitalizing and advancing the city.

With continued funding from the state and support from the Archway Partnership, the City of Americus is confident that it will soon become even more of a college town that students, faculty and local residents can enjoy.

Advancing Community Priorities: With the creation of the Sumter Archway Partnership, one of the first identified goals of the community was to become a college town. Through research, survey development and compilation, and streetscape and road path planning, higher education resources were matched with the local community needs. Additionally, the community was assisted with increasing their capacity to further their efforts with the development of the BCC. The expressed need, matched with higher education resources, and implemented by the local community makes these efforts a reality.