Habersham Employer Survey Follow-Up

Results from a survey taken at a Tuesday, February 12, 2013 meeting with the Habersham Employer Committee were distributed at the March 6, 2013 meeting of the Habersham Archway Executive Committee. The survey was presented to the group of employers at the request of Archway committee members Wade Rhodes and J.R. Charles, and was designed to gauge the overall state of Habersham’s current workforce, as well as assess both current and future employer needs. Local attendees at the February meeting completed the surveys, which were returned to the university for compilation and reporting. After compiling results in a published report, UGA officials recommended changes to the survey, which has been revised and redistributed to the Habersham Chamber. Chamber officials will survey member businesses and will again submit completed surveys to UGA for compilation and reporting. Archway Professional Rick Story will continue to work with the local employer group as well as the Habersham Chamber and the Workforce Development Issue Work Group, and will provide future information and support as requested.

North Georgia Technical College / CED Project

On Thursday, February 21, 2013, students from the University of Georgia’s College of Environment and Design (CED) met with Archway Professional Rick Story, North Georgia Technical College President and Archway Executive Committee Member, Dr. Gail Thaxton and campus landscape designer, Craig Thurmond, to explore an Archway approved project for a campus redesign. While on site, UGA students toured the North Georgia Technical College campus, talked with college officials, and photographed areas to be highlighted in a master campus plan for the main campus in Clarkesville. Discussion revolved around a proposed plan expected to provide for an accounting of current use, while highlighting potential sites for additional buildings, additional parking, and plans to maximize green space and traffic flow. While on site, school officials also showed UGA students areas where drainage is a problem and highlighted additional areas where water issues must be addressed. UGA students also obtained GIS mapping data while at the meeting, and additional detailed GIS data will also be provided by officials at North Georgia Technical College as the project continues. Archway Professional Rick Story is providing follow-up to this meeting, and will coordinate a mutually convenient time for the next meeting. This project is expected to last throughout the summer semester.
Tallulah Falls Marketing Plan

On Wednesday, February 20, 2013, UGA graduate student Mike Kolzet, met with Habersham Archway Professional, Rick Story, as well as officials from the City of Tallulah Falls and Tallulah Falls School. The meeting included dialogue with city and school officials, as well as a tour of the town of Tallulah Falls, Tallulah Falls School facilities, and the Tallulah Falls State Park and gorge. During the meeting, city officials and school administrators discussed in detail, the particulars of an Archway approved project which requests the assistance of the Terry College in designing a marketing plan. Both school and city officials expressed a desire to have a marketing plan that centers around the inventory of existing park and recreational facilities, as well as a plan that calls for a feasibility study for the expansion of these facilities. Officials also expressed an interest in linking existing local trails to other area trails, such as the Bartram and the Appalachian. Officials stressed both the tourism and economic benefits an integrated trail system would provide, as well as expressing their desire that such a system be in place by July of 2015 so that it could be used in the marketing of a proposed walk across Tallulah Gorge by the grandson of Karl Wallenda. Plans for attracting and developing area businesses were also addressed, and the request for a marketing brochure produced by either the Terry or Grady College was included. Graduate student Mike Kolzet has drafted a potential marketing plan and is working with Archway Professional Rick Story to provide follow-up. A future meeting will be scheduled next week.

Habersham County Website Design Plan

UGA graduate student Rosanna Cruz has met twice with Habersham County Commissioner and Archway Executive Committee member, Natalie Crawford, Habersham County Manager, Janeann Allison, Archway Professional Rick Story, and other county officials, as she is working to complete an Archway approved project to redesign the county’s official website. Per request from county officials, the website redesign plan will center on content editing and website link upgrades. Additionally, Cruz will provide county officials information and examples of other website designs and will assist them in choosing a design best suited for the needs of Habersham County. Cruz will also provide an analysis of the various types of social media services that may potentially benefit Habersham County. Habersham Archway Professional Rick Story will continue working with both county officials and Rosanna Cruz to schedule follow-up meetings as needed.

Habersham Federally Qualified Rural Health Center (FQRHC)

After identifying healthcare as an issue of priority, the Habersham Archway Executive Committee has formed a healthcare work group tasked with addressing local healthcare needs and initiatives. After an initial meeting, the group asked representatives from Habersham Medical Center to take the lead in exploring the prospect of establishing a Federally Qualified Rural Healthcare Center (FQRHC) in the area. The group concluded that such a center could offer Habersham residents healthcare services with a sliding fee scale designed for sensitivity of each individual patient’s ability to
The group began work with former hospital CEO, Richard Dwozan, and Habersham Archway Professional Rick Story will continue working with newly appointed interim CEO, Jack Fulbright. An initial proposal will hopefully be available to the Habersham Archway Executive Committee at next month’s meeting.

**Clarkesville Parking Study**

At its monthly meeting on March 6, 2013, the Habersham Archway Executive Committee approved a request from committee member and Clarkesville Mayor, Dr. Terry Greene. Dr. Greene noted that the city of Clarkesville is currently experiencing various problems as the result of a parking shortage in and around downtown, and hence requested that Habersham Archway assist the city in conducting a parking feasibility study. In response to Dr. Greene’s request, Habersham Archway Professional Rick Story established the Clarkesville Parking Study as an official Archway project, and in turn, met with Clarkesville Better Hometown Director, Mary Beth Horton, and Habersham County Development Director and Archway committee member, J.R. Charles, to discuss the matter. During the meeting, Mrs. Horton and Mr. Charles helped Rick identify potential sites near downtown which would be suitable for the development of parking areas, and which may perhaps be offered to the city for purchase. Rick will provide a listing of these sites to UGA students and will work with both students and Clarkesville city officials to facilitate a mutually convenient time for students to visit the downtown area and collect the data needed to initiate the project.

**Baldwin Streetscape Project**

On March 6, 2013, the Habersham Archway Executive Committee approved a request from committee member and Baldwin Mayor Jerry Neace. Mayor Neace requested that Habersham Archway assist the City of Baldwin in formulating a streetscape plan and design. The mayor noted that currently, the city has no sidewalks or pedestrian walkways along its main streets, and an overall plan for design and beautification is also lacking. Mayor Neace further noted that Baldwin is Habersham’s second largest city, and could greatly benefit from an Archway approved plan for streetscape design, as such a plan stands to distinguish Baldwin as a municipality and give it the individualism that it has traditionally lacked. The mayor also noted the plan will be original in design as it will be the first of its kind in the city. In response to the mayor’s request, Habersham Archway Professional Rick Story established the Baldwin Streetscape Project as an official Archway initiative, and will work with UGA students and Baldwin officials to facilitate a mutually convenient time for students to visit the town and begin organizing a work plan.
**Baldwin Land Use Project**

On March 6, 2013, Habersham Archway’s Executive Committee approved a second new project for the City of Baldwin. Baldwin Mayor Jerry Neace noted that the city had become the recipient of eleven acres of land inside the city limits. According to Mayor Neace, portions of the land would be suitable for a potential park, but the mayor also noted that the parcel contains a wetlands area with some degree of water runoff. The mayor noted that the water runoff is extremely close to the continental divide area. Mayor Neace requested Archway assistance in determining how this parcel of land can best be developed for city use. In response to the Mayor’s request, Habersham Archway Professional Rick Story, established the Baldwin Land Use initiative as an official Archway project, and also contacted environmental specialist Duncan Hughes at North Georgia Technical College. Rick will work with Hughes in determining the best use of the wetlands area, including the exploration of establishing a possible outdoor classroom for water studies. This exploration will also consider the possible use of 319 project monies for the effort. Archway Professional Rick Story will continue to work with Duncan Hughes as well as set up a time when UGA students can visit the site and begin formulating a work plan for the project.

**Demorest Pedestrian Trail Project**

Also during its March meeting, the Habersham Archway Executive Committee approved a request from Demorest City Councilman and Archway Executive Committee Member Jerry Harkness. Councilman Harkness requested Archway assistance in developing a plan for a possible stream-side pedestrian trail in an area along Ivy Street. The new pedestrian trail will potentially exist in an area presently overgrown and covered in kudzu. The new trail could also be potentially linked to existing trails in the neighboring cities of Clarkesville and Cornelia which are also part of the “Rails to Trails” program. In response to Councilman Harkness’ request, Rick met with Soque River Watershed Executive Director, Justin Ellis, and Mona Painter, from the City of Cornelia. Both Ellis and Painter expressed a willingness to work with Demorest in possibly linking existing trails with the proposed new trail in an effort to establish a central Habersham trail system. Painter and Ellis also noted that a “Rails to Trails” effort has been included as a potential beneficiary of the pending local SPLOST initiative. Soque River Watershed Executive Director, Justin Ellis, has already reached out to councilman Harkness, and offered his assistance and support. Archway Professional Rick Story will continue to work with councilman Harkness as well as other local officials, and has established the Demorest Pedestrian Trail initiative as an official Archway project. Rick will equally provide follow-up and facilitate a future meeting of all interested parties, as well as establish a time for UGA students to visit Demorest and begin work.
PENDING -- Alto “Vision for Growth” Project

Following the March meeting of the Habersham Archway Executive Committee, committee member and Alto Mayor, Audrey Turner, spoke with Archway Professional Rick Story, regarding possible Archway assistance in formulating a visioning and growth plan for the City of Alto. In follow-up to the Mayor’s request, Rick attended the Alto City Council meeting on Tuesday, March 12, 2013. During and after the meeting, both Mayor Turner and members of the city council expressed an interest in having Archway visit the town of Alto to evaluate existing facilities, assess growth potential for future businesses, and produce some possible options for a streetscape and beautification project. The mayor and council members also expressed a desire to work with local internet and wireless providers to potentially provide unlimited WiFi services to the city. Rick informed the mayor and council members that a formal request could be presented at the next Archway Executive Committee meeting for approval. Mayor Turner indicated she will present the formal request, thus making the Alto “Vision for Growth” initiative an official Habersham Archway project.