Local interest in the missions and activities of existing community-service agencies in Hart County was the inspiration for developing a community asset inventory. A comprehensive inventory of local agencies, non-profit organizations, clubs, churches, and other service-provider groups could be used to identify areas of potential coordination or gaps, to direct people in need of services, or help volunteers find organizations to work with. UGA social work graduate student Jimbo Graves began developing Hart County’s community asset inventory, beginning with a list developed by Hart County School System social worker Pam Gordon. Graves and Gordon worked together to build it into a categorized database. Their approach was to develop a comprehensive inventory driven by the assets rather than needs within the community, encouraging proactive development of assets. Using free online software, Graves plotted the inventory to create an interactive asset map.

The Archway Partnership was fortunate to receive support from UGA’s Office of the Vice President Public Service and Outreach (PSO) when Dr. Michelle Carney, Director of the UGA’s Institute for Non-Profits, partnered with Archway as a PSO Faculty Fellow. Carney and graduate students Natalie Okeson and Hillary DeJarnett built upon Graves’ and Gordon’s efforts. The inventory includes hundreds of resources and can be sorted according to category or location. As Carney told UGA Today (Nov. 21, 2011), “Assets are in every community, but you have to understand what the needs are to determine if the assets are sufficient. Just gathering all the asset information is so powerful because communities can then make decisions on how to maximize all those resources.” Resources are mapped using geographic information systems (GIS), enabling users to spatially identify areas of the community where needs may not be matched by available resources or there is duplication.

The project sparked conversations about how to improve access to needed resources and how to link potential volunteers to organizations in need of assistance. One key issue in ensuring the inventory was accessible to the public was identifying a central person or agency to maintain the asset inventory and keep it updated going forward. Hart County GIS Specialist Carol Harvey has taken on that role, working to integrate the asset inventory data into the county’s GIS map layers. Harvey explains: “We were able to take the Community Asset Inventory data that the students compiled and join it to our recently completed address point layer to expand the information that we can extract from that layer. The Community Asset Inventory provided specific location data for many businesses, activities, attractions, and organizations and also categorized those features. This has greatly enhanced our ability to use our address point layer with a variety of other GIS layers and determine how things such as ISO ratings, flood zones, and 911 activities affect citizens in different ways.”

**Advancing Community Priorities:** One of Hart County Archway Partnership’s key focus issues is planning and visioning for the future. The community asset inventory provides value for local elected officials, non-profit organizations, and community members to better understand the network of existing local resources, how they can be tapped to address local needs, and identify potential areas where there are mismatches between needs and resources.