Teasley-Holland House Enhancement Addresses
Hart County Tourism Development
Written by: Ilka McConnell & Alex Crevar

For some time, the Hart County Historical Society Board of Directors had wanted to improve the curb appeal and visibility of the historic Teasley-Holland House in Hartwell, Georgia. Home to the Hart County Museum and Chamber of Commerce offices, the Teasley-Holland House serves as Hartwell’s Welcome Center. Even so, the house, which is strategically placed at the entrance to downtown, was hidden from street view by overgrown trees and the house’s sign location was such that many drove right past. The fear was that people would miss the house and the chance to learn more about Hart County and Hartwell.

Highlighting the Teasley-Holland House moved from desire to reality in 2011. That summer, landscape architecture student Claire Dellinger, an Archway Partnership intern from UGA’s College of Environment and Design, began working with members of the Historical Society, the Chamber Director, and the Hart County Cooperative Extension Coordinator. The group developed renderings for ways to enhance the house’s landscape and exterior. The plan included a planting strategy, pruning and removing trees, and installing a brick walkway.

As work with the house progressed, what started as a landscape makeover became a community-wide effort to improve the house’s interior and exterior as well. Archway’s involvement and grounds’ renovations were just the spark needed.

The Hart County Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, and Hart’s Archway Partnership all came together in late autumn 2011. Hart’s Archway Professional wrote a successful $9,500 grant to the Hart Electrical Membership Corporation (EMC) Foundation to begin the makeover. Historical Society members spent hours sorting through artifacts and reorganizing the museum displays. Chamber of Commerce volunteers cleaned, painted walls, stained floors, connected new light fixtures, and installed new window coverings to protect displays. The Chamber’s board purchased new office furniture. A brick walkway from the front door to the sidewalk was installed, and a safety handrail was added. The City of Hartwell pruned trees to make the building more visible while Hart County High School students built new displays to better showcase museum items.

A second Hart EMC Foundation grant for $10,000 was awarded in October 2012 to fund a new roof, landscaping materials, and a new entry sign. The roofing company offered a discount as their contribution, and the roof was installed in early 2013. The repainted and repositioned entry sign was installed in August 2013 and the first phase of landscaping will be completed fall 2013. Hart County Archway and the Historical Society Board are working together to identify potential grants to repaint the house for the final phase of improvements.

Advancing Community Priorities: The Teasley-Holland house project fits with Hart County’s tourism-development priority because of its role as the community’s museum and Welcome Center. The property’s enhancement and improvement created a sense of community spirit around the house and an example of how working together can result in a greater impact than working alone.