Robert E. Gordon Jr., the new director of the Archway Partnership, visited Griffin on his first day on the job, as Griffin-Spalding County is the latest community selected to participate in the program.

As director of the Archway Partnership, Gordon will oversee work being done in eight communities now actively involved in the Archway program. Griffin/Spalding County will become an Archway Partnership community in July, though local leaders are meeting now, making appointments to the local committee and working on priorities moving forward.

Through that partnership, an Archway professional is based in each community and serves as its contact with the University of Georgia, bringing resources from the university to help address issues identified by community residents.

Alumni of the Archway Partnership include Colquitt, Glynn and Clayton counties. Communities currently active in Archway are Sandersville, Tennille/Washington County, Hart County, Americus/Sumter County, Hawkinsville/Pulaski County, Dalton/Whitfield County, Cairo/Grady County, Habersham County and Metter/Candler County.

Gordon told local leaders he was “very excited to be here as you get started.”

Gordon replaces Mel Garber, who retired as Archway director. Garber told local officials, “at this stage, the local group is coming together and will be in great shape.”

Archway began in 2005 as a two-year pilot project in southwest Georgia’s Moultrie and Colquitt County, to help that community solve issues related to rapid growth. During the pilot phase, Archway partners tackled issues such as land-use planning, workforce housing and economic development.

Since its inception, hundreds of UGA faculty, staff and students have engaged in research and outreach in Archway communities.

“Georgia’s local communities are served through access to faculty and student expertise,” Gordon said in a press release. “At the same time, university faculty benefit from additional research opportunities, and students gain real-world experience outside of the classroom.”

The membership of the Spalding County Executive Committee includes one staffer and the chairman or designee of the city and county commissions and the school board, along with representatives from the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Spalding Regional Hospital, UGA-Griffin, Southern Crescent Technical College, Sun City Peachtree and the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
The City of Griffin approved having City Manager Kenny Smith and Mayor Doug Hollberg on the committee as annual appointments. Spalding County is expected to do the same, and Griffin-Spalding County School Board Chairman James Westbury said he would serve with Judy Parker as the school board staffer.

Griffin-Spalding Development Authority Executive Director David Luckie, along with GSDA Chairman Chuck Copeland, will serve. Copeland and Stephanie Windham from the Chamber of Commerce had worked to get the community included in the Archway Partnership, and Windham recommended Copeland be part of the committee.

Current chamber Chairman Randy Peters will also serve on the board in his capacity with the chamber and as president of Souther Crescent Technical College. Spalding Regional CEO John Quinn will represent the hospital, and Clay Davis was selected to represent Sun City Peachtree.

NAACP President Jewell Walker-Harps was suggested as the NAACP representative, with local officials to ask her. UGA-Griffin will also be represented on the committee, when the new assistant provost is named, as that is being written into the job description, according to Angel Jackson from Archway.

Two local listening sessions, to get input from the community, are planned for June 2, with a morning session at 9:30 a.m., at Spalding High School and an evening session at 6:30 p.m., at Griffin High. Both will include presentations and information from a team of Archway professionals from Athens.