Candler County: 121/129 Connector Analysis
Written by: Betsy McGriff, Eli Truett and Angel Jackson

Beginning in the Fall of 2014, students from the University of Georgia College of Engineering and Terry College of Business worked with the members of the Candler County Archway Partnership to identify potential routes for a new road to relieve traffic congestion and attract potential businesses to locate along the GA-121/Interstate 16 corridor in Metter.

Initially, engineering students collected data on the geography and existing infrastructure on the land adjacent to Interstate 16 and began to work on the design for the selected route. Archway Partnership MBA students from the Terry College looked at commercial development options. With help from the UGA Small Business Development Center (SBDC), they made recommendations for commercial chains that could benefit the community economically.

During the Spring 2015 semester, the engineering students continued to work on the design of the road, drafting utility and storm water management plans and conducting a construction cost analysis. They also incorporated the commercial business recommendations into the plan. Final project recommendations were made in April 2015 to community members, including the property owners and members of the Candler County Archway Executive Committee.

“This project ties together all the engineering principles I’ve studied at UGA,” said Katie Dean, a senior engineering major from Alpharetta, Ga. “It has put us in the mindset of learning, communicating and dynamic problem-solving, putting in perspective what we know how to do and what we need to learn how to do.”

For Dean and the other engineering students on the project, this fulfills the college requirement that they complete a capstone project before graduation. It also helps them apply the academic lessons from the classroom to actual projects.

“Giving our students practical experience in their fields, beyond just the theory, is vital to their education,” said Jason Christian, an assistant professor in the College of Engineering. “This project gave them an opportunity to make real presentations to Candler County officials and develop their communication skills with clients, which is essential to being an effective engineer.”

“The fact that this is a real-life project for these students is priceless to us,” said Jamie Riggs, president and executive director of the Metter-Candler Chamber of Commerce. “Not only are we getting services we would not be able to afford otherwise, but we are also building important relationships with these future experts in their fields.”

Advancing Community Priorities:
One of the key priority areas for the Candler County Archway Partnership is Economic Development. This project addresses access to a newly built school complex and a desire for more commercial developments.