Candler County: Jaycee Park Renovation

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Jaycee Park in downtown Metter has been well utilized for over 40 years by people from all parts of Metter and Candler County. Unfortunately, the park recently fell into disrepair with broken swings, spring riders that no longer bounced and an unusable basketball court. The community recognized the value of renovating the park into a safe and welcoming environment for local families and reached out to the Candler County Archway Partnership for assistance.

As a result, the Candler County Archway Partnership brought together the Metter community and students from UGA’s College of Environment and Design (CED) to visualize a landscape plan for Jaycee Park. The CED students facilitated a community input meeting with local residents which included a listening and visioning session followed by an interactive design process. Originally, the project focused on redesigning the basketball courts and updating old playground equipment, but the results of the meeting indicated the need for a possible skate park and sitting area for parents and caretakers. The students then crafted a visual design to show the community members exactly how their ideas could look on a detailed map.

Betsy McGriff, Candler County Archway Professional, said, “Sometimes people have a hard time visualizing things and when they see a student’s drawings that actually show where everything will go, that really speaks to them in a unique way.” The redesign includes new equipment such as a play structure, renovated basketball courts, free-play areas and a pavilion. It also solves the challenge with the current park boundaries bordering closely to neighboring houses by adding a buffer of trees between the houses and the park.

On Saturday, June 6, 2015, the first phase of the planned improvements began as over 15 local volunteers and professional playground installers assembled the new playground. The structure was funded by a grant from Dr. Pepper/Snapple and Kaboom!. Matching funds and labor were provided by the City of Metter Public Works.

While the newly renovated park contributes to healthy lifestyles among the children and families of Metter, it creates a better environment for the entire community. Community leaders hope that the project will help the community realize that their ideas and opinions can be put into action and, working together, they can create tangible results.

Candler Archway Executive Committee member Rhonda Hendrix stated, “I ride by the Jaycee Park every day traveling to work and the new playground has changed the whole landscape. It is beautiful and such a great asset for our community. I know the children that play there are excited about the new opportunities.”

Advancing Community Priorities

The Jaycee Park redesign advances the community’s priority areas of enhancing recreation opportunities in the community and community beautification. By involving community members in the redesign process, the project has encouraged civic engagement as well as enhanced physical activity opportunities for the community at large.