



ASSOCIATION OF
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UNIVERSITIES



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA



CECE

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY - PLACE

2025
CASE
STUDY

The University of Georgia

**Hart County Archway Partnership:
Downtown Hartwell Revitalization**

The Archway Partnership, a unit of the University of Georgia’s (UGA) Public Service and Outreach, has established a nationally awarded model of sustained community development. Archway was created to enhance UGA’s land-grant mission of teaching, research, and service while addressing critical self-identified community issues. Since its creation in 2005, the Archway model has been replicated in 16 communities across Georgia (serving eight locations at a time). The model starts with embedding a faculty member in the community to support capacity building and serve as a connector back to the university.

ARCHWAY PARTNERSHIP MODEL IN ACTION

Hart County has been an Archway community since 2009. Hartwell, the county seat of Hart County, is a quintessential small town, and because of its proximity to Lake Hartwell is a draw for tourists and entrepreneurs alike. Archway has supported Hartwell’s community development efforts on downtown revitalization as part of its goal to build an “inclusive and sustainable community for people to live, work, and play”. The Archway faculty cultivates networks and connections that bring community stakeholders alongside UGA students and faculty to address these locally identified challenges. This case study highlights the cross-section of various UGA schools and colleges that have contributed to a rejuvenated Hartwell and enhanced the overall quality of life for residents.

FROM IDEATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership with the Terry College of Business

One of the five key academic partnerships is with the Terry College of Business’ Institute for Leadership Advancement (ILA) certificate program. Students work on projects connected to their course of study which support the community’s goals. An ILA student-led strategic plan and capital campaign for the Hart County Community Theatre led to a connection with the Atlanta-based Fox Theatre and the Fox Gives Foundation, resulting in more than \$500,000 in grant funding. To further elevate Hartwell’s image, a comprehensive marketing plan was created to promote the new “Live Well, Play Well” brand, positioning the city as an appealing destination for both residents and visitors. Students also devised a long-term strategic plan for the Downtown Development Authority and the Main Street program. This blueprint was designed to ensure the sustained growth and vibrancy of the downtown area. In addition, ILA students worked in partnership with faculty from UGA’s Small Business Development Center to create a “How to Start a Business” guide designed for potential business owners and entrepreneurs. These initiatives, driven by collaboration and student involvement, have played a crucial role in enhancing Hartwell's cultural, economic, and social landscape.



Partnership with the College of Environment and Design

Another critical partnership is with the College of Environment and Design (CED) and multiple Master of Landscape Architecture students. The revitalization of Depot Street and Railroad Park was achieved through façade enhancements and carefully planned landscaping. Downtown trees and planters were redesigned and replanted to enhance the area’s aesthetic appeal. CED faculty and students worked with community members on a design process that focused on improving connectivity between downtown Hartwell and the public marina on Lake Hartwell. Finally, an Archway graduate student designed a columbarium and memory garden within Northview Cemetery that generated a \$100,000 donation (as capital) to implement the design.



UGA faculty member, Rosanna Cruz-Bibb, (L) speaks with community leaders about an upcoming project.

Partnership with the College of Engineering

Students in the College of Engineering have supported several important infrastructure and sustainability projects. One key initiative involved a traffic study to assess the flow and efficiency of Hartwell’s streets, leading to parking spot enhancements, downtown beautification, and thoughtful recommendations for future improvements. Students also designed a new fire station that was implemented, along with the construction of a new parking lot and a pocket park. Parking lot rerouting was also a part of the broader plan to optimize space and traffic patterns in key locations around the city. Lighting and sidewalk enhancements were made along Johnson Street, which runs parallel to downtown. Funded by a \$500,000 grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), these improvements have increased safety, improved emergency response times, and the overall appeal of this important thoroughfare.

Partnership with the College of Family and Consumer Sciences

Students from the College of Family and Consumer Sciences played a pivotal role in understanding Hartwell’s housing landscape by executing a comprehensive housing assessment for the historic Rome Richardson neighborhood. The findings were instrumental in securing a \$4.4 million federal



grant, which will support the neighborhood's revitalization efforts and improve living conditions for its residents. Students also worked with alumni of the local Rosenwald school, Hart County Training School, to develop the text for a historic marker and additional seating. To further beautify the area, a commemorative brick project was initiated at the historic marker site.

Partnership with the Lamar Dodd School of Art

The most visible project is a series of murals throughout downtown. Students from the Lamar Dodd School of Art contributed to the city's cultural and artistic vibrancy through a public art program in which they designed and painted nine murals across downtown, helping to enhance the area's aesthetic appeal and foster a greater sense of community pride. These murals have become a defining feature of downtown Hartwell and its partnership with UGA.

IMPACT

From ideation to implementation, the Archway Partnership has successfully facilitated and cultivated key student and faculty resources to help address Hart County's needs. Since 2020, the Hart County Archway Partnership has engaged 195 students and 73 faculty through 93 projects with an estimated return on investment of \$6,817,135.

Likewise, Hartwell has had great success in its revitalization efforts, seeing more than 70 businesses open/expand in the past seven years alone, dozens of vacant buildings have been revitalized, and the tax digest has increased 237% from a little over \$8 million to approximately \$40 million. In August 2023, Hartwell was named the 2023 Downtown of the Year by the Georgia Downtown Association for "Outstanding Community Transformation" and was designated a Georgia Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) community in 2024. The community cited its continual work with the Archway Partnership as a key factor in gaining the recognition. In Hart County and Archway communities around the state, the Archway Partnership supports students as they connect theory to practice in a real-world context, developing them for the 21st-century knowledge economy and improving the lives of Georgians by helping their communities thrive.



LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

Supporting Images:

- Hartwell Images:
 - [2023 Hartwell Downtown of the Year images](#)
 - [Landscape Architecture Visit to Hartwell images](#)
 - [Blush Mural images](#)
 - [Color the World Bright Mural, Hart County images](#)
 - [Hartwell Streetscape Engineering Site Visit images](#)
 - [Engineering Visit for Hartwell Parking Lot and Pocket Park images](#)
- [CED Visit to Railroad Street Park and Depot Street images](#)
- [CED Visit to Hart County Training School Commemorative Bricks images](#)
- [Northview Cemetery Columbarium images](#)
- [FACS Housing Assessment images](#)

Supporting Information:

- [Hartwell, Georgia Overview Video](#)
- [2025 Archway Day](#)



ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

ABOUT THE IEP PROGRAM

APLU and its [Commission on Economic and Community Engagement \(CECE\)](#) established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP Program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP Awards Program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- Talent and workforce development
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- Place development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: www.APLU.org/IEP

