Throughout the summer of 2010, Dalton State College (DSC), the City of Dalton, Dalton Utilities, and Whitfield County joined forces with the University of Georgia’s Archway Partnership to produce several concepts and detailed environmental designs addressing local community issues. Five interns from UGA’s College of Environment and Design arrived in Dalton in late May to begin work on various proposals for the redesign of entryways, community parks, nature trails, and more.

Interns Casey Marbutt and Cameron Yates partnered with DSC Biology Professor John Lugthart, Whitfield County Senior GIS Technician Mitch Adams, and DSC Head Groundskeeper Lynn Morse to propose a design that would improve and expand the Dalton State College walking trail system. The redesign would allow the site to effectively drain water while providing a safe and attractive natural area giving visitors the option to walk to campus or enjoy the new trail on a daily basis.

Whitfield County Administrator Bob McLeod and Whitfield County Engineer Kent Benson guided interns Kent Mallett and Ross Tew in developing a master plan for Westside Park including a walking trail, playgrounds, and a handicap-accessible fishing pier with covered pavilions. The interns also spent significant time designing an entrance and planting plan for the new Carbondale Business Park. The design suggestions were warmly welcomed by Whitfield County Board of Commissioners. “They’ve done a fine job on this and we appreciate the work they’ve done,” said Mike Babb, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, as quoted in Dalton’s Daily Citizen.

Archway intern Andrew Maxey worked under the direction of Mark Buckner and Don Cope at Dalton Utilities to develop a plan, involving the implementation of a live gabion rock wall along the stream bank, which would restore 75 linear feet of stream bank alongside Drowning Bear Creek. Currently, the creek’s continued erosion threatens significant damage to property in the floodplain, nearby sewer lines, and the environment. Maxey also assisted in conducting dry weather screenings and developing a rain garden design for the front of the Dalton Utilities building.

As their stay in Whitfield County came to a close, the interns displayed their work to members of the Dalton community and elected officials. “The presentations created a buzz within the community; people were excited about how soon these changes could happen,” said Hazell Lewis, a recent graduate of UGA’s Master of Landscape Architecture program who helped oversee several of the projects.

Advancing Community Priorities: Community members identified the need for a diverse economic base; successful, sustainable industries; and expanded greenways, parks and trails as part of the community’s vision for the future. The proposals prepared by the interns will be used to move toward these goals and as a possible stepping stone for funding.