



Meeting 3 Report

The third Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2005 at South Forsyth Middle School in Cumming. Approximately 70 people attended. In the course of two hours, participants worked in small groups of five or more on a series of questions that helped them think about the kind of community they would like Cumming-Forsyth County to be in 25 years.

By the end of the evening, they had recorded 407 ideas, which are listed later in this report, but some of the most common themes of this meeting seemed to be:

- A desire for **greater planning** in Cumming-Forsyth County, although participants differed on the outcomes they sought. One group wanted to “keep retail in segregated areas,” while another wanted to “blend different land uses in a productive, attractive way.” Still, it was clear from the number of ideas about planning and land use that participants were concerned that not enough was being done to direct the development of Cumming-Forsyth County.
- A need for **more investment in transportation**, although here again participants disagreed somewhat on the kinds of transportation they thought needed attention. Two small groups wanted more highway and road construction, while two others mentioned transit (buses or trains).
- Support for **environmental protection**, including “protecting and utilizing Lake Lanier,” as one group suggested. Participants expressed support for preserving green space, too.
- Support for **education, including public schools and higher education**. Cumming-Forsyth County does not have a four-year college, but participants thought it should aim for one. One group suggested an educational environment that ran from “primary to post-secondary” offerings. Another suggested that Lanier Tech become “more community-based.”

Meeting Process

Participants were welcomed by Brett Berto, co-chair of Envision 2030. He then turned the program over to Jon Abercrombie, the meeting facilitator. Jon explained that participants would work in small groups or “circles” of five or more people and they would be asked to think about, discuss and come to consensus on several questions. Jon also covered a few suggested ground

rules. Each group had a “moderator” who acted as recorder and group facilitator, and wrote the group’s comments on a large flip-chart pad.

The first question Jon asked was part of a scenario. Its purpose was to help the groups imagine what an ideal Cumming-Forsyth County would look like. Here’s the scenario:

It is 2030. Time magazine is sending a reporter to Cumming-Forsyth County to do a cover story on how this community came to be regarded as the “model” or “ideal” mid-sized community in the country – the community other mid-sized communities around the country want to be like.

Here’s the question Jon posed to the groups:

What will Time magazine say in its 2030 article makes Cumming-Forsyth County such an ideal community?

Jon gave the groups 50 minutes to work on this question. As they were finishing, Jon asked the groups to look over the ideas and images they had listed and highlight the ones they felt most reflected the rough consensus of the group – and also place a mark next to the one or two that they thought might be their most visionary ideas.

In the remainder of the meeting, Jon asked the groups to consider two other questions:

- *What do we need to preserve among things that already exist in Cumming-Forsyth County today for the Time magazine article (and our vision of the future) to come true?*

These things could include physical assets, organizations or institutions, public policies or decisions, or positive traits or skills of the people who live here now that will be needed if Cumming-Forsyth County were to become an ideal community.

- *What do we lack in Cumming-Forsyth County today that we would need for the Time magazine article (and our vision of the future) to come true?*

These things could include physical assets, organizations or institutions, public policies or decisions, or positive traits or skills of the people that are missing today but will be needed in the future, if Cumming-Forsyth County were to become an ideal community.

The results of these three group discussions (a general vision for Cumming-Forsyth County, the assets that should be preserved and those that should be developed) are in the following three sections of this report.

Small-Group Results: A Vision of Cumming-Forsyth County in 2030

Here are the vision ideas – the things that participants felt Time magazine would focus on, if it were writing about Cumming-Forsyth County as the ideal or model mid-size community in 2030.

Small Group 1:

- Pro-active road development: build roads before the development
- Balance between work business and recreation: mixed-use development, diverse town area, town center development
- Pedestrian-friendly design, walkable community
- Wider sidewalks, safer pedestrian crossings
- Multiple ways to get places: walking, alternative vehicles (golf carts like p'tree city + others), pathways, moving type sidewalks (look toward futuristic modes), monorail, trolleys
- Preserving open space
- Higher-density development with mixed-use: build closer together, but keep open spaces between developments
- Control higher-density development
- More space between houses
- Integrated uses in a community
- Cohesion within the community between business / residents / industry
- Provision of affordable housing for younger generation
- Attract more industry to county
- Address infrastructure problems
- More entertainment venues - amphitheatre
- Larger parks
- Government backing arts centers
- Turn rock quarry into outdoor venue
- Parks that are actually attractive to kids - less organized activities - allow kids to play safely
- Neighborhood parks / utilize school property for park use
- World-class school system
- School impact fees
- Schools integrated into the community
- Neighborhood parks and neighborhoods interconnected with walkways / pathways / trails
- Single-family / multi-family residential connected to each other & parks - walkability to grocery shopping, etc.
- Alternative fuels available
- Year-round activities on the lake
- Preserved areas around the lake
- Create aquifers / reservoirs
- Walking paths / trails around the lake - long paths, like 10 miles or more
- Water reclamation projects at the neighborhood level / community level / smaller scale (for irrigation)
- Strong central business district: restaurants, businesses, traffic routed around (not through) center, boutiques
- Bike / walkways from neighborhoods to central business districts
- Bike lanes
- More sidewalks / wider - for bicycles, skateboarders (kids transportation), kids
- More solar energy for both residents and commercial
- Sidewalks that provide connectivity between residents / industry / commercial
- More programs for parents to interact with each other to discuss issues related to teens, kids

- Keep commissioners accountable for following the land use plan - do not approve large subdivisions before schools are available
- Better public transportation between here and Atlanta
- Controlled / organized growth / quality growth with architectural guidelines
- Address major infrastructure issues to make county attractive to quality industry
- Reclaim rock quarry for greenspace / amphitheatre / entertainment venues / botanical garden
- Keep big box stores together and allow smaller businesses to be located together, integrated into community

Small Group 2:

- Balance all of above
- People coming together for common goals
- Hotels / street design / Schools / Commercial / retail / single and multi residential
- Master planning (Stoney Point example) (LCI)
- Excellence in learning from other communities
- Quality education (better than average pay for our teachers, internships, college)
- Housing / health care for seniors
- Affordable housing
- Master plan with mixture of housing options
- Airfield for corporate jets
- Varied employment opportunities
- Stricter regulations for drivers licenses
- Family values / lifestyles
- Quality of life / safety / security
- Governmental complex
- Quality health care: hospital / maternity
- Internships for students
- Roadways
- Utilities: technology / cheap power source / underground power / water / sewer
- Protecting and utilizing lake Lanier
- Mix use / Windward-like community
- Cultural arts center
- Hotel / conference center
- Sport facilities for all ages
- Plan for future growth (education facilities / office / corporate facilities)
- Partner: Business / schools
- Partner: Non-profits / businesses
- Partner: City / County
- Partner: Commerce / education
- Partner: Government / people
- Work opportunities for all ages

Small Group 3:

- Commitment to education - including secondary - innovative education programs
- Controlled physical environment

- #1 healthcare
- Do benchmarking (compare to Irvine, CA, Reston, VA, Peachtree City, GA)
- Commitment to what we decide
- More bus tax dollars - less residential
- Low-cost housing or better paying jobs
- Diversity of housing, business types
- Closer adherence to uniform development code standards, etc., fewer variances
- Transparency in and more strict eminent domain laws
- School center (geo.) communities
- Vision become plan, plan was executed and adopted by the powers to be / Leadership group named and responsible
- Regional approach to job growth / infrastructure / housing / strengths / weaknesses / roads / etc (water, sewer)
- Build on county strengths, assets - do not reinvent unless necessary
- Slow things down so we can affect change if smart to do so
- City and county need to work together (consolidation)
- Build Airport (Dawson)
- Roads, roads, roads
- Stop, assess, create vision and plan - commit to plan, check against benchmark and make leadership put someone into action -- planning czar
- Education - quality education, secondary, etc.
- Transportation (roads)
- Airport

Small Group 4:

- Time-Efficient public and private transportation (train / bus)
- Secure environment
- What we have now with issues solved (water, sewer, roads, balance business and residential)
- Affordable housing for service industry
- Senior community housing (high quality / low maintenance)
- 4-year University / college (keep graduates interested in staying here)
- Cultural arts (amphitheatre / museum)
- Maintain small town feel (conservation of greenspace)
- Leisure activities (kayaking, boating, swimming, parks, dog bark parks)
- Maintain k-12 education
- Quality healthcare
- Economic development

Small Group 5:

- Wide Sidewalks
- Mixed-use (vickery concept - live, work, play)
- Green space
- Center focused - restaurant, park, kids area (see drawing)
- Chastain park environment (amphitheatre)
- Gas lanterns - parkway, walking, grassed medians, nice landscaping

- Johns Creek overlay - landscaping, greenery
- Better balance between residential / commercial / industrial
- Develop an incentive to draw corporations in (Alpharetta does a great job)
- Public transportation
- Housing and seniors to have effect needed to consider in growth / needs
- Classroom sizes and ratios acceptable level - smart planning, develop schools
- Lakes - Roswell example - Walking area - greenway
- Taking back sidewalk and bike lanes - infrastructure vs. current program

Small Group 6:

- Great commuting - not just cars - bikes, scooters, etc - connected neighborhoods via paths
- Combo of green space, residential, commercial in places they make sense
- Blend different land uses in a productive, attractive way - no need to drive everywhere
- "Main Street" areas with convenience, rest., areas for community activities
- Master plan adhered to
- A plan that makes sense - mixing uses for the best use of land / space
- Water - intake / way to get it here
- Road plan / traffic solution
- Method for developers to pay for infrastructure
- Commissioners elected only by people in their district
- Sewer
- Grey water usage for landscaping
- Public transportation to downtown and inside county
- More bridges / ways to get across river
- Good landfill and recycling plan - encourage more recycling
- Require developers to donate land for schools / greenspace
- Require water conservation
- Partnership between developers and long term community well being
- Roads should have sidewalks - connect neighborhoods / areas together for easy non-car access
- Balancing tax base
- "Forced" partnerships for schools, fire stations, other necessary infrastructure - this is in addition to greenspace
- Developers required to donate money for specific school needs
- Paid position - liaison between county and city with job of educating citizens on issues that impact them

Small Group 7:

- Noth Point parkway - greenway - good plan
- Integrated greenspace / family / safe / good transportation
- Lake with water
- Medical facilities / good tax base / education / church
- Bike path / sidewalk / link subdivisions / alternatives to driving
- Major university
- Centers / activities for teens

- Mixed use / redeveloped downtown / dining / work, live, play
- Senior resources and facilities / transportation
- Vickery
- Commit to smart growth (balanced tax base / planning / architectural controls)
- Seniors / teens / education (primary to post secondary) / family / environment / healthy lifestyle / educated population
- Energy conservation (alternatives to gasoline / solar / transportation)
- Linked communities / paths vs. roads
- Business recruitment
- Fix meth issue
- Transportation / light rail / Alt / link communities
- County / city partnership (come on!)
- MARTA / GRTA / Transportation partnership
- Planners / developers (goals out of alignment, consider impact fees and other contributions to the community)

Small Group 8:

- Using the lake - recreation, board walk, commercial component
- Small shop centers / town square feel / sprinkled throughout city / activities (cultural, recreation, educational) / Street life
- Adequate roads
- Schools keep up with growth
- Cross-town expressway / connectivity to commercial centers, retail n'hoods
- Commercial campus
- Ensure large commercial projects don't vacate
- Higher education - continuing education / Lanier Tech expand to more community-based
- Assisted living
- Support for the arts - museum, performing arts center, peace center (Greenville)
- Organized faith outreach
- Committed to connecting people – transportation

Small Group 9:

- Kick the can
- Community of convenience with space between houses
- Greenway with parks; area similar to Vickery with shops, condos, possibly on lake. Keep retail in segregated areas. Bypass around city. College campus.
- Good balance between commercial and residential
- Facilities that are animal friendly
- Upgrade existing schools, facilities and build on it
- Pedestrian avenues maintain pride in properly set standards
- More greenspace
- Moved toward an appealing and controlled mix of commercial and residential similar to Windward Parkway. Make use of space around 400 from exit 11-14 for commercial. Movie theatre @ exit 13.
- Revenue generation

- Continued to stay ahead of growth in school system while keeping standards high
- We were pro-active in providing services and retirement centers for the senior population
- We provided a center for the diverse population that provided programs to assist them in their transition to work and live here
- Controlled crime by providing teen programs, drug awareness and help programs
- Brought college campus
- Provide mass transit system (small busses)
- City of Segways
- More privately owned restaurants

Consensus Ideas

Here are the ideas, from those listed above, that the groups felt reflected a consensus of their thinking:

- Greenway with parks; area similar to Vickery with shops, condos, possibly on lake. Keep retail in segregated areas. Bypass around city. College campus.
- Moved toward an appealing and controlled mix of commercial and residential similar to Windward Parkway. Make use of space around 400 from exit 11-14 for commercial. Movie theatre @ exit 13.
- Small shop centers / town square feel / sprinkled throughout city / activities (cultural, recreation, educational) / Street life
- Cross-town expressway / connectivity to commercial centers, retail n'hoods
- Higher education - continuing education / Lanier Tech expand to more community-based
- Integrated greenspace / family / safe / good transportation
- Seniors / teens / education (primary to post secondary) / family / environment / healthy lifestyle / educated population
- Transportation / light rail / Alt / link communities
- Planners / developers (goals out of alignment, consider impact fees and other contributions to the community)
- Blend different land uses in a productive, attractive way - no need to drive everywhere
- Master plan adhered to
- Water - intake / way to get it here
- Partnership between developers and long term community well being
- Center focused - restaurant, park, kids area (see drawing)
- Johns Creek overlay - landscaping, greenery
- Develop an incentive to draw corporations in (Alpharetta does a great job)
- Time-Efficient public and private transportation (train / bus)
- What we have now with issues solved (water, sewer, roads, balance business and residential)
- Maintain small town feel (conservation of greenspace)
- Stop, assess, create vision and plan - commit to plan, check against benchmark and make leadership put someone into action -- planning czar
- Education - quality education, secondary, etc.
- Transportation (roads)
- Master planning (Stoney Point example) (LCI)
- Utilities: technology / cheap power source / underground power / water / sewer

- Protecting and utilizing lake lanier

Visionary Ideas

Here are the ideas, from those listed above, that the groups felt were their most visionary or “out of the box” ideas:

- City of Segways
- Using the lake - recreation, board walk, commercial component
- Major university
- Commissioners elected only by people in their district
- Taking back sidewalk and bike lanes - infrastructure vs. current program
- 4-year University / college (keep graduates interested in staying here)
- Airport
- Reclaim rock quarry for greenspace / amphitheater / entertainment venues / botanical garden

Small-Group Results: Existing assets that should be preserved

Here are existing community assets that participants felt should be preserved, if Cumming-Forsyth County is to become the ideal or model mid-size community in 2030. These things could include physical assets, organizations or institutions, public policies or decisions, or positive traits or skills of the people who live here now.

Small Group 1:

- Trees
- Natural habitat
- Parks
- Clean streams or creeks
- Maintain homeowners rights - judicial use of eminent domain
- Community involvement
- Larger lot sizes
- Lake lanier
- Quality of life
- Lower taxes
- Aesthetic beauty of county
- Greenspace
- Agricultural integrity of county
- Natural scenic corridors
- Downtown square

Small Group 2:

- Bruster's
- Sense of family
- Greenspace
- Lake Lanier
- Parks

- Educational opportunities
- Friendly community / southern hospitality
- Quality education
- Affordable tax base
- Mixture of ethnic groups
- Giving / caring community
- Hospital / health care
- Smart growth

Small Group 3:

- Trees
- Waterways
- Waterways
- Sidewalks
- Underground utilities
- Greenspace
- Suanee Mountain
- Full pool lake
- GA Highlands Health Services

Small Group 4:

- Education system
- Greenspace
- Lake Lanier / Buford Dam
- Small-town atmosphere
- Non-profit organizations
- Low crime rate
- Quality industry
- Property values
- Air quality
- Libraries
- Parks
- Historical sites / buildings

Small Group 5:

- The lake
- The rivers
- The streams
- Low crime rate
- Low taxes
- Good schools
- Family orientation
- Strong faith-based initiatives
- Parks and recreation
- Library system

- Feel of small town community
- Horse farms
- Clean environment
- Affordability

Small Group 6:

- Lake
- Trees / greenspace
- Rivers
- Well educated population
- Good school system
- Low taxes
- Low crime
- Fairgrounds

Small Group 7:

- Small town feel
- Family friendly
- Sawnee Mountain
- Greenspace / parks / recreation
- Lake Lanier
- Low taxes
- Historic landmarks / some farm land
- Senior discounts / tax breaks / etc.
- Newton Preserve
- Library system

Small Group 8:

- High standard of education
- Lake / waterways
- Health care system
- Low taxes
- Strong faith orientation
- SPLOST
- Sense of community
- Community amenities

Small Group 9:

- Low taxes
- Hospital system
- High education standards
- Low crime rate
- Leader program
- Parks / athletic programs
- Sense of community / family oriented

- Charming part of City / fairgrounds / old architecture
- Lake level

Small-Group Results: Assets that will be needed

Here are community assets that participants felt are missing now and will be needed, if Cumming-Forsyth County is to become the ideal or model mid-size community in 2030. These things could include physical assets, organizations or institutions, public policies or decisions, or positive traits or skills of the people.

Small Group 1:

- Incentives for people under 30 to live here
- Entertainment venues
- Street lights
- Adequate roadways
- Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure
- Space in schools for the number of students
- Park space
- School impact fees
- Commissioners sticking to master plan
- Outdoor community events
- Forsyth symphony
- Diversity of types of activities on lake
- Night life
- Boardwalk around lake
- Preservation
- Integrity with decision makers

Small Group 2:

- Equalized funding for all: special educational opportunity (sports, art, foreign language)
- Art / cultural center
- Unlimited supply of water
- Hotel / conference center
- 4-year university
- Uncrowded roadways
- Opportunity for seniors

Small Group 3:

- Water control
- Expand senior program
- Teen center
- Lack conference center
- Roads
- Sidewalks
- Classrooms

- Underground utilities
- OB - full-scale medical facility
- More education
- C/C cooperation
- Public transportation
- Old Atlanta Road

Small Group 4:

- South Forsyth Post Office
- Bark park / with shade
- Architectural design code standards
- Sewer / water
- Cultural arts center
- Amphitheatre
- Ease of movement (congestion)
- College / university

Small Group 5:

- Life "non residential" around the lake
- Nightlife
- Downtown square - nightlife
- Arts / culture
- In & Out Burger
- University / higher education
- Road master plan
- Conference center
- Quality hotels
- Family / fun activities (besides bowling / movies)

Small Group 6:

- Balanced tax digest
- More emergency services
- Employers in the community
- Nice mall area @ exit 12
- More schools
- Discipline to follow the master land use plan
- Culture / arts opportunity
- Nice rest.
- Vibrant downtown with stores, not just government buildings
- Better roads
- Public transit within and outside county
- Judicial center
- Sidewalks / walkways

Small Group 7:

- High tech jobs
- Community connections
- Class A Office Space
- Municipal Airport
- Local transit
- Visionary leadership
- Control of water
- Centralized government
- Architectural controls / sign ordinance
- Diversity
- Bike path
- Entertainment / cultural centers

Small Group 8:

- Qualified assisted living
- Another city
- Adequate roads
- Mixed-use development
- Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure
- Quality employers
- Environmentally sound planning
- Standard architectural guidelines
- Police protection
- More schools
- Water supply
- Cultural arts center

Small Group 9:

- Expand leader program
- Integrating diversity in communities
- Strengthen cultural / arts
- County funded animal shelter
- Expanded senior services
- Improved road systems
- Sidewalks
- Good working relationship between city and county governments
- Controlled commercial and residential growth - need better balance
- Architectural controls
- Privately owned restaurants and cabs
- Money
- Programs for teens, family

Addendum

One participant added this thought afterward via email.

“We need to create a town square area with a big lawn in front of stores with no streets that come to the front to access these or about the amphitheatre, or bike trails Vickery Creek type subdivisions/shopping.”