



Meeting 4 Report

The fourth Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Thursday, October 5 at Vickery Middle School in Cumming. Approximately 30 people attended. In the course of two hours, participants worked in small groups of 10 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 167 ideas, which are listed later in this report, but some of the most common themes of this meeting seemed to be:

- A desire for **different kinds of development** in Cumming-Forsyth County. Among the ideas: “multiple hubs where (the) community is drawn together,” and “a higher standard of appearance, especially (for) the city of Cumming.”
- A strong interest in **transportation improvements**, including projects other than roads and highways. In thinking about the future, one group said it was interested in “people-friendly” sidewalks, bike lanes and buses. It foresaw sidewalks extending from downtown Cumming to Tidwell Park. But others wanted more and better roads as well. One group said it wanted “safer” and “more sophisticated” roadways that were “better planned.”
- A desire for **more cultural and recreational activities** in Cumming-Forsyth County. One group felt strongly that Forsyth needed a “cultural arts center to attract local (artists) and other users” that would “create an environment for artists to visit (and) stay” in Forsyth. Another group wanted more to do. Its list included an “amphitheater, greenway, park areas (and other) things to do.”
- As in earlier vision meetings, when participants looked to the future they thought about **higher education** in Forsyth County – “a university or satellite college to help keep the local young people in the community . . . attract people to (the) community (and) to assist in economic development.”

Meeting Process

Participants were welcomed by Brett Berto, co-chair of Envision 2030, who 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 the strongest about – and also place a mark next to the one or two that they thought might be the most visionary idea.

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. (Note: The small groups were assigned numbers before the meeting, but the numbers may not be sequential. As a result, you may find some gaps in the numbering, but be assured that the results of all the small groups are produced below.)

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:

- Less franchised - more privately owned - like Vickery
- Cultural diversity
- More neighborhoods not like Polo - less 1/4 acre neighborhoods
- A greenway like the Alpharetta greenway
- Less high-density housing
- Preservation of things such as the lake and Sawnee mountain
- Advanced transportation
- More places available (ie, amphitheatre, greenway, park areas, things to do)
- Outdoor amphitheatre
- Better planning with community projects such as widening Hwy 20
- More parks, not just for sports
- More attractions - family oriented
- Better roads - stop developing without sufficient roads - plan for traffic before HS thur
- More traffic lights
- Make "downtown Cumming" more attractive, appealing and inviting
- Ethnic / cultural adjustment
- Better kept parks around Lanier
- Safer roadways / more sophisticated roadways / better planned
- Less strip malls
- Developers contributed to road developments
- More of a focus on art - street art
- More shops independently owned rather than chains
- More streetlights on all of the roads
- More holiday decorations around town
- Restore historic homes - festive activities
- Family-time promotion
- More flowers "downtown"
- Having a higher standard for appearance - especially the city of Cumming
- Boardwalk

Small Group 2:

- Nature and quiet
- Commercial close to home
- Business and residents together
- Like Windward Parkway plan
- Business-fostering so they are long-term
- Traffic planning
- Preserve history
- Use lake with commercial establishments

- Keep lake clean
- Restrict traffic on lake
- Family event around lake with free access
- Safe community
- Multiple hubs of planned growth - school / home / work / nature / play
- Walk to school
- Safe outdoor areas like walking and bike paths
- Planned / self-contained communities
- Designed community in a community - including entertainment
- Diverse house within a development
- Solve for poverty by using local business to engage students - top graduating seniors from high school
- Draw larger business so community can work where they live
- Small town feel
- Everyone connected
- Multiple hubs where community is drawn together
- Increase tax base to fund community
- Affordable housing included in planned communities
- Community adopted areas for affordable housing
- Use pay it Forward model to build affordable houses
- Affordable public transportation within and between community hubs
- Change in education through accountability and future counseling
- Civic pride

Small Group 3:

- Sidewalks (people-friendly) / bike lanes / busses - create a system / inter-connectivity - Sidewalks from city square out to Tidwell park
- Taxi service - more service
- More exercise gyms
- Large park - Families of all ages in the park
- Greenspace
- Furniture stores
- A mall
- Create incentives for improving surfaces in parking lots
- Multi-level parking decks
- Upscale restaurants / incentives to attract prestigious/upscale businesses / corporate offices
- Keep safe community
- Maintain low taxes
- Clean environment
- Low stress way of moving around county - bike paths / low traffic congestion
- Cultural activity center of quality move from Atlanta up to our area / Cultural arts center to attract local and other users of facilities / Create environment for artists to visit/stay in community
- Measure our educational system as against international standards
- MARTA - up to serve the county
- Additional hospital

- Larger fire and police force
- Full lake
- Mixed-use facility on the lake - cultural, restaurants, swimming, less emphasis on high-end homes and move focus on larger community
- Create a waste water retention pond / lake instead of it flowing directly into lake lanier
- Move chicken plant out of city
- More shopping / shopping mall
- Free bus service to reduce drinking and driving
- Bike lanes on roadways
- Balance between county-led sports programs and community-led sports programs
- More sports facilities to keep pace with growth
- Need mixed-use developments so that people can move between housing types as they age (downsize, maintenance aspects)
- Develop retirement community
- A university or satellite college - to help keep the local young people in community - to be used to attract people to community - to assist in economic development
- City of Cumming to become a "Tree City"
- County to re-establish or preserve its tree canopy
- End clear cutting of trees for all types of development - maintain tree canopy
- More emphasis on improvements to roadway construction
- Improve cell phone reception
- More roads improved to help congestion
- Adding more traffic lights at busy intersections
- Passive park space
- Multi-level party deck on lake
- Develop great job opportunities
- Re-assess burning ban - no open burning
- Land trust orchard behind movies 400
- Land trust Mashburn horse farm on Hwy 9 / Pilgrim Mill
- A better movie theater
- More entertainment venues
- Need placers to "hang out" - casual places - dance halls - hoa-structured - local bands
- Enforce loitering laws - stop kids from drinking and smoking in parking lots

Consensus Ideas

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

- Sidewalks (people-friendly) / bike lanes / busses - create a system / inter-connectivity - Sidewalks from city square out to Tidwell park
- Upscale restaurants / incentives to attract prestigious/upscale businesses / corporate offices
- Cultural activity center of quality move from Atlanta up to our area / Cultural arts center to attract local and other users of facilities / Create environment for artists to visit/stay in community
- A university or satellite college - to help keep the local young people in community - to be used to attract people to community - to assist in economic development

- More places available (ie, amphitheatre, greenway, park areas, things to do)
- Safer roadways / more sophisticated roadways / better planned
- Having a higher standard for appearance - especially the city of Cumming
- Solve for poverty by using local business to engage students - top graduating seniors from high school
- Multiple hubs where community is drawn together

Visionary Ideas

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

- Multiple hubs of planned growth - school / home / work / nature / play
- End clear cutting of trees for all types of development - maintain tree canopy
- Boardwalk

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:

- Lake / Sawnee Mtn / Buford Dam
- Farms / horses and cows / pastures
- Safety and low crime rate
- Family / small town atmosphere
- Personal service in county government
- Community pride
- High quality education

Small Group 2:

- Safety / public services
- Small town feel
- Nature
- Downtown area central
- Family oriented
- Lower taxes
- Progressive education
- Cows / horses
- Lake Clean
- Clean air and water
- Libraries
- History

Small Group 3:

- Pristine natural areas

- Character of various areas in County, like: etowah area, equestrian areas, farm areas, beaver dam
- Small town values with big city atmosphere
- Farming culture
- Steam fusies
- County Fair
- Continue community visioning process forever
- Preserve Lake Lanier - cleanliness, integrity
- Downtown area - city square

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:

- More of a focus on arts and transportation and entertainment
- Transportation
- Sufficient roads (x10)
- Water
- More schools if development is going to continue
- The city and county need to unify more
- Recreation

Small Group 2:

- Overlay to control
- Restrictive covenant
- Odor control (sewer / waste)
- Sidewalks
- Bike paths
- Smart roads
- Performing arts entertainment center
- Outdoor theater
- More outdoor movies
- Weekend community events
- 4-year college
- Proactive / educated law enforcement
- Drug enforcement and eradication
- Adult and continuing education

Small Group 3:

- Proper infrastructure
- Quality planning
- Entertainment
- College - continuing education

- Balanced Demographic in County
- Multi-cultural arts center
- Multi-cultural festivals
- Pervious surfaces
- More diversity
- Mixed developments - Residential / stores
- Job opportunities

What Is Envision 2030?

Envision 2030 is a year-long, citizen-led community planning initiative to envision – and plan for – Cumming-Forsyth County’s development over the next 25 years.

It begins with eight vision meetings in fall 2006 and will continue as a strategic planning process in early 2007. At every stage, citizens will be invited to join Envision 2030 meetings and planning groups – and to critique its reports and work products. Every document will be available on the Envision 2030 web site, www.envision2030.com.

Envision 2030’s final report will be available in June 2007.