



## Meeting 5 Report

The fifth Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Tuesday, October 17 at Liberty Middle School in Cumming. Approximately 65 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. One group said it wanted “character through architectural standards,” including more attractive signage, limited strips malls and better landscaping. Another group said it hoped for more attractive downtown for Cumming with “shopping, entertainment, dining (and a) city walk” also with architectural and landscaping requirements. Yet another group said it simply wanted a “vital, active” downtown – more like the downtowns of the past – with “restaurants, shops, a real destination (and) pedestrian friendly” environment.
- Strong support for **education, including a four-year college** in Forsyth County. One group even coined a term for the college it wanted: a “communiversity,” which means a “community-backed university.” Another group said it wanted an innovative college in Forsyth, one that blended “space with technology, not just boring classrooms.”
- A desire for **more cultural and recreational activities** in Cumming-Forsyth County. One group said it hoped, in the future, Forsyth County would attract a minor-league baseball team and an equestrian facility. Another group said it looked forward to an art museum, a performing-arts hall and a children’s museum – along with facilities for music on Lake Lanier, which it called “Chastain on the Lake,” after the Chastain Amphitheater in Atlanta, where the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra performs in summers. Yet another group said it wanted Cumming-Forsyth County to build or attract so much outdoor recreation that one day it would be known as an “outdoor-activity Mecca.”

- Strong support for **preserving the environment**. As in earlier meetings, groups said they wanted to preserve Forsyth County’s green space and protect Lake Lanier’s water quality and level.

### 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:

- Green Space - Walking Trails, Parks, Bike Trails, Trees
- Development with green space
- Impose impact fees
- Planned growth
- Follow Master Plan
- Government leaders (city & county) should work together
- One government for county and city (save tax money)
- Lake cleaner and fuller
- Take care of what we have
- Plan before we grow
- Keep a sense of community
- Keep tax base reasonable
- Developers should work with the land
- Improve roads - main arteries, traffic signals, state routes made into parkways with limited access, public transportation
- Performing arts - Cultural Arts Center
- Presence of a university system - 4-year college, professional development, "communiversity" - community backed university
- 55 and over communities
- Limit density
- Plan for all age groups and demographics
- Sewer and water
- Planning and zoning: Conference center/performing arts/hotel, character through architectural styles, low profile signing, limit strip malls, landscaping
- Master plan that is hard to change
- Communiversity
- Cultural Arts

#### Small Group 2:

- People walking / bicycling on sidewalks with outdoor eating areas with library and a 4-year college / university with trees / landscaping allowing socialization
- Sign restriction and ban on clear cutting residential property (trees)
- Sawnee Mountain - Barker House become planetarium

- Commercial development would have a green space buffer with major streets / corridors housing traffic outside of 400
- Bus System - huge in Brazilia
- Lake Lanier - green space
- Lake Lanier needs commercial access to boaters, walkers with some type of control; ie convention center with resort shopping (upscale)
- Chat. Corridor - public access with connection to green space
- Zone plan that does not allow for spot zoning
- Known for educational system as model to others
- Create a niche for target industries
- Balance between commercial and residential
- Grow medical and technical training to create a "pill hill" in Forsyth County with assisted living
- Affordable housing for all (ie, teachers and firefighters) to reduce commuting traffic (avoiding high density)
- State highway (DOT) to upgrade roads maintained by state, ie 20, 9, 141, 369, 371, and 400
- Define some low density residential (1/2 lots or more)
- Special low interest loans for targeted groups to bring certain folks into community (prof. / teachers / medical / college)
- Clean and need community with maintained landscape and underground utilities
- Architectural restrictions on commercial designs
- Tourism continue to market parks and recreation and fair and playhouse with southern hospitality
- Minor league baseball team and equestrian facility
- What can we preserve? Brannon House B&B
- Large hotel - nice to house folks
- Fishing tournament and Turkey
- Market and preserve cemetery on national registry - tourism - walking tours of cemetery at night with stories
- Preserve Old Federal Road
- Arts Center with symphony
- Civic Center with Hockey
- Junior Samples Museum filled with Hee Haw stuff

Small Group 3:

- Pedestrian friendly neighborhood
- Dedicated master plan
- Parks and recreation being ahead of the curve
- Single political entity to manage county
- Landscaping
- Strict landscaping requirements for businesses
- Preserving farmland
- Plan for future growth
- Set aside commercial property areas
- Revitalized / renovated downtown
- Parking lots downtown

- Affordable housing is an issue
- Bring MARTA to Forsyth
- Park and rides to MARTA
- Improved roads
- Better planning for industrial / commercial growth
- Safe community
- Enforcement of master plan
- Community design with full conformity
- Vote commissioners by district
- Preserve greenspace / farmland / mountains
- Make elected officials more responsible
- Ideal quality of life
- Planned growth
- Allow only specified amount of land to be developed each year / No development until sewer, water and roads are in place
- Bike path on Tribble Gap Road
- Supply grey water to water residential lawns
- Very high impact fees for developers
- Ensure water supply
- Reservoir for future water needs
- Cultural arts center
- Outdoor events facility / beach/waterpark on the lake / More restaurants / More restaurants on the lake
- "Vickerize" more of Forsyth
- Enforceable sign ordinances
- Population growth cap
- Keep high quality schools

Small Group 4:

- Preserve historic landmarks (ex: Poole's Mill Park)
- Themed development, connected by trails walking/biking (tax incentives for public use) "active open space"
- Maintained school quality - student/teacher ratio less than or equal to approx 20 (ask kids, ask teachers)
- Reasonable average density, depend on use
- Outdoor recreation / playgrounds / lake / x-games / wakeboard tournaments, triathlons / "outdoor activity mecca" / Green space
- More stimulating academic environment - Blend space with technology - not just boring classrooms / college, bio-tech
- Community gardens in convenient locations / Low lease rates for plot of garden space
- Development should be regulated by water availability and other infrastructure
- Safe roads with shoulders / master plan with teeth
- Downtown shopping / entertainment / dining / city walk / architectural, environmental, landscape standards with teeth
- Tyson will leave: what's the plan for the land?
- Bio-tech (good jobs / balanced tax base)

- More "progressive" image - "we're not just chicken plants"
- University research center
- Education / private enterprise partnership
- Cap property tax assessments to prevent exorbitant property tax liability
- City / county / developers / corps of engineers partnership
- Planner / developer partnership - goals must be aligned
- Public private partnerships - require developers to fund infrastructure improvement, impact fees
- Sewer infrastructure
- All stakeholders should participate - no "closed door" secret deals
- Building moratorium until master plan is in place

Small Group 5:

- Better court facilities - don't just build on - facility has room for everything needed in law enforcement and court system
- Downtown vital, active - go "back" to the old downtown - restaurants, shops - a real destination - pedestrian-friendly
- Lake with sailboat, walking trails on shore, full lake, entertainment on lake
- Work, live, play environments around the community - sense of community similar to past times - neighbors know each other b/c development helps this happen (ex: Vickery, Wintergreen in Canton)
- Downtown pedestrian-friendly, things to do, architecturally similar, greenspace on outskirts of town
- 4-year university - brings culture and global perspective - helps education in community
- Downtown - needs better, attractive parking to enhance downtown
- Need a map to help residents understand new roads being built
- Rejuvenation of entire county - put admin buildings together - pedestrian friendly
- Road infrastructure, combined with walkways, bike paths - family-friendly environment preserved
- Development with a plan
- Less strip malls!
- Caption of pic: most fit, active community in the southeast
- Public transportation to downtown within community, around southeast
- Top-notch education - kids should have a great environment to learn in - stay on leading edge of technology in classroom
- Chastain on lake - art museum - children's museum (hands on) - Replace Sawnee Center - something for performing arts
- Expand on demo area at fair - more opportunities for people to see older ways of farming (historic)
- "Unto these Hills" performance at Sawnee Mountain - add an amphitheatre if not already planned
- Preserve history of this area through events, museums, etc. (Brannon Hotel and similar projects)
- Better senior center (ex. Alpharetta) - ball fields, tennis, activities, larger and more facilities
- County purchasing land for greenspace

Small Group 6:

- Moratorium on Res 3 and 4 to allow for public ownership of greenspace - also, will have lesser need for school growth
- More jogging, biking trails
- Increase set-backs of businesses
- Sign ordinance to conform with a country-like atmosphere
- Combine city and county government
- Active retirees having engaging life style - classes - expand senior center
- Protect Lake Lanier's water quality and level
- Public/private partnership to create corporate campus for higher income jobs and contribute to county tax base
- High-end arts center
- In 2030, named the safest county and the cleanest county in the U.S.
- City by-pass
- Quality housing
- Revitalize city to be more family friendly
- Infrastructure in place - stop putting cart in front of horse
- Determine main arteries and put commercial there
- Safe trees vs. clear-cutting
- Determine main arteries and put commercial there
- Save trees vs. clear-cutting - provide incentives
- Office parks resembling Windward parkway with coordinated architecture
- Regional transportation system
- Expanding Lanier Tech to a 4-year school
- Commit ourselves to quality, water conservation
- Business / education partnerships

### **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:

- People that care
- Community participation
- Lake Lanier
- Sense of history
- Sawnee Mountain

#### Small Group 2:

- Lanier golf course
- Terrain / environment
- Clean lake and waterways
- Sawnee Mountain
- Greenspace

- Cemetery
- City fairgrounds / landmarks
- Sense of community (welcoming and concern) with folks who want to volunteer
- Continue civic clubs / non-profits
- School system (quality)
- Safe community (police / fire / ems)
- Medical services

Small Group 3:

- Greenspace
- Farmland
- School system (improve)
- Water resources
- Sawnee Mountain
- Community businesses
- Caring attitude of people
- Poole's Mill
- Historic buildings
- Lanier golf course
- Quality of Lake Lanier
- Streams that feed the lake
- Attractiveness of county
- Low millage rate
- SPLOST
- Fairgrounds
- Diversity
- Affordability of housing

Small Group 4:

- Greenspace / lakes / parks / landscape
- Historic landmarks
- Water quality / quantity
- History prior to the invasion
- Small-town feel
- Volunteerism
- Family values
- Community activism
- Quality schools
- Parks / recreational activities
- Public parks, not private

Small Group 5:

- Small town feel
- No highrise
- Some country roads with tree cover
- Citizen involvement

- Low crime rate (esp. violent) - very unique to our area
- High education rate (helps prevent crime)
- Emphasis on children
- Trees, greenspace
- Churches, faith-based community
- Volunteers in community
- Supporting non-profit organizations - helps with social issues
- Active PTA at the schools
- Preserve locally-owned Dairy Queen
- Clean environment (including lake and air)

Small Group 6:

- Friendly culture
- Fresh air
- Small town atmosphere
- Trees
- Lake Lanier water quality and volume
- Safe environment
- Indian seats at Sawnee Preserve
- Pasture and farmland
- Parks - preserve and grow
- People who care and volunteer to make better
- Quality of schools

**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:

- Town hall meetings
- Utilization of school buildings at night
- Leadership
- Good master plan
- Revitalize downtown area
- Mr. Rodgers community feeling
- Expand on mentoring program - school system, senior citizens

Small Group 2:

- Infrastructure (sewer / water / roads)
- Good working relationship between city / county (single government? / unified - only one)
- Establish 4-year college / university focusing on a unique niche to bring in certain industries
- Create convention center on lake
- County control of federal parks (our parks)

- Need charming atmosphere
- Create a "pill hill" state-of-the-art medical services in Forsyth County
- Centralized public safety complex with jail / courthouse
- Create miracle league field
- Larger senior centers with planned activities
- Create master land use plan
- Synchronized traffic signals
- Museum? (Junior Samples - Hee Haw)

Small Group 3:

- Adequate water supply
- Transportation (mass)
- High end Retail
- Sufficient commercial properties to add to tax base
- Enforceable Master Plan
- Standard Architectural Design
- University level education
- East-West corridor
- Cumming downtown bypass
- Airport
- Lack of political focus on quality of life
- Electronic government

Small Group 4:

- High-tech / environmentally friendly industry
- High-paying jobs
- Master plan
- Architectural / environmental standards
- Vibrant downtown
- More educated population / academic environment
- Connected communities
- Integrated shopping centers - "all in one"
- Alternative transportation (bike / walk) - "commuter oriented" light rail
- Traffic planning (timed lights, speed humps, etc. on install, not retrofit)
- Training centers to integrate legal immigrants
- Chamber outreach to attract industry

Small Group 5:

- Church coalition allowing all churches to work / volunteer together
- Better, more public transportation including local buses (open air) to serve tourists / community
- Better roads
- Reduce smell from rendering plants / Tyson
- Cleaner lake
- Water infrastructure and other utility infrastructure
- Emergency services / fire stations

- Better restrictions on developers regarding fire hazards
- New judicial facilities and jail
- Revitalized downtown
- Community-based placement resources for children needing to live away from their homes / parents (boys home, foster parents)
- Community-based classes for parenting skills
- Architectural guidelines
- Balanced tax digest
- Residential drug treatment, especially for young people in community

Small Group 6:

- A plan that we stick to
- More eclectic community
- Entertainment
- Aesthetics (no visual pollution for example Hwy 9 from the Forsyth County Line and north)
- Vision, commitment and continuity
- Cultural Arts
- Adequate infrastructure
- Connectivity - ex. Bike trails, pedestrian
- Larger community / personal involvement
- Political accountability

**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](http://www.envision2030.com).

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