



Meeting 6 Report

The sixth Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Tuesday, October 24 at North Forsyth Middle School in Cumming. Approximately 105 people attended. In the course of two hours, participants worked in small groups of 10 to 12 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 387 ideas, which are listed later in this report, but some of the most common themes of this meeting seemed to be:

- Strong support for **preserving the environment**, including green space. One group said it wanted “perfect balance: green space (and) development.” Another said it wanted “trees . . . saved within developments.” Yet another said, in thinking about the future, it saw “progressive, futuristic, environmentally minded city and county vision and leadership, including local recycling.”
- A desire for **different kinds of development** in Cumming-Forsyth County. Two of the groups said they wanted a more appealing downtown for Cumming. One saw “shopping (and) entertainment at night in downtown Cumming” in the future. Another said it was a “more quaint downtown Cumming (with a) small-town look” where people could “park and walk around.” Others saw sidewalks and bike paths throughout the county. One group said it wanted a “good zoning plan and stick with it,” while another suggested the county “redo the master plan.”
- There was interest in making Cumming-Forsyth **more distinctive**. One wanted it wanted the county to become “a safe, healthy ‘Mayberry’ place to raise families.” Another group suggested that Cumming undergo a “personality development” to become more distinctive. This group offered, as models of distinctiveness, cities like Charleston, Savannah, Marietta and Roswell.
- There were also ideas about **education and human development** in general. One group said it wanted Forsyth to always be known for its “technologically advanced school

system (with) high test scores and well-performing students.” Another group said it wanted to see school vouchers as a way of supporting schools. Others pointed to human development needs outside of K-12, such as a “YMCA and activities for teenagers” and “affordable adult and special-needs day care.”

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:

- Safe community
- Small community schools
- Accessibility to public transportation in Cumming (city limits)
- Homeless shelter
- Greenspace - planned subdivisions with greenspace, more parks - balanced to area population
- Dedication to history around county
- Roads, water and sewer (adequate)
- Double-decker roads and reverse traffic on 400 at rush hour
- International center for multicultures
- Center for the arts to include university and teen center
- New courthouse
- New jail - multi-level
- MARTA station in Forsyth County
- Special population services - Full service healthcare, Affordable adult and special needs day care, An early intervention facility for special needs (birth - 5 yrs old)
- More shopping - real malls
- 4-year college
- Clean air - keep trees / public transportation
- Waste disposal for Forsyth County and more incentives for recycling
- Teen center in complex with college and arts center
- Affordable single-family homes rather than apartments
- More shopping in downtown Cumming

Small Group 2:

- University system
- Improve school system
- Perfect balance: green space, development
- Performing arts center
- Post office - multiple locations
- Infrastructure - sewer / water / roads
- White collar jobs
- High tech industry
- Improved school transportation system
- Comprehensive growth plan with community input

- Maintain good air quality
- Bike lanes - sidewalks - trail system
- Smaller schools
- Downtown area in Cumming
- Regional airport
- More provision for green spaces
- Diversified job market
- Capacity for social service needs to be met on an ongoing basis
- More services for senior citizens
- Transportation - access roads off 400
- Services for youth
- Regulations related to zoning and housing density
- Lake Lanier - ensure quality, improved safety, public use
- Litter control measures on public areas and roads
- Services increased - police, fire protection
- Architectural controls in place
- More commercial development along GA 400
- More affordable housing and decrease number of mobile homes
- More mixed-use developments
- Safe community
- World class school district
- Full service medical facilities in Forsyth
- Crime control and drug-free community
- Develop charter and magnet schools to develop academic offerings available to students
- Crises intervention teams to serve community
- Minor league sports teams
- Concert venues
- Shopping, entertainment at night in downtown Cumming - expansion of park and recreation services - livability (jobs, housing, recreation) - establish land bank for recreation / greenspace
- Tax exemptions for families to keep land
- Alternate sources of energy available
- Alternative roads to GA 400
- County-wide beautification plan and community support
- "Lexus lane" - paid traffic lanes
- Limit truck traffic to certain hours
- Improved hospitality facilities - more and better quality
- Beautification of roads to improve scenery and slow traffic
- Get rid of billboards on 400 - limit billboards
- Preservation of local history - museums, nature centers
- Politicians who listen to public feedback
- Adequate water to limit restrictions on use
- Private business and government partnerships to improve services and quality of life
- Collaboration between school system, parks, libraries and museums to improve quality of life
- Sharing of facilities - public schools - examples: stadiums, swimming facilities

Small Group 3:

- Bike paths on the side of roads
- Cultural arts center - one is needed to complete the community
- County wide community center available to be seated
- Make 20 by-pass the city of cumming - all state highways should be at least 4 lanes
- Make sure our parks keep up with growth of county
- Community pool
- Good businesses that don't pollute and contribute to the community - life and work in the county
- A citizen review board with even the power to veto commission decisions
- More turning lanes for busy roads and subdivisions
- Continued variety of quality developments
- County is not entirely dependent on Lake Lanier for water - cooperation between city and county - county has its own reservoir to supply water
- Each district should have its own county commissioner elected by the people of that district
- Greenway extended to Sawnee Mountain - More rights for those who own property, especially large tracts of land who have owned it for a long time
- Innovative solutions to greenspace issues that don't place the burden on property owners
- Trees are saved within developments
- Schools are safe and not overcrowded - excellent system including teachers, administrators and students
- Technologically advanced school system - high test scores and well-performing students
- Public safety (fire, sheriff, police) are well-funded, supported and encouraged
- Plenty of sidewalks for children to walk and play
- No chicken plant in the county in 2030
- Re-visit the exemption of school tax for 65 and older
- Good assisted living facilities for senior citizens
- Well-planned and well-designed commercial areas
- Impact fees on subdivisions help to pay for schools
- Public-private partnership to encourage company headquarters to relocate to county
- Pedestrian plaza downtown where no cars are allowed
- Clean water in Lake Lanier
- "Water Wars" are resolved between FL, AL and GA
- Small regional airport in the area (Dawson County)
- New county jail and courthouse off the square in downtown

Small Group 4:

- Schools, churches that develop value systems
- School Vouchers
- Up SPLOST and do away with property taxes
- No transit systems - will bring more crimes
- English to be the official language of Forsyth County
- Better operations of Lake Lanier - Change managers of the lake to private sectors
- Encourage/recruit a lot more industrial and commercial building in the north end of the county along ga 400, but have green space between it and 400
- Better upkeep of Forsyth County - medians, roads, landscape, etc.

- Control of housing density
- More control over property prices
- Re-do the master plan
- Need HOV lanes

Small Group 5:

- Connectedness of areas in community, ie Peachtree city (golf carts, bikes)
- Compensate landowners for keeping land greenspace
- Higher density homes can be nice with the connections in place
- Must plan golf paths and walkways from the beginning
- Could use meeting center - civic center like Gwinnett
- Cohesive planning is needed between city, county, etc.
- Citizen involvement - knowledge of what goes on in county and city planning
- Continue the great public school system - why a lot of people move here
- Generate interest in working in forsyth - like the interest in working in our schools
- City and county must come together and work together
- Prepare accordingly for water , utilities
- Trees and landscaping in medians. Tree-lined sidewalks and paths
- Sawnee Mountain still looks like it does now
- Well-planned business parks and retail, restaurants, etc - unity, consistency
- Downtown area is planned, consistent - pedestrian-friendly - pleasing to the eye
- Tax people who use Forsyth services and work here but don't live here
- A mass transit system down the center of 400
- Preserve wooded greenspace and compensate land owner
- A trail following Big creek from Forsyth to Alpharetta
- A safe, healthy "Mayberry" place to raise families

Small Group 6:

- Take advantage of lake, Sawnee Mountain
- Take down billboards - more like Peachtree City
- Personality development of City of Cumming (Charleston, Roswell, Marietta, Savannah, etc.)
- Take advantage of terrain - e.g., bikers, bike lanes, trails
- Take advantage of existing parks
- Comprehensive plan for healthy lifestyle (hospital, parks, bikes)
- Attract foremost health care
- Enhance communication, promote county
- Transit - Become partners with regional transit - rail to Dahlonega, local trolleys (bus), bike paths, tree lined roads
- University presence
- Enhance cultural activities - Sawnee Center, playhouse, outdoor concerts in the park
- Safe teen-oriented events, places, activities - music, friends, leisure park, lake
- Control / moderate growth, strict ruling re expansion, infrastructure must support growth
- Enhance balance of commercial / residential - explore impact fees
- Lowest real estate tax in metro Atlanta due to increased digest / growth - must bring in business taxes to hold residential tax - e.g. Satellite blvd in Gwinnett
- Commission should not have conflict of interests with development

- Affordable housing, good schools, infrastructure (roads, transit, water, sewer, waste management, recycling)
- Attract high tech, progressive industry
- Alternative fuels
- Progressive, futuristic, environmentally minded city and county vision and leadership, including local recycling
- Solid waste plan implementation / funding
- Keep tree canopy / ordinance strong - preserve greenspace
- More mixed-use development like Vickery
- Enhance all FC communities - Coal Mountain, Johns Creek, Chestatee

Small Group 7:

- Commissioners elected from own districts
- County-wide sewer system
- Transportation hub with small municipal airport
- Some kind of transit to relieve 400 traffic (bypass for truck traffic)
- Commercial development on lake
- No more subdivisions (or at least consider traffic problems before building)
- Why not build our schools up? (more stories)
- More affordable apartment housing
- Need more retirement communities - also- affordable, safe, one-story, has all amenities so they don't have to drive - ex: communities with doctors, grocery, pharmacy, activities (golf, etc), gated and secure
- Sheriff department expansion - jails, county complex, etc.
- Good zoning plan and stick with it
- Happy medium between acreage and house size
- Need mechanism that will take these ideas and make them happen
- Need individual county water system
- Review tax exemptions (ie - 65 or older not paying school tax, etc.)
- Moratorium on residential building -or- expanding lot sizes
- Need more greenspace
- Better maintenance on parks in county
- More quaint downtown Cumming - small town look (park and walk around)
- Self-contained planned communities

Small Group 8:

- Deviate traffic away from center of town
- Welcome / multicultural center for the county of forsyth
- Local transportation (maybe electrical)
- A university
- More recreation facilities - provide programs / classes in spanish for accessibility to parks and recreation
- Better / more rental living conditions
- Provide a spanish section in Forsyth County News with school / community activities
- Education center for adults - English and spanish and other languages + technology
- Set aside a day for an international celebration

- Wider streets / more green areas
- Preventative programs against violence and discrimination
- Cumming and Forsyth merge as one
- Beautify Cumming, making it less industrial
- Bicycle path all around Forsyth (leveled + travels through nature - 20 miles long)
- More land with each house built - less crowding
- No dumping in Lake Lanier
- More businesses / non-profit agencies to take high school interns to help reduce high school drop out rates
- More cultural entertainment / amphitheatre
- Less billboards
- Need YMCA and activities for teenagers
- Library in north end of the county
- Hospital and health clinics on the north side

Small Group 9:

- Easy access from community to highway
- Parks and squares - easily accessible benches, trees, water falls
- Sawnee preserve enhancement
- Clean lake H2O
- Recycle more - mandatory
- Good jobs available in the county
- Law enforcement for offenders
- No road rage - create a positive environment
- Emergency response is rapid
- Low property taxes
- Good education system
- College - higher degrees
- Access to good healthcare
- More retail centers like the Aves
- Pro football team
- More county park and rec programs and facilities (like Ctrl. Park)
- Aquatic center
- Maternity ward
- More self-contained community
- More sidewalks and bike paths (to also accommodate golf carts)
- Hiking trails
- Plenty of trees - Sawnee Mountain preserved, pooles creek, river edges
- More sewers - less septic (not necessarily more density)
- Clear and abundant water available (gardening, drinking, etc.)
- Better water recycling
- All the lake parks kept open (trees, camping, fishing, horseshoes, hiking)
- Impact fees to fund infrastructure (greenspace, parks, schools)
- Litter-free roads and roadsides
- Downtown Cumming - architectural conformance, small mom and pop shops, walkable, town square look

- Botanical garden - learning, labeled specimens
- Big Creek Greenway completed to F.C.
- Cultural Center - Art museum
- Spiritual focused community - churches, places of worship, labyrinths
- Small airport - commuter planes to Hartsfield
- Commuter rail line - above ground (to Atl / Chattanooga) commuter hub

Small Group 10:

- Retain country charm
- Lots of greenspace
- Retain wildlife via land purchases
- Correct traffic issues - wider roads: 20, 14, 9, 369
- Meet the needs of aging population, esp with outdoor activities, sidewalks
- Cultural center
- Get away from "bedroom community" and make it a place to live, work, play...
- Water issues
- Pedestrian friendly downtown
- Bypass
- Higher education
- Activities for student population
- Hockey team, recreation, youth sports
- Affordable housing
- Planned growth
- Outdoor trails, parks
- Don't overdevelop lake with too much retail
- More integration of nationalities / diverse
- Job development - light industry
- State of the art schools
- More retail / mall
- Airport - northern regional
- Infrastructure support density areas / gas / sewer / law enforcement to keep taxes at current level (no cuts) and support infrastructure
- Blanket broadband
- Thoughtful development of Sawnee Mountain for recreation - keep paved parking lots / tree cutting minimum
- Mass transportation - Marta like, hovercraft
- Live / work areas: housing / office / retail / schools
- Protection / support of small businesses / do not allow county to be partial to big retailers
- Reduce emissions of poultry plants - will likely happen??
- Better housing / job opportunities for lower income population
- Services and education opportunities for non-english speaking residents
- Continuing education for retirees
- Meet religious need of diverse population
- Increase tax collection by close scrutiny of property evaluations

- Develop stretch of castleberry and veterans memorial to 400
- Continue enlarging libraries and senior center

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:

- School system
- Sense of community
- Churches / morality
- Friendly
- Heritage
- Clean air
- Our landscape
- Safety
- Healthcare system
- United Way services
- Low taxes

Small Group 2:

- Sawnee Mountain
- Poole's Mill
- Air quality
- Low density housing
- Downtown Cumming
- Moral fiber
- Steam tractor parade - 4th
- Farmland
- Heritage / rural roots
- Maintaining social service agencies
- Historical buildings and landmarks
- Central park and other parks
- Scenery

Small Group 3:

- Sawnee Mountain
- Safety
- Lake Lanier at full level
- School system
- Farms
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Churches

- Sense of community
- Downtown Cumming
- Affordable housing
- History of Forsyth County
- Historical buildings and cemeteries

Small Group 4:

- Historical buildings
- Greenspace and trees
- Lake Lanier
- Streams, creeks, and rivers

Small Group 5:

- Old historic buildings
- Our school system
- Sawnee Mountain
- Sense of history - community
- Big old trees, waterways
- General quality of life

Small Group 6:

- Sawnee Mountain from development
- Tree canopy
- Landfill
- Farmland
- Greenspace
- Safety
- Small town feel
- Sense of community
- Lake Lanier
- Good school system
- Religious community
- Historic buildings / places
- Native American history

Small Group 7:

- Greenspace
- Lake Lanier
- Sawnee Mountain
- Small town feel
- School system quality (student/teacher ratio)
- Medical facilities
- Poole's Mill
- Farms
- Historical structures

Small Group 8:

- Land
- Lake
- The fair
- Natural resources
- Safety in schools
- Present state of the trees' canopy
- Continue this type of meeting / brainstorming
- Schools to continue the high standard on education
- Small community "feeling"

Small Group 9:

- Sawnee Mountain
- Tree canopy
- Schools - best education
- Giving, caring community (generous with time, talents, money)
- Clubs, fair
- Rural roads
- Great healthcare - Northside Forsyth with maternity
- Great parks - recreational - i.e. Central

Small Group 10:

- Trees / greenspace / land
- High quality of schools
- Historic buildings
- Mountain / lake
- Quality of life

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:

- Community education re: heritage for newcomers
- More comprehensive health care system
- Master plan that focuses on small community development with multi-use

Small Group 2:

- Maintain values that are here
- Blend north and south forsyth into one community
- Schools - continue to provide quality facilities, improve educational opportunities for the future students
- Maintain water quality and air quality
- Land use plan for maintaining quality of growth

- Process and services to welcome and assimilate newcomers

Small Group 3:

- Cultural Center
- Top-notch medical center (maternity, heart surgery, etc.)
- Senior citizen housing and assisted living facilities
- Sufficient roads and infrastructure
- Sufficient water supply
- Full lake
- Family values and discipline
- Public transportation
- Business - live and work in county
- Bike trails and sidewalks
- Viable downtown

Small Group 4:

- Community centers
- Increase water supply
- Water treatment
- Justice center

Small Group 5:

- Visionary leadership
- Civic center
- Cooperation between all entities and levels
- Fiscal commitment to our vision
- Mass transit
- Infrastructure to support rapid growth - roads, utilities, etc
- Support for public safety - police, fire

Small Group 6:

- Multicultural growth
- Multicultural understanding
- Workforce preparedness
- Technical / career prep opportunities
- Communication between governments and public
- Infrastructure
- 400 alternatives

Small Group 7:

- Election procedures for county officials
- Infrastructure
- Follow through of plan
- Professional level of county staff
- More emphasis on keeping / planning of quaint downtown feel - instead of wiping it out
- Community plan assimilation of other cultures

- Maintaining of current park system (individuality of each separate park)

Small Group 8:

- Fine arts theater - convention center
- Closer collaboration between city and county government
- Community centers
- Promote cultural diversity
- Transportation
- Bike Paths

Small Group 9:

- More people with higher education
- Infrastructure with sewer
- Density plus some greenspace
- More synergy and cohesiveness with county and city elected officials
- Diversify our tax base - commercial and residential
- More jobs available
- Common cause

Small Group 10:

- Values
- Physical assets
- Skills
- Planned growth - we lack a plan with teeth for zoning / remove politics
- Roads / infrastructure
- Provide higher education institution and job training

Reasons for Hope

Participants were also asked to provide a reason to hope for the future. Here are the group answers:

Small Group 1: We're one community all pulling together with respect for each other to empower future generations

Small Group 2: Generous, caring community

Small Group 3: The people that are concerned and care about the future of our county. They also have the resources and desire to get things done

Small Group 4: People care (that's why we are here tonight)

Small Group 5: We have hope and faith in our youth

Small Group 6: Sense of community, prosperity/growth, Best schools in the world, good people, doesn't get any better than Forsyth, Chamber - great forethought and vision (should replace the commission and city council), Great interest of citizens in making better community

Small Group 7: Community involvement in this process - young families - want kids and grandkids to be happy here - strong support of school system

Small Group 8: Having meetings such as this - schools / educators involvement in community matters / activism

Small Group 9: Kids/students, a great place to raise a family, great role models, good community involvement, people care, general environment

Small Group 10: The past has progressed very positively. We hope and believe the local, committed folks will help to maintain the values and attributes Forsyth County has

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.