



Meeting 7 Report

The seventh Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Thursday, Nov. 2, 2006 at Cumming First United Methodist Church. Approximately 120 people attended. In the course of two hours, participants worked in small groups of eight 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 418 ideas, which are listed later in this report, but some of the most common themes of this meeting seemed to be:

- A strong interest in **developing the cultural, educational and recreational assets** of Cumming-Forsyth County. Nearly every small group mentioned a desire for new facilities, from a “performing/visual arts/cultural center” and a “planetarium on Sawnee Mountain” to an “amphitheater/convention center/special events facility” and a “minor league pro baseball sports franchise.”
- A desire for **different kinds of development** in Cumming-Forsyth County. As earlier groups of citizens had, those at this meeting showed strong support for revitalizing downtown Cumming and making it, as one group said, “more pedestrian oriented (with) small shops.” They also saw a need for “roads with sidewalks and trees” and “better planning (with) more uniform zoning with common architecture.” Two small groups mentioned the need for public transit and other forms of “alternative transportation.”
- Strong support for **environmental protection and green space preservation**. There was interest in preserving Cumming-Forsyth’s trees, but also in protecting Lake Lanier. One group had a simple instruction: “Water – solve the issues.”
- Strong support for maintaining Cumming-Forsyth’s **high-quality public schools and bringing in a four-year college or university**. Forsyth’s schools, one group said, should be considered “a showcase for the nation,” featuring advanced technology. But two groups had complaints. One said it wanted “better schools – without junk foods.”

Another said it wanted fewer trailers. As in previous meetings, there was support for creating or attracting a four-year college in Cumming-Forsyth County.

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:

- Better planning - preserve farms - less commercial - more mixed-use zoning
- Better schools - without junk foods
- Performing, visual arts / cultural center
- Strong tree ordinance - more street lights
- Green space / tree ordinance
- Infrastructure ahead of development
- Senior-friendly county
- Planned / controlled growth - business-friendly community
- Balanced tax base
- Hospital
- B issue for green space - parks - park/rec facilities
- Interconnecting, multi-use trails
- County leasing more parks
- Parks, library system is great

Small Group 2:

- Street lights in subdivisions
- Consistency in county government
- Preserving more greenspace - land trust foundation
- Planning / preserving proper rights of way for traffic
- Water conservation
- More schools, less trailers
- Amphitheatre / convention center / special events / events facility
- Airport
- Cargo airport - businesses
- Bring 4-year school to the county
- Mass transit / regional relationship
- Connectivity from I-75 to I-85
- Revitalization of the city of cumming: more friendly for visiting, in-town housing
- Police to support growth: additional jail space, public safety building
- Medical personnel
- More affordable housing
- Affordable living accommodations for senior citizens
- Same for persons with disabilities
- Consider energy resources with the extra growth
- More planned living communities (i.e. Vickery): mixed-use and more density

- Place to rent sailboats
- Taxi service on lake - water taxi
- AAA Baseball team
- Alligator farm (animal control)

Small Group 3:

- Children - little league world series
- Lots of trees / greenspace with design theme
- Performing arts center
- Encourage use of school bus with supervision
- Lower density of residential sites
- Higher residential density along major transportation routes
- Public transit
- Rebuild downtown cumming
- Balanced development / growth plan
- Focus on infrastructure to support growth
- Focus on pro-active transportation planning
- 4-year university
- Attract higher paid job
- Emphasize value of Lake Lanier
- Destination for health care facilities

Small Group 4:

- Culture downtown - outdoor market / artist retail / demo
- Cultural arts center - destination downtown
- Office space - visual
- Loft space - performance (amateur / professional)
- Alternative transportation
- Connectivity - sidewalks, greenspace, bike paths
- Parks and outdoor venues
- Education - magnet school, program expansion, university
- Continuing education - expansion of Lanier Tech
- Continued great schools and facilities - integration of cultures
- Diversity outreach
- Expansion of medical facilities / medical school
- Minor league pro baseball sport franchise
- Amateur sports
- Competition youth sports - facilities for organized sports
- Daily local newspaper / expanded coverage
- Clean lake - convention center / boardwalk facility / shopping, arts, entertainment for the kids / interactive nature facility
- Criminal justice center
- Term limitations / no term limitation
- Airport - regional / southwest hub
- Mall of America facility
- Youth center - teen development - multiple teen centers

- Continued focus on safety - fire, law enforcement
- Business development - work/live/play, avoid commute, significant corporate campuses / community investment

Small Group 5:

- Arrive to heliport from Atlanta
- Perimeter around city
- Link parks and Sawnee mountain via trails / greenway
- Mass transit
- Balanced business incentives to encourage balanced tax base
- High-density locations to support mass transit
- We need to be a destination (arts, events)
- Cultural arts
- Great schools (multi-story)
- Protected green space
- Sustainable design for business (partner with USGBC)
- College: continuing education for seniors
- Public radio station for North GA
- Expand technical college programs - combine with tourism industry
- Welcome center - exit 15 - helps us to be a destination
- Community center for family to find services / programs
- Reclaimed water facility
- Walkable shopping areas
- Improved one-way traffic system in town
- Bicycle / jogging lanes - makes us a functional urban area
- Providing interconnectivity between subdivisions / shopping / parks / recreation - similar to small European hamlets within city
- Planetarium on Sawnee Mountain - with chair lift - helps make us a destination
- Hotels
- A place for events, socials, dinners - helps night life
- Piano bar

Small Group 6:

- Recreation - passive - nature - more than ball fields - Sawnee mountain - Lake Lanier
- Great schools without trailers - high school build as high school / vocational high school
- Aquatic centers
- Roads with sidewalks and trees - master planning - overlay - preservation of green space - good transportation - better planned roadways
- Underground utilities
- Better facilities for seniors - CCRC - Seniors next to schools / youth
- Revitalized downtown - more than 8 hour
- Better sense of community - better planning - more uniform zoning with common architecture - balanced tax base
- A presence in all arts, cultural, performing
- A community that embraces cultural diversity
- A world-class destination on lake lanier

- More healthcare facilities
- A civic center for meetings, etc - a cultural arts center
- Preservation of green space and preservation of landmarks
- Hotels
- Multi-cultural center
- Convention and visitors bureau
- High-end retail, shopping and restaurant
- Safe places for teens - recreation
- University campus
- Elections to local government by district
- Affordable housing
- Community / cultural / civic center in downtown cumming along with revitalization of downtown

Small Group 7:

- Park system connected by bike / hike / skate trails
- Tree preservation - designate county tree and promote planting (ie Sugar Maple)
- Sidewalks promote walking
- Nature center
- Schools - the best - personnel tools
- Infrastructure
- Tax incentives to encourage green space and farming
- Promote sensible, aesthetically pleasing, walking-oriented commercial, office, industrial development to keep tax base low
- Attract civic-minded, clean large and small business
- Improve traffic flow - ie City of Cumming
- City of cumming more pedestrian oriented - small shops
- Civic center needed - convention center
- City club - like 1818 club in Gwinnett
- Keep government open and accountable
- Public safety - keep it the best - pay them to keep and attract the best
- East-West transportation - improve ga hwy 20
- Drug task force - stay aggressive

Small Group 8:

- Vickery
- Sense of community
- Trees, clear streams
- Keep schools, technology - schools to be a showcase for the nation
- Showcase for Lake Lanier
- Water - solve the issues
- Higher education play a more important
- Public transportation - MARTA - county bus service
- More programs for disabled - parks and recreation
- Medical facilities - women's center
- Tech triangle

- Cultural arts
- Community meeting areas
- Road improvements
- Rural lifestyle
- Preserve Sawnee mountain
- County free of drugs - more funds for social services
- Social services campus
- More cooperation between all agencies and BOC and City, state
- Cumming to be a live-work-play destination
- New justice center and jail
- More greenspace
- Impact fees for schools

Small Group 9:

- Quality of schools
- Safe place to live
- Balance of nature vs. business progress
- Quality of parks and recreation
- More, smaller neighborhood parks, nicer streetscapes
- Clean, well-kept
- Science center, cultural center, civic center, arts center, college, private arts council (control and funding) all possibly in campus type environment
- Well-designed plan (community) with good infrastructure possible mass transit to help with congestion
- Recognized center for cultural exchange
- Child-oriented
- Live, work and play - livable centers tied together with trolleys and transit
- Great medical care
- High quality businesses
- Revised downtown area - better architecture - more aesthetically pleasing
- Preserve small town values and historic buildings
- Highlight our spirit of volunteerism
- Awesome recreation / tourism opportunities connected together through trails

Small Group 10:

- Multicultural children
- Schools
- Wide roads
- Recreational clubs
- University
- Walkways for people to walk
- A picture of a factory
- A picture from up above to see the construction that has taken place over the last 30 years
- A picture of downtown cumming with walkway around it
- We have diversity
- The growth of cumming, but it preserves their values and traditions of a small town

- That we will have the best university
- A clean town
- Respect for nature
- We would like to see a closeness between cultures
- A safe town
- That we will keep our forest intact
- That we will have cultural centers: workshops, cultural activities (dances), theater, higher education, recreational areas, information, cultural education
- Respect for immigrants and live in a peaceful environment
- That we will have center for day light workers
- More activities for elderly people - active activities - walks, entertainment
- Affordable clinics
- We will have more information in other languages about what cumming has to offer
- For community to involve other cultures in community programs - Cumming fair (cultural events), YMCA (info in other languages), job fair, chamber of commerce, Forsyth County newspaper (articles in other languages)
- Housing - affordable, better maintenance in rental homes

Small Group 11:

- Preservation of trees - buffer of trees - Sawnee Mountain
- Less traffic
- Public transportation
- Bypass for all trucks
- Encourage people to come downtown - renovation of downtown
- Cultural arts center - change tyson to arts center - need community center for groups to meet in, replace Sawnee center
- No trailers at schools
- More commercial growth, light industry, blue grass parkway, windward
- Designated industrial campus
- Controlled growth
- Nature friendly developments - no mass clearing
- Welcome center
- Expanded hospital campus
- Senior housing - majority of population over 65
- Commissioners, please pay attention
- Well defined ordinances that will be enforced
- Maintenance of buffers between developments - establish buffers of trees
- A community that uses water wisely - recycle water
- Still got rolling land
- Unified government facility - court house, jail, other departments in central location - preserve county courthouse
- Instead of more landfills, use incinerators
- No more huge marina developments on lake
- Litter free community

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:

- Cumming's small town atmosphere
- Green space - parks, trails
- School excellence
- Low tax rate
- Preserve / enhance drinking water
- Prosperous economic / social lifestyle
- English language
- Quality law enforcement / low crime rate
- Upscale hotel

Small Group 2:

- Mountain and lake lanier / Chattahoochee River (land and water)
- Historical landmarks in the county
- Country / rural feel and culture of the county

Small Group 3:

- Outstanding health care facilities
- Average travel time
- School system
- Home town feel / hospitality
- Lake Lanier / Sawnee Mountain
- History
- Public safety

Small Group 4:

- Low taxes
- Green space
- Great public education
- Lake / water supply
- Safe community
- Sense of community / involved citizens
- Property values
- Freedom to choose / opportunity / monitor regulations
- Park facilities capacity
- Healthcare
- Churches

Small Group 5:

- Fairgrounds
- Friendly people

- Natural history
- Safety
- City
- Historic buildings
- Town events - parades
- Quality of life

Small Group 6:

- Preserve the environment for small business
- Community spirit - county / city fair - taste of forsyth - volunteer spirit
- Quality of lake lanier
- Our rural heritage
- Greenspace / sawnee mountain
- Family values / sense of faith
- Sense of security
- Quality of our schools - continue to improve alternative schools - forsyth academy
- Library system
- Quality of our park / recreation system
- The city - what is left of the old
- Programs for seniors
- Community outreach
- Low taxes

Small Group 7:

- Green space
- Great schools
- Public input and allow community involvement
- Low crime rate

Small Group 8:

- Schools
- Lake Lanier
- Sawnee Mountain
- Low taxes
- Rural lifestyle
- Sense of community
- Green space
- Water supply

Small Group 9:

- Lake
- Quality schools
- Green space - trees (small neighborhood parks)
- Safe place to live
- Northside
- Small town attitude and values

- Sawnee mountain preserve
- Fair grounds
- Strong community involvement
- Churches
- Parks and recreation
- Low taxes

Small Group 10:

- Trees / flowers
- Lake
- Security / safety
- Participation of the hispanic groups in activities like this
- Quality of schools
- Cumming fair / rodeos
- English classes within the community
- The transition services office
- Employment

Small Group 11:

- Trees, trees, trees
- Sawnee Mountain
- Water - clean lake lanier
- Rolling land / open space
- Beauty of natural land
- Court house, historical buildings
- High quality school system
- Maintain safe law-abiding community
- Good air quality

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:

- General obligation bond issue to fund parks, green space, amenities, etc.
- Far-sighted drinking water policy
- Long-range transportation plan that includes interconnectivity
- Economic development planning
- Planned higher density areas for affordable housing

Small Group 2:

- Bike paths / nature teaching centers
- Agricultural center / zoo
- More business so people can live and work in county and play

- Theme park

Small Group 3:

- Historical center
- Cultural arts center
- Regional airport
- More resource for commercial / industrial recruitment
- Major hotel
- More parking
- Public golf course on lake
- Involved / informed public

Small Group 4:

- Opportunities for future generations to grow roots
- Place our hidden desire to return
- Synergy between government leadership
- Supportive state government - partnerships with legislature
- Expanded infrastructure - roads, water, sewer, etc.
- Desire for major corporate location - incentives
- Integrated land use / transportation plan
- Executive suite rest stops
- Better balanced growth - residential / commercial

Small Group 5:

- Sustainable infrastructure
- Widen roads where needed
- Citizen advisory panels - aggressive and progressive
- Tax base (commercial)
- Elect officials by district rather than at large - we need representation based on the individual districts
- Ombudsman for county
- More centralized communities
- Take advantage of single city / county relationship

Small Group 6:

- Better communication between north and south forsyth
- To repair our divisive local government - election by district
- Infrastructure - roads, water, sewer
- Cultural / civic / performing arts center to define an identity
- Culture and visitors bureau
- To develop better ways to grow "community" and families
- Better technology
- Better master plan
- World class facility on lake lanier
- To get rid of billboards

Small Group 7:

- Road improvement (esp east-west)
- Revitalize downtown cumming
- Smart growth: affordable housing for school and public safety folks; promote business development in the county - helps traffic

Small Group 8:

- Cultural arts
- Life-work-play areas
- More infrastructure
- By-pass around downtown
- More commercial development
- 4-year university
- Full medical services - heart, women's
- Reliable water source
- Social service complex
- Justice center and jail

Small Group 9:

- Livable centers - live, work and play
- Maternity center
- Alternative transit
- Affordable housing
- Additional industry with higher and better paying jobs
- Higher education - college - 4 year campus
- Privately controlled arts council
- Arts center
- Science center
- Cultural center
- Civic center
- More parks (small and large) - connected
- Way to fund all of this
- Revitalize downtown cumming

Small Group 10:

- Transportation
- Recreational areas
- Multicultural center
- Sidewalks all around the city
- University
- "Up in Cumming" in other languages (spanish)
- More information in forsyth county news in spanish
- Translators in community agencies / hospitals
- Sheltered centers
- Better salaries
- More roads away from downtown cumming (deviate traffic)
- Take care of our forests

- Social services - health centers
- A volunteer program to involve the hispanic community
- University scholarships

Small Group 11:

- Greenspace and bike trails
- Jail and courthouse
- Community center
- Truck bypass
- Road system - environmentally attractive and user friendly
- More competent commissioners
- Senior housing - affordable
- Viable downtown with arts center
- Incinerator instead of landfill
- Affordable housing for young families
- Welcome center

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.