



## Meeting 8 Report

The eighth Envision 2030 vision meeting was held Thursday, Nov. 2, 2006 at Chestatee Elementary School. Approximately 103 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 353 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, including stricter development standards, greater efforts to preserve Forsyth's remaining farmland and what one group called "thoughtful, responsible growth."
- An interest in **transportation improvements**. One group pointed out that there is a "need (for) additional traffic lights over the entire county," while another said Forsyth should have "community transportation," which might include "senior bus(es), (a) disabled person's bus service (and) public-private partnerships" for other kinds of transportation.
- A desire for a **four-year college or university**. One group said, in looking toward the year 2030, it wanted educational opportunities from "grade K through four-year college."
- An interest in greater cultural and recreational assets. One small group said it wanted an "arts center with all arts included: ballet, theater, handicrafts." Another wanted "recreational parks: sporting fields, enough fields." Yet another group saw the need for "family-oriented entertainment activities" of all kinds.

### Meeting Process

Participants were welcomed by Carter Barrett, 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:

- More active community
- Small corner parks
- Maintain rural areas
- Protect farming communities (Bucks County model) - tax breaks for farms
- Safe place to live
- Cutting edge technology - schools
- New jail
- Wireless technology county-wide
- Managed growth - have a plan
- Affordable housing
- Village square
- Great place for retirees, with services such as transportation, shopping
- Attract tourism through an interactive experience focusing on our agricultural community - farms, wildlife
- Streetscaping - dogwoods - signature native plant
- Bike lanes and sidewalks mandatory
- Strong water system
- Infrastructure - outer perimeter
- Tree city
- Sign ordinance - ban billboards
- Zero growth policy on strip mass until all existing structures - malls filled
- Façade standards - support the identity "branding"
- Enforce our ordinances - signs, trees

#### Small Group 2:

- Thoughtful / responsible growth
- Good working relationship between city/county governments
- Develop better utility infrastructure
- Protecting green space - amend master plan
- Lake at full pool
- Visionary school system planning for growth
- Active senior / adult community with services
- Parks and recreation with adequate facilities for all ages
- Visionary plan for roads and traffic flow
- Connectivity (golf cart paths, sidewalks, etc.)
- Common language - English as official language
- Balanced budgets
- Alternate funding mechanism for city / county school (besides property tax)
- Must have "big picture" for the betterment of the entire county
- Adequate health care from pre-natal to geriatrics
- Four-year university

Small Group 3:

- Greater healthcare system - more specialized physicians: cancer, eyes, surgery - expansion of hospitals - specialized treatment
- Less modular classrooms, better estimation of school needs
- Control growth
- Preserve greenspace and community
- Better balance of tax digest - housing vs. commercial vs. industrial
- Focus on life-work-play in the county
- Learn from the development in the south of the county to understand what worked well and what didn't - use as tools for planning
- Commitment to the family - parks, recreation centers - things that will foster a sense of community
- Family oriented entertainment activities
- Bowling / skating - family oriented
- Ice rink - family oriented activities
- Swimming facilities - pools in schools - olympic size pool - ymca/ywca - swimming activities for all ages
- More of a variety of kids activities
- More traffic lights/lanes added - roads widened / more roads to relieve congestion on existing roads
- Drivers education
- Perimeter road
- Selected corridors for different categories of development - commercial / industrial / housing
- Bury the utilities
- Rapid transit system - run by private company
- More park and ride lots for public transit use
- Greater car pooling
- Dedicated bus lanes on 400
- Create an incentive program to foster more use of public transit
- Greater sewer system coverage throughout county
- Require development to put in sewer infrastructure
- Greater control over the uncontrolled intersections on 400

Small Group 4:

- Education / retention healthcare personnel
- Continued development of medical infrastructure - increasing demand
- Road infrastructure - avert bad traffic
- Ride-share development
- Police, schools, teachers, fire department - (family values)
- Sidewalks for new subdivisions
- Cultural / performance arts / civic auditorium
- Consistency / standards for commercial building
- Effective zoning
- Underground utilities - remove existing cell towers as technology allows
- Billboard standards

- Protect trees - natural environment
- Better judicial and detention facilities
- Drug / alcohol treatment for kids in Forsyth
- Sawnee Mountain as focal attraction, developed appropriately
- Pioneer development / expansion of personal aircraft
- Preserve Lake Lanier - sufficient water levels - drinking water, etc.
- Maintain historic elements
- Revitalize downtown, but maintain quaint feel
- Continued development of local hubs - with housing / business as group
- Insure high air quality
- Sufficient water supply
- Adequate green space
- More parks, community activities for kids to be proud of
- Retirement and assisted living communities - similar to the one in Roswell off Old Alabama
- Local activities for teens - food, music, supervision, sports
- YMCA expansion
- Need to attract hospitality industry and large employers that don't create pollution, waste
- Create tourist attractions
- Make sure necessary infrastructure in place prior to implementing above improvements

Small Group 5:

- Smooth traffic flow
- Plan far ahead
- Community schools closer together: elementary, middle, high school closer together - smaller schools
- Upgrade medical facilities as we grow
- Recreational facilities, pools
- More green space - cluster housing with designated protected land
- Make sure agricultural / conservation exemptions are honored
- Agritourism
- Great schools
- Grocery store, community centers, parks, senior centers - hubs
- Spirit of small communities - restaurant, dry cleaners, grocery, re-establish community
- Bike path / parks / walking trails
- Peachtree City
- Water supply - clean / safe, readily available
- Crime - well qualified, well paid law enforcement, precincts in communities
- City of Cumming - City hall / cemetery / sidewalks / Cumming Playhouse
- County / city getting along
- Well-planned development
- 4-year college / university
- Community transportation - senior bus, disabled person's bus service, private/public partnerships
- More senior centers in communities

Small Group 6:

- Preserving its rural roots - farming and agriculture
- Committing ourselves to a drug-free environment
- Committed to industrial and commercial growth, employment
- Committed to family recreational areas consisting of civic and community buildings
- Committed to physical, emotional and spiritual needs of all age groups
- Education - grades K-4-year college
- Committed to elderly care and housing
- Committed to maintaining a sense of community
- Maintaining and developing cultural arts
- Committed to modular-free schools
- School systems equipped with state of the art technology
- Performing arts building / civic center
- Detention facility - public safety facility
- Free-flowing traffic
- Cap housing development
- Health care
- Water and sewer
- Parks and recreational facility with indoor pools, trails (bike, walking, horses)

Small Group 7:

- Family community based activities - family events connect as a community
- Better balance and concern for land owners
- Farm land preserved
- Need additional traffic lights over the entire county
- Senior citizen centers and teen centers in every community
- Less large developments, smaller subdivisions for families, and larger lot sizes - green space considered
- Preserve family farms to allow families to continue to work the farm
- Concerns for schools growth - using mobile units, schools prepared for any situations that might arise
- More conservation development - more investigation into land development
- Better sense of small town communities
- Slow development down and let us catch up
- School system be given impact fees from developers
- Required traffic study for every residential development

Small Group 8:

- Better parks
- Multi-use trails: walking, biking, etc. connected throughout county
- Lake Lanier to stay full and clean
- Roadways cleaner
- Rural / green space
- Controlled number of apartment buildings
- Condemned buildings disassembled
- Sewer systems in place before overbuilding
- Transportation system in county and out

- Build sidewalks near / around schools
- More challenging playgrounds at schools
- Better planning for development - what will all of the pavement create? Flooding?
- Keep our friendliness / politeness
- Hands-free while driving
- Slow down speed limits, etc. - no cell phone / eating
- Continue vision meetings to keep on track
- Improvements need to be evenly distributed, and extras like library, post office
- Keep up with growth with schools
- Control the growth
- Work together to eliminate illegal drug use / manufacturing
- Put God back into the equation
- Fire / police / highway departments - all need to fit growth
- Increase county supplements to attract top-qualified teachers, police, and firefighters
- Non-smoking community
- Boys / Girls Clubs
- Additional recreation options for young children and teens

Small Group 9:

- Paths - bike trails connecting communities
- Low traffic patterns - clean air
- Commitment to all citizens
- Clean and safe parks
- Strict zoning laws - maintain standard
- Continue to be open spaces - examples: farm land, less population
- Adult education opportunities
- Safety for our children
- Clean up lake lanier
- Preserve our natural resources
- Providing educational facilities - alternative educations
- Improved transportation issues
- Optimal housing opportunities
- Law enforcement - provide payment and benefits to hold attraction for good staff
- Partnership between teachers, education, all business, citizens, employers
- Focus on small business
- Architectural guidelines
- Total care medical facilities
- Anc. Services - supporting children with disabilities and their families locally in Forsyth County; elders; persons with disabilities/mental health
- More public library locations
- Resources for referrals - clinics
- Recreational parks - sporting fields, enough fields
- Citizens who are accountable
- Teacher / staffing support due to increased expectations of them

Small Group 10:

- Art center with all arts included - ballet, theatre, handicrafts
- More commercial master plan development
- More controlled growth (smart)
- Safe green space
- Revitalize downtown Cumming
- Expansion of health care
- Continue park and recreation facilities
- Walking and bike trails
- Manage lake lanier better - maintaining lake level
- Infrastructure - roads, water
- Alligator farm
- Pray back in school
- Drugs under control
- Convention center
- Land trust
- Public access
- Four-year college
- Conservation of Cha river
- Mode of transportation

### **Consensus Ideas**

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

- Art center with all arts included - ballet, theatre, handicrafts
- Revitalize downtown Cumming
- Four-year college
- Paths - bike trails connecting communities
- Strict zoning laws - maintain standard
- Optimal housing opportunities
- Architectural guidelines
- Recreational parks - sporting fields, enough fields
- Sewer systems in place before overbuilding
- Improvements need to be evenly distributed, and extras like library, post office
- Work together to eliminate illegal drug use / manufacturing
- Need additional traffic lights over the entire county
- Preserve family farms to allow families to continue to work the farm
- More conservation development - more investigation into land development
- Preserving its rural roots - farming and agriculture
- Committed to industrial and commercial growth, employment
- Education - grades K-4-year college
- Smooth traffic flow
- Community transportation - senior bus, disabled person's bus service, private/public partnerships
- Education / retention healthcare personnel
- Protect trees - natural environment
- Make sure necessary infrastructure in place prior to implementing above improvements

- Greater healthcare system - more specialized physicians: cancer, eyes, surgery - expansion of hospitals - specialized treatment
- Control growth
- Family oriented entertainment activities
- Thoughtful / responsible growth
- Must have "big picture" for the betterment of the entire county
- Wireless technology county-wide
- Great place for retirees, with services such as transportation, shopping

### **Visionary Ideas**

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

- Attract tourism through an interactive experience focusing on our agricultural community - farms, wildlife
- Pioneer development / expansion of personal aircraft
- Committed to physical, emotional and spiritual needs of all age groups
- Better sense of small town communities
- Multi-use trails: walking, biking, etc. connected throughout county
- Alligator farm

### **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:

- Farms
- Trees
- Streams
- Lake
- Sense of community
- Mountains
- Recreation
- County churches
- Grave yards
- Topography (don't need to flatten everything)
- Dave's Creek city hall
- Good school system
- Low crime rate
- Business base
- Preserve the north side county

#### Small Group 2:

- Natural resources
- Sense of community
- Moral values

- Security / low crime rate
- Quality education
- Historical society

Small Group 3:

- Christian heritage
- Historical sites
- Trees - no clear-cutting
- Community churches
- Community theater
- Greenspace
- Community character - respect the heritage of the community
- The beauty of the county
- Quality of life
- Low crime rate

Small Group 4:

- Open space
- Trees, quality of lake
- Heritage, architecture
- "Mom and pop" businesses
- Agricultural components
- Quality of primary, secondary level schools
- Natural look / resources of 400 corridor

Small Group 5:

- Farms and farming infrastructure - cattle sale barn, rendering plant, etc.
- Trees / green space - ecosystems, wildlife
- History - buildings, stories, documents, in county as well as city (example: Sharon Old Springs Elementary)
- Low taxes with balance between commercial and residential

Small Group 6:

- Farms and families
- Green space
- County heritage and history
- Small town atmosphere
- Lake Lanier
- School system

Small Group 7:

- Farm land
- Downtown area (any historical site)
- Community landmarks
- Safe old schools for history centers
- Our wonderful school system
- Trees

- Greenspace
- Sense of smaller communities
- Churches

Small Group 8:

- Farms - keep them cost-effective, low taxes
- Sawnee Mountain
- All the lake parks
- Lake - for recreation as well as water
- Heritage / history
- Air quality / environment: land, water, trees

Small Group 9:

- Our good school systems - private, public, pre-school
- Our farms
- Our quality of life
- The lake - water preservation
- Trees, wildlife, green spaces
- Our reputation
- Supportive families - parental involvement
- Local businesses
- Our churches

Small Group 10:

- Farming
- Friendly atmosphere
- Small town feel
- Historical places - keep like cemeteries, fairgrounds
- Dairy Queen
- School system
- Vote splost
- Health care

**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:

- Managed growth plan - stick with it
- 4-year college
- Wireless network countywide
- Increase cultural opportunities
- Retiree services
- Infrastructure - jail, roads, hospitals, schools
- Water

- Safety - sidewalks, bike trails, parks, medical, fire, police, hospitals
- Village squares
- Building standards
- Development standards
- Unified identity
- Community transportation
- Unified government

Small Group 2:

- Drug awareness
- Transition / assimilation of different cultures
- More recycling efforts and sites for collection
- More centralized services
- Training facilities and retention incentives for fire, police, health, etc.

Small Group 3:

- Make sure we don't turn into Roswell / Alpharetta / Gwinnett
- To continue this type of process into the future
- To make sure that this effort is not wasted - this info is actually going to be used
- Some sort of oversight committee to make sure elected officials do what the community and citizens want
- Create 5 to 10 year plans for the community
- To follow / adhere to the land use plan
- Less talk, more action

Small Group 4:

- Infrastructure
- Cracker Barrel
- Event center - for graduations, reunions, art display, etc.
- 4-year college
- Residential treatment center for kids
- Healthcare system (local) development and healthcare personnel
- Public safety personnel - fire/police
- Landfill / recycling

Small Group 5:

- Transportation that has a full spectrum: buses, walking trails, bike trail - stop lights to prevent accidents (Holtzclaw - 369, Parks - 306)
- Partnership between county and city government
- More small school communities
- Better planning for school bus routes - 3-tier transportation not good
- Health care - retirement services, senior centers, cluster homes
- University

Small Group 6:

- Performing arts facility
- Detention and public safety center

- Health care
- Adequate highway system
- Cooperation between city and county government
- Industrial and commercial growth
- 4-year college (small)
- Address needs of hispanic communities

Small Group 7:

- Changes in tax structure - more flexible, to be used for conservation in preserving farms
- Create more jobs so people can work in the communities, add more industry
- Other technical schools
- Medical facilities
- More satellite government offices

Small Group 8:

- Controlled planning
- Top quality medical care and facilities
- Kid / teen centers
- All amenities evenly dispersed
- A chef in every school - healthier food

Small Group 9:

- Transportation - public
- Accessible community
- Medical facilities
- Focus on increasing aging population needs
- Appropriate educational facilities
- Partnership in government, education, law enforcement, business, citizens

Small Group 10:

- More respect for elders and each other
- Four year college
- Convention center
- Drivers education

**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.