

Group 1  
Draft Action Steps  
3/29/2007

**Establish quality of life objectives for Cumming-Forsyth County**

Action Steps:

1. Create the Cumming-Forsyth County Quality of Life Council to set quality of life objectives on a regular basis.
  - The Quality of Life Council should be comprised of representatives selected by a broad array of public, private and civic organizations. The proposed composition is listed in Appendix A.
  - In its first year, the Council's work should be facilitated by the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce. An important early decision of the Council is how its work should be managed in years to come.
  - The Quality of Life Council should establish its bylaws, including terms of service, work processes and other issues.
  - The Quality of Life Council should be advised by committees made up of citizens who are familiar with measurements that might be used in the process.
    - The committees would suggest objective third-party statistics that will accurately measure the quality of life objectives set by the Quality of Life Council.
    - The committees would review the Quality of Life Council's report in draft form, to assure the measurements are accurate.
  - The Quality of Life Council should actively seek citizen ideas about how quality of life should be defined – and which indicators of quality of life should be used – as a first step in its decision-making process.
  - On a regular basis, the Quality of Life Council should publish a report that:
    - Sets broad quality of life goals for Cumming-Forsyth County.
    - Reports on how Cumming-Forsyth County's current situation compares to the goals, using objective third-party numbers.
    - Reports Cumming-Forsyth County's performance in these statistics in recent years.
    - Provide other information important to understanding the goals or the community's performance in reaching these goals.
2. In connection with its reports, the Cumming-Forsyth Council Quality of Life Council should convene Quality of Life Forums to discuss the objectives and community performance.
  - The main topic of the Quality of Life Forums would be how to make greater progress toward the objectives and/or how to address poor performance.
  - Elected officials, top government appointed officials and executives of major community non-profit organizations should be invited guests of the Forum.
  - The Forum should be open to the public and the news media.

## **Balance economic and residential growth so that growth improves the quality of life of existing residents**

### Action Steps:

1. Create tools and incentives to attract desired forms of growth.
  - For the foreseeable future, desired growth includes employment and retail to balance the tax digest, provide jobs and services closer to home, and reduce overall traffic congestion.
  - Develop the most comprehensive set of incentives for employment and retail developments.
    - Study city and county incentives for employment and retail elsewhere with the objective of identifying “best practices” and “benchmark communities,” and developing incentives matching the best practices.
    - Every year, the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce should issue a public report on how Cumming-Forsyth County’s employment and retail incentives compare with those of the benchmark communities – and how much progress was made in the previous year toward closing the gaps.
    - Every five years, commission a new study of “best practices” and “benchmark communities.”
  - Identify and encourage desirable commercial developments.
    - Develop architectural overlay districts within the county that reflect the history and aspirations of these areas.
    - Develop strategies that ensure all new business developments are architecturally compatible with these overlay districts.
    - Create new planning and zoning initiatives that encourage live, work and play environments (e.g., Vickery, Windward, John’s Creek).
  - Create an efficient process for approving desirable commercial developments so that Cumming-Forsyth County becomes the community with the most streamlined approval processes for developers with desirable projects.
  - Create incentives for property owners to protect land for commercial and business use.
  - Establish initiatives and tools that preserve property for business and economic growth in order to balance the tax digest.
    - One of the tools could be a Cumming-Forsyth County land trust that would protect properties determined to be valuable for economic development.
2. Create new sources of revenues for community quality of life projects.
  - Use SPLOST funds, impact fees and dedicated property taxes for achieving quality of life improvements that are tied to the quality of life objectives set by the Quality of Life Council.
  - Also use general obligation bonds, special tax districts, tax allocation districts (TADs), community improvement districts (CIDs).
  - Study how Cumming-Forsyth County property taxes compare with those of benchmark communities and recommend changes, if needed.
3. Develop city and community centers as important elements for quality of life.

## **Employ state-of-the-art strategies for managing congestion and improving mobility**

### Action Steps:

1. Create an innovative county alternative transportation system connecting Cumming-Forsyth County's major residential and employment centers.
2. Require that Cumming-Forsyth County transportation planning include alternative transportation and ways of paying for it.
3. Where possible, integrate Cumming-Forsyth County transportation projects with regional transportation systems.
4. Develop a heliport that allows passengers to check their bags at the heliport and fly directly to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, where they can connect to their flights.
5. Require connectivity among all future residential, retail and commercial developments so that driving, bicycling and walking from one development to another is as efficient as possible. One way of assuring efficient connectivity is through use of a road grid and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.
6. Connect existing residential, retail and commercial developments along existing roadways with pedestrian-friendly sidewalks or alternative multi-use paths.
7. Develop parallel road systems so that alternative routes are available during periods of congestion. Specifically, provide a bypass alternative around downtown Cumming to relieve congestion.
8. Establish an innovative public education program about combining trips, forming or joining carpools and using alternative transportation.
  - This public education program should include information about the environmental cost of multiple, single-occupant trips versus fewer, combined trips.
  - This program should also educate residents on businesses that pick up and deliver goods and services to save single-occupant trips.
  - Publicize opportunities for telecommuting, flex-time and other alternatives to reduce congestion.
9. Provide incentives for business/industry to allow and encourage new telecommuting and flex-time alternatives.
10. Create incentives for students to bike, walk or bus to school, to help relieve traffic in mornings and afternoons. Build sidewalks within a one mile radius of all schools. Only high school juniors and seniors should receive high school parking passes.
11. Create new ways for Cumming-Forsyth County to pay for road and transportation improvements with money generated in and controlled by the community.
12. Institute impact fees on new construction that make financial contributions to an "emergency needs" fund. This fund can be used to create turn lanes, install red lights and make other improvements more quickly than traditional channels.

**Appendix A**  
**Suggested Composition of the**  
**Cumming-Forsyth County Quality of Life Council**

The Planning Group with major responsibility for the quality of life action steps suggests that the 15-member Quality of Life Council be comprised of representatives selected in the following manner:

Selection by organizations: 10 of the 15 members should be selected by the following organizations:

Organization	Number of representatives
Forsyth County Board of Commissioners (elected official)	1
Cumming Mayor and City Council (elected official)	1
Forsyth County Board of Education (elected official)	1
Forsyth County School System (professional educator)	1
Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce	1
Council for Quality Growth	1
Forsyth County Community Connection	1
Northside Hospital Forsyth	1
Envision 2030 Steering Committee	1
Ministerial Alliance	1

Additional members: These 10 representatives will select 5 additional members with the following criteria in mind:

1. Each of the five Forsyth County Commission districts should have at least one resident serving on the 15-member Quality of Life Council. This will ensure geographic diversity.
2. Additional members should be demographically diverse, meaning that they reflect the gender, age and ethnic composition of Cumming-Forsyth County residents.
3. At least one of the additional members should be a business person, who may or may not be a member of the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce.

## **Appendix B**

### **Suggested Quality of Life Objectives**

The Planning Group with major responsibility for the quality of life action steps suggests that the Quality of Life Council consider the following areas for setting quality of life objectives (in order of importance):

- Transportation/mobility
- Education
- Healthcare availability and quality
- Low crime/community safety
- Family Life Quality
- Master Plan
- Population/density
- Arts and leisure
- “Planned Image”
- Environment/air quality/water quality/weather/climate
- Parks/green space
- Taxes/governmental efficiency
- Employment/Job Sustainability
- Cost of Living/Income
- Volunteerism
- Town Center/community center