

The Citizens' Vision of Our Future

Cumming-Forsyth County, Georgia

**Vision Statement
and Action Steps**

June 28, 2007



Contents

Introduction	3
Common Vision	6
Big Ideas	8
Strategic Tasks and Action Steps	10
Sponsors	30
Steering Committee Members	31
Envision 2030 Milestones	33
Appendices	34

Introduction

This is the final report of the Envision 2030 community visioning project for Cumming-Forsyth County, Ga., which began in September 2006 and concluded in June 2007 with a citizen review and comment process and the publication of this report.

Envision 2030 grew out of a special leadership summit held in March 2006, in which more than 100 diverse community leaders learned about community visioning, heard from a leader of a community visioning effort in Gainesville-Hall County, Ga., and voted overwhelmingly to begin a similar process for Cumming-Forsyth County.

The goals of the year-long process were to:

- Engage hundreds of citizens in describing the community they'd like to live, work and raise families in. (In 15 meetings, more than 1,200 people were involved in this work.)
- Draft a “common vision” for Cumming-Forsyth County that captures the major elements of these vision meetings.
- Convene a number of planning groups to draft recommendations for achieving the common vision – and ensure that average citizens are represented in these groups. (More than 150 citizens participated in four planning groups to draft the Action Steps for this report.)
- Bring together citizens to review and critique the work of the planning groups.
- Make every document and decision available for public comment, through open meetings, public communications and an easily accessible web site.

The end product, which you hold in your hands, is a set of long-term goals and plans for Cumming-Forsyth County that, we believe, the vast majority of citizens will recognize as their own and support wholeheartedly.

How We Developed These Recommendations

Envision 2030 began in September 2006 with 15 vision meetings, held in different locations in Cumming-Forsyth County. The two-hour meetings were well-publicized, and more than 1,200 citizens participated.

The sessions were open-ended. We asked those attending to describe the community

they'd most like to live in over the next 20-25 years (by 2030). We also asked them to list the things they considered the community's most valuable assets – and should be preserved – and the things they felt needed change. From these sessions, we gathered more than 3,000 ideas, images and recommendations. (Reports of these meetings, including every idea collected, were made available on the www.envision2030.com web site.)

From these 3,000 ideas and images, we developed in December 2006 a “Common Vision” – a statement of the broad themes that ran through the vision meetings. We e-mailed the Common Vision to every participant for whom we had an e-mail address and posted it on the Envision 2030 web site and asked for suggestions and comments. In early January, we revised the Common Vision, based on the suggestions received. (The revised Common Vision is presented on pages 6-7.)

With the Common Vision in hand, we drafted 10 “Strategic Tasks” – things that must be accomplished if Cumming-Forsyth County is to achieve the vision. (Examples: Make Cumming-Forsyth County a community of lifelong learning, develop the best recreational facilities of any county its size, make it the leader in protecting and enhancing its natural environment, etc.) In late January, we formed four planning groups to draft “Action Steps” that could achieve these major community tasks. Each group was assigned two to three Strategic Tasks.

From January to March, the planning groups met five times (once in an orientation meeting, four times in planning sessions). The meetings were well publicized and all 1,200 citizens who had participated in the fall vision sessions were invited, through e-mails, to participate. Some came for one or two meetings, many participated in all five. Citizens were free to join any planning group they wished. Between 100 and 150 citizens were at each of the five meetings.

Each planning group began its work by reviewing the citizen ideas from the fall meetings that were most closely related to its task. Most did additional research, and some invited experts to brief them. Over the course of the meetings, each group drafted Action Steps for its own tasks and sometimes offered ideas related to other groups' work.

After the final planning meeting, Envision 2030 organizers took the groups' work and did three things:

- Organized the Action Steps in logical sequence.
- Where a group had offered ideas outside its assigned tasks, placed the ideas in their proper categories.
- Edited the Action Steps for grammar and clarity.

In May, the Envision 2030 Steering Committee met and made further editorial changes – eliminating some proposed Action Steps they saw as duplicative, adding others that seemed logical – and approved a draft document for citizen review and comment.

In late May, we held a set of “Community Day” activities, at which citizens were invited to drop by the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce building, review the Big Ideas, comment on them, receive a copy of the entire report and, later on, send us their comments and suggestions about the entire report. Based on these citizen comments, we have made some final changes to the Envision 2030 report.

How This Report Is Organized

There are four major sections of this report:

- The Common Vision, as revised in January 2007: This document reflects the major themes from the citizen vision sessions last fall.
- “Big Ideas”: This is a list of the 13 most dramatic changes citizens could expect to see in 2030, if Envision 2030 is implemented. This will give you an overview of the major proposals in the Envision 2030 report.
- The Strategic Tasks and Action Steps: These are the detailed tentative Envision 2030 recommendations, as drafted by the planning groups and edited by the Steering Committee.
- A list of the sponsors of Envision 2030, those individuals, organizations and companies that helped pay for this effort.
- A list of Steering Committee members.
- The key dates for Envision 2030 – a list of milestones.
- An appendix section with ideas and approaches that are referred to elsewhere in the document. The documents refer to the pages where they are mentioned.

A Common Vision for Cumming-Forsyth County

Vision: Cumming-Forsyth County is a leader at defining and delivering a high quality of life.

Description:

In 2030, Cumming-Forsyth County is recognized as the community that does the best job of **systematically improving the quality of life of its residents and those who work here**. It does this in two ways. First, as a community it regularly reviews its quality of life and sets higher standards that serve as goals. Second, it finds creative ways of meeting these goals, including new means of paying for improvements.

Quality of life is defined broadly in Cumming-Forsyth County. It includes a thriving economy, a healthy environment, learning opportunities, arts and culture, recreation, human connectedness and community attractiveness, among other things.

A key to Cumming-Forsyth County's success is that it has **successfully balanced economic and residential growth and has significantly improved the quality of life of its existing residents**. One way it does this is by using state-of-the-art strategies for managing congestion and improving mobility.

A major element of quality of life is Cumming-Forsyth County's determination to be a community of **lifelong learning**, where children receive the best education in Georgia and adults learn actively into their retirement years. The learning takes place in classrooms – the Forsyth County School System is regarded as one of the best school systems in the country, and Cumming-Forsyth County has a superior four-year college that offers post-graduate courses – but also in the community itself. Cumming-Forsyth County has a number of **institutions that help residents explore the world around them**, including arts and cultural institutions and a renowned Lake Walk, which allows residents and visitors to learn about the lake's ecosystem.

You can also see Cumming-Forsyth County's high quality of life in its **recreational offerings**. There is an abundance of sports facilities and a network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. Cumming-Forsyth County is regarded as having the best recreational facilities of any county its size.

Among visitors, Cumming-Forsyth County is best known for Sawnee Mountain Preserve, which has become a community symbol. But as visitors learn, there's more to Cumming-Forsyth County than Sawnee Mountain. The community offers a year-round calendar of events and festivals that draws visitors to the area and keeps residents involved in community life.

The county is a significant **employment center**, with employers drawn by the community's superior work force and because workers elsewhere in the region are eager to work in Cumming-Forsyth County. The growth in employment does not come at the expense of the environment, however. On the contrary, Cumming-Forsyth County has emerged as a leader in **protecting its natural environment**.

Downtown Cumming is truly the heart of the county. It is where the governments are located and important community decisions made. It is a significant employment center, as well as an exciting place to shop and live. It is where numerous events and festivals are held. And it is the hub of an **innovative county transit system** that connects Forsyth County's major employment centers and relieves traffic congestion.

The result is that Cumming-Forsyth County is the nation's leader at providing an ever higher quality of life: an attractive, interesting, economically dynamic place that prizes learning and self improvement and welcomes visitors.

The Big Ideas from Envision 2030

In 2030 . . .

1. The Cumming-Forsyth County Quality of Life Council sets community quality of life goals and reports on a regular basis to the citizens on progress in reaching those goals. Citizens are involved in setting these goals, and hundreds turn out for the Council's annual Quality of Life town-hall meetings.
2. Traffic congestion has been managed through a combination of road improvements, mixed-use developments, better connections between developments and alternative transportation, including a countywide public transit system.
3. All residential, commercial and retail developments built in the last 20 years have been connected with street grids, sidewalks and multipurpose trails so that driving, bicycling and walking from one development to another is efficient.
4. There is a university in Cumming-Forsyth County that offers undergraduate and post-graduate courses with degree offerings based on local demands and community needs.
5. Cumming-Forsyth County is recognized as a model community for lifelong learning, with public schools, the new university, Lanier Tech, the library system and private businesses working together to educate and retrain residents and employees at all points in their lives.
6. Cumming-Forsyth County is a 100 percent English literate community.
7. Cumming-Forsyth County is crisscrossed with multipurpose recreational trails known as greenways. Cumming-Forsyth County is also known for its extensive network of recreational streams known as blueways. Developers and landowners receive incentives for maintaining or extending greenways and blueways.

8. There are numerous recreational and tourist facilities in Cumming-Forsyth County, including a new civic center, a performing and cultural arts center, several aquatic centers, numerous ball fields, several multipurpose indoor sports facilities, and an Outdoor Adventure Center, which offers whitewater rafting and the tallest climbing wall in the Southeast.
9. Cumming-Forsyth County's favorite gathering places are its Lake Walk and River Walks. The Lake Walk, along Lake Lanier, has an amphitheater, which is frequently used for concerts and educational programs, as well as retail and housing, and is filled with people every day of the week. The River Walks are a similar recreational and educational gathering place along the Chattahoochee and Etowah rivers.
10. Cumming-Forsyth County is known throughout the United States as a center for arts awareness and support, and two reasons are its annual Cumming-Forsyth County Arts Festival and Cumming-Forsyth County Drama Festival.
11. Cumming-Forsyth County has become a significant employment center, which means that many who live in the community can now work here. A major contributing factor: The community planned for multi-price housing for workers at the new companies.
12. Cumming-Forsyth County is recognized as the leading community in Georgia for conserving resources, recycling waste, ensuring environmental compliance and educating citizens about the value of protecting and sustaining natural resources. It is also a leader in conserving water.
13. Downtown Cumming has become a live, work and play community, with a classic "old city" look and numerous public gathering spots, restaurants and night spots.

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 selection process is outlined 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.
 - Once it is established, 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.
 - Provides 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 not-for-profit organizations should be invited guests of the Forum.
- The Forum must be open to the public and the news media.

Balance economic and residential growth so that growth improves the quality of life of 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.
 - Identify and encourage desirable developments.
 - Develop architectural overlay districts within the county that reflect the history and aspirations of these areas. These districts would establish minimum standards for site development, exterior architectural design, landscaping, lighting and signage of buildings.
 - 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 throughout the county (e.g., Vickery, Windward, Johns Creek).
 - Create an efficient process for approving desirable 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 dedicated revenue sources for making 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) for financing quality of life improvements.
 - Study how Cumming-Forsyth County property taxes compare with those of benchmark communities and recommend changes, if needed.

3. Develop town centers, such as the retail areas and gathering places in Ducktown, Coal Mountain and Castleberry-Bethelview, as important elements for quality of life.

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

Action Steps:

1. Plan and create transportation connections among the places people live, work and play in Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - These connections should include intracounty road improvements and alternative transportation (including public transit and non-motorized modes, such as walking, biking and golf-cart trails).
 - The plans should include ways of paying for transportation improvements, including alternative transportation.
 - The planning should be done by a public-private partnership including, among others, landowners and developers.
 - One aim should be to create a transportation hub in Cumming, as a way of making Cumming the heart of Forsyth County.
2. Create new ways for Cumming-Forsyth County to pay for road and transportation improvements with money generated in and controlled by the community.
3. Institute impact fees on new construction and use the fees to create an “emergency needs” fund. This fund can be used to create turn lanes, install traffic signals and make other improvements more quickly than traditional channels.
4. 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 an inviting network of sidewalks.
5. Connect existing residential, retail and commercial developments along existing roadways with pedestrian-friendly sidewalks or alternative multi-use paths.
6. 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.
7. Where possible, integrate Cumming-Forsyth County transportation projects with regional transportation systems, including alternative transportation modes.
8. 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.

9. 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.
10. Provide incentives for businesses that create telecommuting and flex-time alternatives for their workers and encourage workers to use them.
11. 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.

Make Cumming-Forsyth County a community of lifelong learning.

Action Steps:

1. Establish a university in Cumming-Forsyth County that offers undergraduate and post-graduate courses with degree offerings based on local demands and community needs.
2. Create a Learning Partners Collaborative that identifies and supports the lifelong educational needs of Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - The Collaborative should provide vision, promote action and identify and pursue potential funding for meeting the learning needs of Forsyth County.
 - The Collaborative should bring together leaders of the Forsyth County School System, Lanier Technical College, the newly created university, the Forsyth County Library System, Cumming city government, Forsyth County government, the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, private education providers, major employers, senior services agencies and others with responsibility for education of residents and workers of all ages.
 - The Collaborative should recommend national and international standards for its educational partners to consider.
 - An example of a national standard is the Malcolm Baldrige National Award for Quality.
 - The Collaborative should build support among the business community, government agencies and the public for Cumming- Forsyth County learning organizations that pursue excellence.
3. The Learning Partnership Collaborative should develop a plan for recruiting, educating, training, and retaining a future-oriented workforce.
 - This plan should be called the Hiring Highway, and it should be Georgia's most comprehensive and innovative roadmap for developing and retaining a talented workforce.
 - Forsyth County School System, Lanier Technical College and the newly created university should take leadership roles in developing and implementing the Hiring Highway plan.
 - Business community and learning organizations should provide ongoing training and retraining of workers for future work needs.
 - The Collaborative should work with economic development organizations and large employers to establish the learning needs of the community and revisit those identified needs on a regular basis.

- The Collaborative should work with its educational partners to provide a seamless curriculum from secondary to post-secondary to continuing education that prepares and supports the workforce needs of the future.
- 4. The Learning Partnership Collaborative should work with governments, businesses and non-profit groups to transform community centers and public gathering places into learning venues, creating a “communitywide open campus.”
- 5. Cumming-Forsyth County should become a 100 percent English literate community.
 - To accomplish this, learning organizations should offer 24/7 access to educational opportunities, using traditional (classroom) methods, virtual (computer) instruction and a hybrid (classroom plus computer) methods.
 - By offering new methods of learning, learning organizations can lower barriers to education and training.

Establish arts, cultural and other institutions in Cumming-Forsyth County that help residents explore the world around them.

Action Steps:

1. Establish a Cumming-Forsyth County Arts Coalition to provide cultivation, collaboration, visibility and ownership of the arts. The aim should be to gain recognition for Cumming-Forsyth County locally and nationally as a center for cultural arts awareness and support.
 - Among the specific tasks of the Coalition should be to:
 - Promote cultural arts activities, arts awareness and arts education in Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - Identify strategic partnerships that are needed for support and growth of the arts.
 - Seek financial support through grants as well as public and private support for arts venues and programming.
 - Develop a directory of existing cultural arts programs in Cumming-Forsyth County, and create a website that can serve as a source of information about community arts events and offer maps of local and regional arts venues.
 - Identify potential venue sites, public and privately owned, for new cultural arts programs. The proposed Lake Walk and River Walk, plus proposed expansions of the Cumming Fairgrounds and other locations, may offer opportunities for arts events and programs.
 - Create an annual arts festival with simultaneous art events throughout Cumming-Forsyth County and stage an annual summer outdoor drama. Work closely with the newly formed Cumming-Forsyth County Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop and promote the new festival and drama.
 - Host an annual “State of the Arts” town-hall meeting.
 - Develop intergenerational arts programs.
 - The Coalition should include representatives from existing arts groups, the Forsyth County School System, the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, nearby colleges and universities, the Cumming city government, the Forsyth County government, the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce and the private sector.
2. Forsyth County should expand the Parks and Recreation Department’s scope to include arts and cultural heritage by adding a dedicated special-events coordinator to develop and promote arts and cultural events.

3. Create a Lake Walk with an amphitheater, nature walk and facilities for hosting performing arts and arts-education activities.
4. Plan and build a performing and cultural arts center.

Develop in Cumming-Forsyth County the best recreational facilities of any county its size.

Action Steps:

1. Form a partnership among the newly created Cumming-Forsyth County Arts Coalition, the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, and Cumming and Forsyth County officials to design and create greenspaces that will provide recreation opportunities for citizens of all ages and preserve areas from future development. (Definition: Greenspace is a term applied to certain urban areas, including parks, preserves and public or private lands. In general, these places are over an acre in size, are physically separated from human developments and contain forests, gardens, grass or other foliage.) This partnership should:
 - Establish guidelines for integrating greenspace within new developments.
 - Set goals for parks development and greenspace preservation for Cumming-Forsyth County in the future. Among the things the partnership should consider:
 - Developing overlays for city and county land use plans that establish the acreage per capita that should be set aside for greenspace, extending to year 2030.
 - Determining if the existing inventory of government-owned property would meet current and future needs. If not, establish how much is needed and identify properties that should be purchased to meet the goals.
 - Create the Cumming-Forsyth County Botanical Trails and a series of educational gardens, similar to DeKalb County's Fernbank Forest.
 - The trails and gardens should be planned and managed by Georgia Master Gardeners in Cumming-Forsyth County.
2. Cumming-Forsyth County should develop multipurpose trails connecting residential, recreational and work areas so that people could travel between areas of the county by non-motorized transportation. Some of these trails would be "greenways" and others "blueways."
 - Definitions: Greenways are linear paths that are asphalt or wooden and intended for multiple non-motorized uses. Blueways are waterways for non-motorized water recreation (such as canoes).
 - Where possible, the multipurpose trails should connect to trails outside of Cumming-Forsyth County.

- Use more limited greenways (such as bike or walking paths) to connect to the major intra- and intercounty greenways where cost is prohibitive or undeveloped land is not available.
 - Develop incentives to reward developers and landowners who help extend the greenways and blueways.
3. Establish the Cumming-Forsyth County Sports Coalition to promote competitive and non-competitive recreation in Cumming-Forsyth County.
 4. Form a partnership among the Sports Coalition, Cumming city government, Forsyth County government and the Forsyth County School System to create specific-purpose facilities for competitive and non-competitive recreation activities.
 - The aim of these facilities should be to provide first-class recreational opportunities for Cumming-Forsyth County residents of all ages.
 - The facilities should also be designed to attract visitors to Cumming-Forsyth County for tournaments, competitions and other activities. This would allow the facilities to generate revenue for their support and build a larger tourism economy.
 - Among the facilities the partnership should consider are:
 - A civic center complex to accommodate large group events, graduations, civic meetings, concerts, conventions, etc.
 - Other events facilities to accommodate smaller events and meetings.
 - Multipurpose world-class aquatic centers for scholastic, competitive and recreational purposes. These centers should be located in different parts of Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - An Outdoor Adventure Center featuring whitewater rafting, tallest climbing wall in the Southeast, etc., to create a point of differentiation for Cumming-Forsyth County and build tourism.
 - Additional rectangular fields (for soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey, etc.) to support recreation needs within the county and attract state and regional events.
 - Additional diamond-shaped ball fields to be able to support current county needs and attract state, regional and national tournaments.
 - Multipurpose indoor sports facilities (for hockey/ice skating, bowling, cheerleading, gymnastics, basketball, etc.) to support current county needs and attract state, regional and national competitions.
 - A world-class level disc-golf course to attract state, regional and national tournaments. The best location would be near Lake Lanier.
 - Additional multipurpose parks, like the existing Central Park, with facilities and activities to appeal to a broad range of citizens. The aim should be to have multipurpose parks in a number of locations, convenient to all citizens.
 - Expand the current Cumming Fairgrounds to attract larger events. Ensure that ample parking is provided.
 - There are a number of things the partnership should consider in planning these facilities:
 - The facilities should be models of energy efficiency, using LEEDS requirements for their construction.

- Where possible, facilities should be multipurpose to accommodate a variety of recreational, competitive and other entertainment events.
 - The facilities should have adequate parking and access to alternative transportation.
 - Facilities that may attract visitors from outside the county should be developed with convenient hotel/motel accommodations.
 - At or near the visitor-supported facilities, there should be restaurants and other dining accommodations that would create a lasting positive impression of Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - The city and county governments should approve liquor licensing options that would support special events.
 - Where possible, private resources or public-private partnerships should be used to develop these facilities.
5. Create a signature Lake Walk for Cumming-Forsyth County.
- The Lake Walk would be a multipurpose area adjacent to Lake Lanier, featuring recreational, educational, retail and residential components.
 - The Lake Walk should include an amphitheater that features outdoor concerts, events and festivals.
 - The Lake Walk should be planned by the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, the Cumming-Forsyth Arts Coalition and the Cumming-Forsyth Convention and Visitors Bureau. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers should also be involved in the planning.
 - To make it a signature project for Cumming-Forsyth County, the Lake Walk should feature architecturally distinctive structures to accommodate concerts, events, festivals and make the structures a destination in themselves.
 - The Lake Walk should be a public-private development.
 - There should be restaurants and other dining accommodations at the Lake Walk that would create a lasting positive impression of Cumming-Forsyth County among visitors.
6. Create signature River Walks for Cumming-Forsyth County.
- The River Walks would be multipurpose areas adjacent to the Chattahoochee and Etowah rivers, featuring recreational, educational, retail and residential components.
 - The River Walks should be planned by the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, the Cumming-Forsyth Arts Coalition and the Cumming-Forsyth Convention and Visitors Bureau.
 - As with the Lake Walk, the River Walks should include architecturally distinctive structures.
 - The River Walks should be a public-private development.
 - There should be restaurants and other dining accommodations at the River Walks that would create a lasting positive impression of Cumming-Forsyth County among visitors.

Develop in Cumming-Forsyth County year-round events and activities that draw visitors to the area and keep residents involved in community life.

Action Steps:

1. Establish a Cumming-Forsyth County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) to promote the unique assets of Forsyth County to visitors and residents and to help develop additional assets.
 - Some of Cumming-Forsyth County's tourism assets might include:
 - Lake Lanier
 - Heritage Village
 - Etowah River/Chattahoochee River
 - Big Creek Swamp
 - Sawnee Mountain
 - Forsyth's proposed greenways and blueways
 - Among its promotional activities, the CVB should establish a website that helps visitors plan their activities in Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - The CVB should work with local governments, developers, visitor attractions and other interested parties to create additional hotel accommodations that are convenient to Cumming-Forsyth County's attractions.
 - The CVB should take the lead in lobbying the U.S. Department of Interior to designate Sawnee Mountain as the southernmost point of the Appalachian Trail as a way of increasing tourism.
 - The CVB should work with others in creating additional visitor attractions and promote these attractions. Among the partnerships it should form are those with:
 - The newly created Forsyth County Sports Coalition to plan and promote competitive sports events.
 - The newly created Forsyth County Arts Coalition to plan and promote cultural events.
 - Cumming and Forsyth County government officials to plan and promote additional events in the city and county.
 - The CVB should plan and promote a signature festival or festivals for Cumming-Forsyth County to encourage tourism and enhance the quality of life of residents. Specifically, it should work with the Arts Coalition in planning and promoting an annual arts festival.

- A list of proposed specific-purpose facilities is included in a preceding section. While these facilities would serve the recreational needs for Cumming-Forsyth County residents, we believe they would draw large numbers of visitors to the community as well.
- 2. Establish a Cumming-Forsyth County Sports Coalition to promote competitive and non-competitive recreation in Cumming-Forsyth County.
 - The Sports Coalition should be comprised of representatives from the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department, the department's Recreation Advisory Board, the athletic directors of schools and the Forsyth County Convention and Visitors Bureau.
 - The Sports Coalition should consider developing the following competitive activities, among others:
 - White water facilities
 - Competitive tournaments for new rectangular and diamond-shaped playing fields
 - Cheerleading workshops and competitions
 - Gymnastics workshops and competitions
 - A Maxus Road Race, which is a biking competition
 - Triathlons, which include running, swimming and biking competitions
- 3. The Sports Coalition should study the feasibility of bringing a minor-league sports team to Cumming-Forsyth County
- 4. The city of Cumming should enhance and expand the Cumming Fairgrounds to support additional events. New facilities at the Fairgrounds might include:
 - An outdoor arena large enough for a wider variety of events and festivals.
 - A permanent roller coaster built and operated by private investors.
 - An expanded Heritage Village to include a Civil War Heritage section and a Native American Museum.
- 5. A public-private partnership should be created to plan and build a civic center that can attract business meetings, conventions and large-scale indoor entertainment to Cumming-Forsyth County.

Make Cumming-Forsyth County a significant employment center.

Action Steps:

1. The Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce should draft a detailed plan for the targeted recruitment of new businesses. In drafting this plan, it should involve citizens and its members in identifying the types of businesses and employers that should be targeted.
 - As part of this plan, the Chamber should identify financing, incentives and other resources needed for successful recruitment.
 - The Chamber should establish measurable benchmarks that indicate how competitive Cumming-Forsyth County is today in attracting the desired businesses – and what actions, if any, are needed to improve the community’s performance.
 - One set of benchmarks should compare Cumming-Forsyth County business incentives with those of comparable “benchmark” communities. The incentives may include educational incentives, tax and construction incentives, and efficient building-approval processes.
 - Another set of benchmarks should measure quality of life attributes that attract and retain employees.
 - The Chamber should issue every year a public report on how Cumming-Forsyth County compares with its benchmark communities – how much progress was made in the previous year in closing gaps and what further actions might be needed.
 - The Chamber should assume responsibility for recruiting the desired businesses, working with governments and key community organizations, as needed.
2. As part of the effort to build employment in Cumming-Forsyth County, a task force of business leaders, elected and appointed officials should draft a plan for multi-price housing for workers that will be needed by the targeted businesses.
 - The plan should include ways of ensuring that zoning and other government policies encourage a range of housing options.
3. A Social Capital Partnership should be established to recognize businesses that act as community leaders and government agencies that work cooperatively with private companies and non-profits.
 - The United Way of Forsyth County and the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce should be founding members of the partnership, with other organizations added over time.

- A primary activity of the Partnership should be an annual recognition of companies and government agencies for community leadership.
- The aim of the Social Capital Partnership should be to build a greater recognition of good corporate citizenship and positive public-private collaboration.

Make Cumming-Forsyth County community the leader in protecting and enhancing its natural environment.

Action Steps:

1. A public-private partnership including the Forsyth County Planning and Zoning Department, Cumming city government, the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce and other groups should be established to make Cumming-Forsyth County a leader among growing communities in conserving and preserving its natural resources and attractiveness.
 - The partnership should draft preferred-development models and community benchmarks, and convene an annual town-hall meeting to review progress toward reaching the benchmarks.
 - Examples of preferred-development models and benchmarks may include:
 - Effective design and development models (such as LEEDS certification).
 - Benchmarks for water usage and conservation of streams and wetlands.
 - Benchmarks for air quality improvement.
 - Strategies for ensuring that Lake Lanier and land near the lake are protected and available for public and private use.
2. The partnership should identify and critical natural areas of the county that could be endangered and draft a plan that includes:
 - Development models that preserve and enhance natural resources, parks and woodlands.
 - Proposed incentives encouraging developers, residents and commercial entities to donate or set aside portions of their land for green space – including non-motorized paths or trails that allow residents to travel by foot, bike, golf cart or horseback. These incentives should include bonuses allowing more units per acre in return for significant natural enhancements.
4. The partnership should draft a long-term plan for water use and conservation in Cumming-Forsyth County.
5. Another public-private partnership should be created, including among others Keep Forsyth County Beautiful, to make Cumming-Forsyth County the leading community in Georgia for conserving resources, recycling waste, ensuring environmental compliance and educating its citizens about the value of protecting and sustaining natural resources.

- Improvements that the partnership should consider include initiating solid-waste recycling programs, encouraging enforcement of existing environmental laws and additional incentives for conservation and recycling.

Make Downtown Cumming the heart of the county, where people live, work and play.

Action Steps:

1. A Downtown Cumming Development Coalition should be created to help make downtown Cumming a true live, work and play community. The Coalition's mission would be to help promote quality residential and commercial growth and tourism and advise the city government on design and infrastructure improvements that could result in responsible and sustainable growth. The aim would be to:
 - Improve day and night time activities.
 - Encourage cultural attractions.
 - Create a more unified classic or "old city" look for the downtown that is consistent with recently established architecture for the development of public buildings in Cumming, including the Justice Center, Jail, Parking Deck and Aquatic Center.
 - Create more high-quality places and spaces for the public to interact, including public parks and seating areas that will make downtown Cumming a pedestrian-friendly place.
 - These public spaces should include trash and recycling receptacles and walkways with lighting that enhance the look of the town.

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Jerry Bowman	Cardinal Logistics, Inc.
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ENVISION 2030 REPORT

Terry Smith
Andy Walker

A.C. Smith Poultry Co.
First National Bank of Forsyth County

Envision 2030 Milestones

March 29, 2006	More than 100 Cumming-Forsyth County leaders agree that a community visioning initiative should be undertaken.
April-Sept. 2006	Envision 2030 is named, planned and organized. A web site, www.envision2030.com , is launched.
Sept. 19, 2006	First of eight community Vision Meetings is held at Otwell Middle School, Cumming. Other meetings are held in September, October and early November at locations around Forsyth County.
Oct. 26, 2006	First of seven special Vision Meetings is held with community groups. Special sessions are held with two seniors groups, two high school groups, a Jaycees club, a disabilities group and an English language class.
Dec. 22, 2006	Draft of the Common Vision is released for public review and comment. The Common Vision reflects the major themes heard in the fall Vision Meetings.
Jan. 5, 2007	Based on public comments, the Common Vision is revised and approved by the Envision 2030 Steering Committee.
Jan. 27, 2007	Orientation session for the second phase is held at Cumming Elementary School. Planning groups are formed to focus on strategic objectives outlined in the Common Vision.
March 26, 2007	Planning groups hold their final Strategic Planning meeting at Otwell Middle School
May 24, 2007	Draft of the Final Report is approved by the Envision 2030 Steering Committee and released for public review and comment.
June 7-8, 2007	Citizens are invited to review the Draft Report at Envision 2030's Community Day activities.

Appendix A

Selection of the Cumming-Forsyth County Quality of Life Council

The Envision 2030 Steering Committee will manage the selection of the first group of Quality of Life Council members. Once the initial Council is selected, the Council will manage its own selection process.

The Envision 2030 Steering Committee will manage this process in three stages:

- The first stage will create the criteria for membership, including the groups that should be represented (i.e., geographically, demographically and by community “sector”) and number of Council members.
- When the criteria are established, the Steering Committee will encourage community groups in Cumming-Forsyth County to make nominations. For example, it might ask non-profit groups to meet and select a representative from the not-for-profit community or neighborhood associations to select a representative from homeowner groups.
- The first meeting will be held and the Quality of Life Council impaneled. From that point forward, the Council will manage its selection process.

The criteria that the Steering Committee will use to seek Quality of Life Council members is yet to be established, but the criteria may include:

- Government representatives
- Business community representatives
- Homeowner representatives
- Religious community representatives
- Non-profit community representatives
- Developer representatives
- Landowner representatives
- Geographic and demographic diversity

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