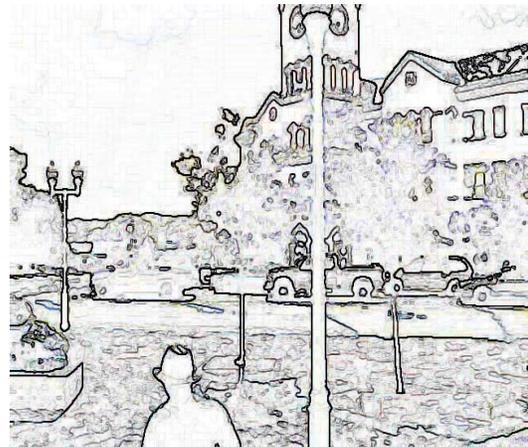
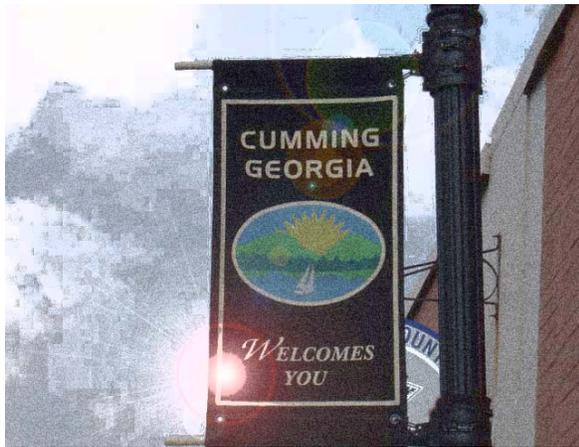


**PARTIAL UPDATE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
CITY OF CUMMING, GEORGIA**



**May 20, 2009**



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## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	1
PAST PLANNING EFFORTS	1
OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	1
Summary	1
Greenspace Plan	2
Active Greenspace Preservation	3
Set-asides in New Development	3
Cooperation with State or National Land Conservation Programs	3
Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	4
Comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory	4
“Part V” Environmental Ordinance Adoption and Enforcement	4
Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Natural Resources	6
Tree Preservation and Tree-Replanting Ordinances	7
Stormwater Best Management Practices for all New Development	7
GROWTH PREPAREDNESS	7
Summary	8
Growth Trends and Projections in Relation to Infrastructure	8
Population Projections for Infrastructure Decisions	11
Compatibility of Projections with School Board Projections	12
Review of Zoning Code and Development Regulations	12
Understanding of Land Development Processes	12
Capital Improvements Program	13
Designated Areas for Growth	13
EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION	13
Summary	13
Analysis of Types of Existing Businesses	14
Diversity of Job Base versus a Reliance on Single Industries	17
Analysis of Strengths/Weaknesses and Business Development Strategy	17
Plans to Recruit Compatible Businesses and Industries	17
Entrepreneur Support Program	17
Workforce Training Options	18
Existence of or Proximity to Higher Education Opportunities	18
HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS	18
Summary	19
One or More Mixed Use Districts	20
Traditional Neighborhood Development by Right	20
Prospects for Infill Development	20

Areas in Need of Redevelopment	21
Promotion of Brownfield and Greyfield Development	21
Nodal Versus Strip or Linear Commercial Development	22
Small Lot Residential Development (5,000 square feet or less)	22
Development Following the Pattern of the Original Town	22
Allowance for Accessory Housing Units	23
Affordable Housing for Workers in the Community	23
Sufficient Housing for Each Income Level	24
Options for Loft living and Downtown Living	24
Vacant and Developable Land Available for Multi-family Housing	24
Other Allowances for Multi-family Housing	25
Community Development Corporations	25
Households with Special Housing Needs	25
SENSE OF PLACE, COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AESTHETICS	26
Summary	26
Characteristics of the Region	27
Distinct, Recognizable Aspects of the Community	27
Historic Districts and Historic Preservation Commission	27
Areas of Historical Importance	28
Ordinances Regulating Signage	29
Ordinances Regulating Aesthetics	29
Development Guidebook and Design Guidelines	29
Plan for Protecting Designated Farmland	29
Street Tree Ordinance	30
Street Tree Planting Campaign	30
Clean and Beautiful Programs	30
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION	31
Summary	31
Evaluation of Sidewalk Network	31
Sidewalk Requirements for New Development	32
Connection of New Sidewalks to Existing Network	32
Sidewalk and Vegetation Maintenance	33
Plan for Bicycle Routes	33
Safe Biking Routes to Schools	33
Multi-Use Trail System Development	33
Public Transportation	34
Connectivity of Development	34
Shared Parking Allowances	35
Continuation of Existing Street Design	35
REGIONALISM AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION	36
Summary	36
Joint Comprehensive Planning	37
Regional Economic Development Organizations	37

Regional Environmental Organizations and Initiatives	37
Provision for Sharing of Services and Joint Service Delivery	37
Satisfaction with Service Delivery Strategy	37
Connections to the Surrounding Region for Economic Livelihood	38
Businesses Drawing on Regional Heritage	38
Regional Tourism Partnerships and Promotion of Tourism Opportunities	38
<b>CHAPTER 2 AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION</b>	<b>39</b>
AREAS LIKELY TO BE ANNEXED	39
SIGNIFICANT NATURAL OR CULTURAL RESOURCES	39
AREAS WHERE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE IN LAND USES IS LIKELY TO OCCUR	39
AREAS OUTPACING AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES	40
AREAS IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT OR SIGNIFICANT AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT	40
LARGE ABANDONED SITES OR STRUCTURES	40
AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT INFILL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL	40
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT DISINVESTMENT, LEVELS OF POVERTY, OR UNEMPLOYMENT	41
<b>CHAPTER 3 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>47</b>
NATURAL RESOURCES	47
Greenspace Protection	47
Development Practices for Steeply Sloping Lands	48
Tree Protection	48
HOUSING AND LAND USE	49
Land Development Process	49
Promotion of Traditional Neighborhood Development	49
Redevelopment	49
Multi-Family Housing Allowances	50
Design Guides and Aesthetics	50
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION	50
Population Projections for Infrastructure Decisions	50
Street Trees and Street Tree Planting Programs	50

Multi-Use Trail System Development	51
Service Delivery Strategy	51
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>LAND USE</b>
	<b>52</b>
LAND USE TRENDS, 2003-2009	52
Single-Family Residential Development	52
Multi-Family Residential Development	52
Public-Institutional Development	52
Office-Professional Development	53
Commercial Development	54
Industrial Development	54
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	54
Park/Recreation/Conservation	55
Agricultural and Vacant Land	55
SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAND USE IN 2009	56
EXAMINATION OF THE 2025 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN	58
An Opportunity for Reexamination	58
Office-Commercial Multi-Story Designation	58
Re-designation of OCMS Parcels as Multiple Use (MU)	59
Central Business District (CBD)	59
Stand-Alone Office Development along Pilgrim Mill Road	60
Re-Designation of Pilgrim Mill Road Corridor for Other Uses	60
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN 2030	62
Residential, Single-Family	62
Residential, Multi-Family	63
Residential, Mixed Use TND	63
Public/Institutional	64
Office Professional	64
Commercial	64
Office-Commercial Multi-Story	65
Mixed Use – Commercial	65
Mixed Use – CBD	65
Industrial	65
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	65
Park/Recreation/Conservation	65
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>POLICIES</b>
	<b>68</b>
NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT	68
General Environmental Policies	68
Flood Plain and Tributary Protection	69

Wetlands	69	
Watershed Protection Generally	70	
Big Creek Watershed	71	
Big Creek Ecological Greenway	71	
HISTORIC PRESERVATION	72	
HOUSING	72	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	74	
LAND USE	75	
Established Single-Family Neighborhoods	75	
Multi-Family Residential Development	75	
Central Business District (CBD)	76	
Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)	76	
Neighborhood Shopping	76	
Highway Commercial Corridors	77	
Planned Shopping Centers	77	
Office-Commercial Multi-Story Development	78	
Office Development	78	
Institutional Districts	78	
Industrial Districts	78	
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	79	
Land Development Process	79	
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES	79	
General Policy for Siting Community Facilities	79	
Water	79	
Sanitary Sewer	80	
Stormwater Management	81	
Fire Protection/Emergency Medical Services	81	
Police Department	82	
Parks and Recreation/Fairgrounds/Cultural Facilities	82	
Education	83	
General Government, Planning and Administration	83	
Health and Hospitals	83	
TRANSPORTATION	83	
Highways and Roads	83	
Alternative Transportation	84	
Other Transportation Policies	85	
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION	86	
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	<b>SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS</b>	<b>92</b>

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1	Summary Assessment: Environmental Protection and Open Space QCOs	2
Table 2	Summary Assessment: Growth Preparedness QCO	8
Table 3	Population Projections, 2005-2030, City of Cumming and Forsyth County (As adopted in 2003 Comprehensive Plan)	8
Table 4	Population Estimates, July 1, 2000-2007, City of Cumming and Forsyth County	8
Table 5	Employment Projections, 2000-2025, City of Cumming (2003 Comprehensive Plan)	10
Table 6	Revised Population, Housing and Employment Projections, 2009-2030, City of Cumming (City Limits as of April 2009)	10
Table 7	Summary Assessment: Employment and Education QCOs	14
Table 8	Establishments and Employment by Reported Industry Type, 2002, City of Cumming	15
Table 9	Establishments and Employment by Industry Type, 2006, 2007, and 2008, Forsyth County	16
Table 10	Summary Assessment: Housing, Traditional Neighborhood and Infill QCOs	19
Table 11	Summary Assessment: Character and Design-Related QCOs	26
Table 12	Summary Assessment: Transportation Alternatives QCO	31
Table 13	Summary Assessment: Regional and Coordination QCOs	36
Table 14	Labor Force and Unemployment, 2004-2008, Forsyth County	41
Table 15	Existing Land Use, April 2009, City of Cumming	56
Table 16	Future Land Use 2030 and Comparison with 2009, City of Cumming	67
Table 17	Short-Term Work Program, FY 2009-10 to FY 2013-14	88

**LIST OF MAPS**

Annexation Plan	42
Difficult to Develop Infill Sites	43
SR 9 Corridor Redevelopment Focus Area	44
Central Business District	45
Transitional Neighborhood/Target Community Development Area	46
Existing Land Use, April 2009, City of Cumming	57
Future Land Use Plan 2030, City of Cumming	66

# CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential. The Office of Planning and Quality Growth in turn created an assessment tool meant to give communities an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives set by the Department. The assessment is much like a demographic analysis or a land use map, showing a community that “you are here.”

This QCO assessment for the City of Cumming draws on the specific questions provided in DCA’s assessment tool, but it does not present the assessment in a checklist form, with yes or no answers. Also, some of the parameters for assessment are organized differently from that provided in the DCA assessment tool.

## PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

When the city of Cumming prepared its comprehensive plan in 2003, it was aware of the state’s Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) and in fact incorporated them into its overall vision statement and other parts of the adopted comprehensive plan. Chapter 1 of the 2003 comprehensive plan provides a summary of how the plan embraces the QCOs. This updated assessment of QCOs incorporates relevant parts of that prior analysis but provides an updated and more complete analysis, given the specific questions suggested in the Department of Community Affairs’ assessment tool.

## OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**“Environmental Protection Objective:** Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

**“Open Space Preservation Objective:** New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”

### Summary

Cumming is in compliance with these Quality Community Objectives, as Table 1 below indicates. The paragraphs which follow describe the extent to which the city complies with the various considerations suggested in the QCO assessment tool.

**Table 1  
Summary Assessment: Environmental Protection and Open Space QCOs**

<b>QCO Considerations</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Greenspace Plan	Compliant	Via countywide greenspace plan
Active Greenspace Preservation	Not compliant	City has focused on more active recreation activities (e.g., Mary Alice Park)
Set-asides in New Development	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance provisions for minimum landscaped open space. See also conservation subdivisions, Sec. 1809
Cooperation with State or National Land Conservation Programs	Compliant	No such programs apply within Cumming except for federal NRCS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Conservation Subdivision Ordinance	Fully compliant	Zoning Ordinance Article XVIII
Comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory	Fully compliant	Chapter 5 comprehensive plan
“Part V” Environmental Ordinances	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance Articles X, XI, XII
Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Natural Resources	Compliant; improvement suggested	Flood plain and soil erosion ordinances; suggestions for additional code provisions for steeply sloping lands
Tree Preservation and Tree-Replanting Ordinances	Partially compliant	Landscape plan required, zoning ordinance; stronger tree protection and replanting requirements not supported locally
Stormwater Best Management Practices for all New Development	Fully compliant	Stormwater ordinance adopted 2005 in compliance with Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District requirements

**Greenspace Plan**

Forsyth County adopted a Greenspace Plan in the year 2000 and has incorporated it into its current comprehensive plan (see Appendix B). Preparation of countywide greenspace plans required a goal of maintaining 20 percent or more of the total land area in the county as protected open space. The plan recognized that the county was well short of that and unlikely to attain an additional 45 square miles of greenspace. The countywide greenspace plan did not envision acquiring any land within the city limits of Cumming, the county’s only municipality. However, just to the northwest of Cumming lies Sawnee Mountain, at an elevation of approximately 1,960 feet, also referred to as Sawnee Mountain Ridge, and that area forms a key target for greenspace acquisition strategies.

Sawnee Mountain consists of 1,166 acres of undeveloped land. On July 20, 2000, the county formally acquired a portion (174.1) acres of the Sawnee Mountain property. The countywide greenspace plan envisions that the Sawnee Mountain conservation zone will be expanded to include the entire mountain, with eventual development of portions of it as a passive use recreation area, containing trails and interpretive areas. As of 2000, Forsyth County had set aside four million dollars for purchase of Sawnee Mountain Ridge properties. U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers sites around Lake Lanier were also assumed in the countywide greenspace plan to comprise 16 percent (4,722 acres), a large amount, of the total county protected greenspace.

### **Active Greenspace Preservation**

There are no active efforts on the part of the City of Cumming to acquire permanently protected green space. However, see the discussion below about the City of Cumming’s involvement in further development of Mary Alice Park, a Lake Lanier recreation site owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers but now under a long-term lease by the city.

### **Set-asides in New Development**

Minimum landscaped open space (percent of total land area) is required for several (all non-single-family) zoning districts in the City of Cumming. The minimum percentages range from a low of 10 percent in manufacturing zoning districts to 35 percent in the Office-Commercial Multi-Story zoning district. The Cumming zoning ordinance defines “landscaped open space” as “that portion or portions of a given lot, not covered by buildings, pavement, parking, access and service areas, set aside and maintained as a buffer, landscape strip or other approved open area.” Also, within conservation subdivisions, open space refers to “the portion of the conservation subdivision that has been set aside for permanent protection,” and each conservation subdivision must provide at least 40 percent of the gross land area of the subdivision as restricted open space (Section 1809.1 zoning ordinance).

### **Cooperation with State or National Land Conservation Programs**

There are no known national or state programs actively occurring within the city or at its fringes with regard to land conservation. However, as noted in other sections of this assessment, Forsyth County intends to continue acquiring conservation land northwest of the city at Sawnee Mountain Ridge. Also, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) works with residents to encourage the wise use of our natural resources on both agricultural and non-agricultural land.

Also, the shorelines of Lake Lanier are under federal control (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Cumming is engaged in the operation and development of the Mary Alice Park site under a long-term lease. There are national and private efforts to further protect the Chattahoochee River corridor below Lake Lanier (i.e., the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and acquisition efforts by the Trust for Public Land). The City of Cumming is not directly involved in these efforts since its geography does not coincide with the Chattahoochee River.



**Mary Alice Park has been leased from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by the City of Cumming and, as of April 2009, is an operational city park.**

## Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

In May 2005, the City of Cumming amended its 2003 zoning ordinance to adopt a new Article XVIII, “conservation subdivisions.” Cumming is therefore in compliance with the mandate of the North Georgia Water Planning District that local governments adopt and provide for conservation subdivisions. In many developed parts of metropolitan Atlanta, there are relatively few opportunities for conservation subdivision principles to be applied. However, there appear to be significant opportunities remaining for conservation subdivisions to be developed in parts of Cumming. At issue is whether the conservation subdivision option will be chosen by area subdividers, or whether it will remain largely unused and inapplicable in Cumming. Policy changes encouraging conservation subdivisions may not be enough, and the city might consider stronger code requirements that force land developers to consider more seriously the conservation subdivision principles.

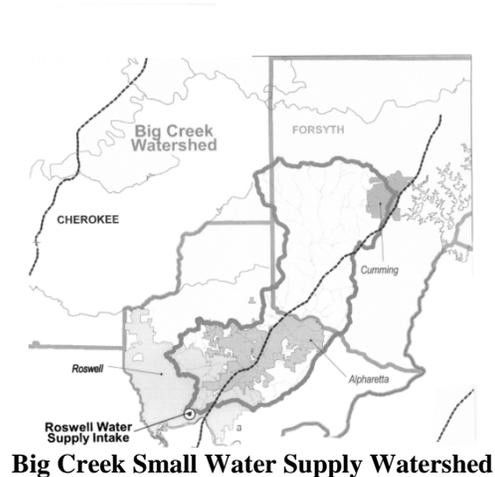
## Comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory

Cumming’s comprehensive plan, adopted in 2004, provides a comprehensive inventory of natural resources (see Chapter 5). That chapter maps and describes all major natural resources in the city, including wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, water supply watersheds, flood plains, slopes of 20 percent or more, and soils and their limitations on development. Therefore, Cumming is considered compliant with this strategy to promote the environmental protection objective.

### “Part V” Environmental Ordinance Adoption and Enforcement

As a part of the revised zoning ordinance in 2003, Cumming adopted the environmental planning criteria adopted in 1990 pursuant to the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. Article X covers groundwater recharge areas, Article XI provides regulations for the Big Creek Water Supply Watershed, and Article XII provides regulations for wetlands. The regulations are enforced by the Director of Planning and Zoning as a part of the zoning ordinance. Therefore, Cumming is in compliance with this program which implements the environmental protection objective.

However, the issue has historically been and remains more complex with regard to protection of the Big Creek (“small”) water supply watershed. The majority of land in the city limits of Cumming lies within the watershed of Big Creek, which is a water supply in the City of Roswell which has a water intake above the Chattahoochee River, several miles (outside a seven mile radius) downstream of Cumming. As alluded to above, Cumming has adopted the Environmental Planning Criteria for water supply watersheds (DNR Rule 391-3-16-01), as applicable to the Big Creek watershed, per Article XI of the zoning ordinance.



Those regulations establish 50 foot buffer requirements on both sides of streams and tributaries of Big Creek within the City of Cumming, as well as minimum 75-foot setback for septic tanks and septic tank drainfields from those streams and tributaries. In addition, the city's regulations (Article XI of the zoning ordinance) reference the state environmental planning criterion that the Big Creek small water supply watershed shall not exceed twenty five percent impervious. Since the mid 1990s, if not before, it was recognized that the Big Creek small water supply watershed was unlikely to meet the 25 percent maximum impervious surface coverage threshold established by the state. Reasons for not meeting that standard include extensive development existing in Roswell and Alpharetta, and extensive non-residential development in all local jurisdictions upstream of the Roswell water intake.

It is important to underscore that the 25 percent maximum impervious surface standard is for the watershed as a whole, not for individual jurisdictions in the watershed. Obviously, such a requirement would have to be coordinated among all the local governments in the watershed. Trying to enforce that watershed rule would mean that localities that had experienced in later time periods (e.g., Forsyth County and the City of Cumming) would have to place severe limitations on impervious surface due to the extensive existing development that had already occurred (or had been approved) in lower parts of the watershed (e.g., Roswell and Alpharetta). That consideration led to equity concerns, that upstream local governments should not be held to a higher standard than what existed or took place in the more developed, downstream jurisdictions. Furthermore, the situation led to concerns about the confiscatory possibilities such development limitations would pose on private property rights in the watershed. The 25 percent impervious limit for small water supply watersheds has led some to interpret the rule erroneously to suggest that each jurisdiction should limit its portion of the watershed to 25 percent, when again the rule is applied on the basis of the entire watershed. And again, to apply it to each individual local government would raise serious equity considerations for upstream local governments.

Recognizing those concerns, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) conducted a study of the Big Creek water supply watershed in the mid-1990s in an effort to establish an alternative to the 25 percent impervious limitation. Generally, ARC sought to prepare a watershed protection plan and program that would meet the alternative criterion established in DNR Rule 391-3-16-01. Specifically, the state rule provides that "criteria different than those in (6) and (7) [minimum criteria for large and small water supply watersheds, respectively] may be presented to the Department of Natural Resources by all the local governments within a water supply watershed. The Department of Natural Resources may approve such criteria if the Department of Natural Resources deems them to provide an equivalent level of protection to the criteria of (6) and (7), and if they provide at least as much stream corridor buffer and set back area in the watershed as the criteria of (6) and (7)."

While the study by ARC resulted in a report and meetings among local governments in the Big Creek watershed, it does not appear that any alternative criteria were agreed to by the affected local governments and/or presented to DNR. The ARC study has been largely forgotten.

The issue of limiting impervious surface in the Big Creek watershed has recently been revived by a watchdog group, “Smart Growth Forsyth, Inc.” According to a newspaper account, the group has called for a building moratorium in Forsyth County’s portion of the watershed, contending that only 1,600 acres of some 32,000 acres in Forsyth County’s share of the watershed remain usable for development.<sup>1</sup>

### **Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Natural Resources**

There are three primary areas of concern with regard to environmentally sensitive lands in Cumming. The first is flood plains. Cumming has a flood damage prevention or floodplain management ordinance which was rewritten and readopted August 15, 2006 as Chapter 38 of the Cumming City Code.

Secondly, while most of the City of Cumming’s topography does not pose significant limitations on development, there are some areas that are considered to have steep slopes (20 percent or more as defined in the adopted comprehensive plan. The City has not enacted regulations to deal specifically with properties that have steep slopes. One such area, as mapped in the comprehensive plan, is Bald Ridge, which parallels Georgia 400 on the west. There is a difference in elevation of at least 100 feet between the top of Bald Ridge and Georgia 400, thus posing some difficult topography to develop. There are also some steep ridge lines in western Cumming, where land descends steeply to Kelley Mill Creek and Sawnee Creek.

Generally, Cumming’s land development and soil erosion are considered sufficient regulations to address steeply sloping lands. However, because these steep slopes present a greater potential for soil erosion and permanently visible land alterations upon development, some consideration should be given to more restrictions on the development of steep slopes. As noted in the comprehensive plan, these significantly sloping lands are among the last to be developed in the city, thereby potentially justifying more scrutiny in the land development process. One such policy existing in the comprehensive plan is to limit development to no higher than 25 feet above the ridgeline of Bald Ridge.

A third area of concern deals with what are termed “environmentally sensitive parcels” in the Cumming Zoning Ordinance. Section 719 of the Cumming Zoning Ordinance addresses Environmentally Sensitive Parcels, which are lands “that have been previously used as a landfill or are known to pose substantial public environmental concerns.” Prior to development or redevelopment, such lands are required to be preceded by a land reuse study and environmental strategy which describe the suitability of the proposed building, structure, or use on the parcel given its prior use, the stability of the ground, and the potential risk to the proposed buildings or structures and any occupants of any proposed buildings or structures, or proposed use established, on the site. environmental strategy may be required to address toxins, methane gas, or any other environmental issues that are likely to occur or be present as a result of the prior use of said parcel. The environmental mitigation or remediation recommended by a qualified professional may be made a condition of any building permit on any of the environmental sensitive parcels.

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<sup>1</sup> Badertscher, Nancy. March 5, 2009. “Watchdog Group Urges Building Moratorium.” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Page c-3.

## Tree Preservation and Tree-Replanting Ordinances

Cumming’s zoning ordinance regulates land development, and as noted elsewhere in this assessment, most zoning districts require a minimum amount of landscaped open space be provided as development occurs. Also, within office, commercial, institutional and industrial zoning districts, landscape strips are required along right-of-ways. Minimum landscaping requirements are enforced through the land disturbance and development permit processes, which must include a landscape plan in order to meet the minimum landscaped open space requirements. The definition of “landscaping” specifically includes the preservation of existing vegetation, including trees. There are certain buffer requirements along riparian areas and between potentially incompatible zoning districts which undoubtedly result in the retention of existing trees. While these provisions are bound to result in some protection and preservation of existing trees and the planting of new ones within required landscape strips and landscaped open space areas, the existing regulations do not specifically require a minimum number of trees.

## Stormwater Best Management Practices for all New Development

Mandates to implement best management practices (BMPs) (both structural and non-structural) are described in the city’s stormwater permit. In May 2005, Cumming adopted a new stormwater management ordinance which meets the mandate of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. Furthermore, in 2005, the city evaluated the organization and staffing in the Utilities Department with an eye toward full enforcement of stormwater best management practices. Therefore, Cumming is in full compliance with this consideration.



**This photo, not from the City of Cumming, illustrates the potential degradation of water quality without enforcement of stormwater best management practices.**

## GROWTH PREPAREDNESS

**“Growth Preparedness Objective:** Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.”

### Summary

Cumming is in compliance with this Quality Community Objective, as Table 2 indicates. The paragraphs which follow describe the extent to which the city complies with the various considerations suggested in the QCO assessment tool.

**Table 2  
Summary Assessment: Growth Preparedness QCO**

<b>QCO Considerations</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Growth Trends and Projections	Fully Compliant	Updated as a part of this plan update
Population Projections for Infrastructure Decisions	Fully Compliant	City has and will update detailed projections for the water and sewer service area on which to base master water and sewer plans
Compatibility of Projections with School Board Projections	Not Applicable	Such projections are not readily available
Review of Zoning Code and Development Regulations	Fully Compliant	Comprehensively updated during the 2003-2005 time period; see recommendations for environmental protection and open space QCOs
Land Development Process	Partially compliant; improvements suggested	Recommendations are made to improve understanding of requirements
Capital Improvements Program	Fully Compliant	Updated as part of this planning process
Designated Areas for Growth	Fully Compliant	See revised future land use plan map and vacant areas shown on existing land use map

**Growth Trends and Projections in Relation to Infrastructure**

In order to assess this quality community objective, it is necessary to acknowledge and quantify recent development activities in the community and compare them with adopted growth projections.

**Table 3  
Population Projections, 2005-2030  
City of Cumming and Forsyth County  
(As adopted in 2003 Comprehensive Plan)**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
City of Cumming	5,263	5,608	6,476	7,224	7,974
Forsyth County	131,569	160,219	185,019	206,419	227,819

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc. 2002.

**Table 4  
Population Estimates, July 1, 2000-2007  
City of Cumming and Forsyth County**

<b>Total Population</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Cumming	4,281	4,481	4,816	5,060	5,376	5,742	5,785	5,842
Forsyth County	100,516	108,763	116,264	123,292	130,472	138,691	148,307	158,914

Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. Annual Estimates of the Population for Incorporated Places in Georgia: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007. Release Date: July 10, 2008. Annual Estimates of the Population for Counties of Georgia: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007. Release Date: March 20, 2008. Figures are July 1<sup>st</sup> of the year.

A comparison of the projections in 2005 and 2010 with recent population estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that Cumming's population has increased faster than what was anticipated in the comprehensive plan during the last five years. In fact, as of 2005, Cumming exceeded (by slightly more than 100 persons) the 2010 projections for the city's population made in the 2003 comprehensive plan. Similarly, Forsyth County exceeded the 2005 population estimate in the county and city comprehensive plans (which used the same projections) by about 7,000 persons. As of 2008, Forsyth County's population estimate is more than 168,000, considerably higher than the 2010 projection. While the county's recent housing and population increases have exceeded projections, the recent and ongoing economic recession (2008-2009) has slowed that pace of growth and it is possible Forsyth County will not sustain its past population and housing growth trends due to overbuilding and anticipated market saturation time frames. It is also instructive to note that Forsyth County's longer term population of 227,000 persons in the year 2025 may not require revision (and indeed have been retained in the Forsyth County comprehensive plan update).

The majority of Cumming's population increase of about 800 people, from 2003 to 2007, is attributed to housing construction in just three developments. During that time period or shortly thereafter, Cumming added about 190 townhouses in one project off Castleberry Road, 20 single-family detached homes north of Kelly Mill Road, and 160 units in a townhouse project off Veterans Memorial Parkway at Atlanta Road (SR 9). These three developments constituted virtually all of the total population gain during the time period. The adopted comprehensive plan did not provide a detailed buildout analysis, but indicated that *major* (not all) vacant residentially zoned properties in Cumming could yield an addition of approximately 700 housing units. While that figure did not include all vacant residentially zoned land and did not account for the city's change in land use policy to allow for higher density housing in the central business district, it is evident from the future land use plan that the city can accommodate an additional estimated 2,260 housing units.

These findings regarding the city's population growth exceeding projections are all the more reason why Cumming's existing land use inventory should be updated. Furthermore, a more refined method for projecting the buildout of development in the city would be of great benefit to the city in its planning processes. Accordingly, that work is done as a part of the plan update.

As noted in the adopted comprehensive plan, it is difficult to predict population increases that might occur due to annexation. Adding one major subdivision can substantially influence the city's total population. As a part of this plan update, given requirements of the partial plan update rules of the state to consider future annexation areas, a map has been prepared that shows possible future annexation areas. While no policy basis exists requiring the city to annex these areas in the future, the future city limit boundaries is useful in terms of Forsyth County and the city in anticipating possible future service arrangements. Accordingly, it is desirable to have a "order of magnitude" estimate of the city's population and employment at buildout, if it annexes these lands.

Shifting from population to employment, the city’s adopted comprehensive plan provides projections of employment by industry. The total employment projections adopted by the city are provided in Table 5. It is necessary to reconsider these employment projections, which were prepared in 2002 as a part of both the city and county comprehensive planning processes. They also need to be updated for the year 2030. It is important to note, as alluded to under the discussion of employment options and related Quality Community Objectives, that employment data for the city are extremely limited.

**Table 5**  
**Employment Projections, 2000-2025**  
**City of Cumming**  
**(2003 Comprehensive Plan)**

<b>Employment</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
City of Cumming	10,810	12,885	15,300	18,945	21,675	23,050

Source: City of Cumming Comprehensive Plan.

As a result of various research, including detailed analysis of employment data at the county and (to the extent available) city and zip code levels of geography and an update of the city’s existing and future land use plan maps, a set of revised population and employment projections are provided below for the current city limits, and for the city limits assuming annexation as shown on the map of possible future city limits.

**Table 6**  
**Revised Population, Housing and Employment Projections, 2009-2030**  
**City of Cumming**  
**(Forecasted Buildout of City Limits as of April 2009)**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2030</b>
Total Population	6,000	6,150	7,500	8,850	10,200	11,550
Total Housing Units	1,965	2,020	2,560	3,100	3,640	4,180
Total Employment	17,000	18,155	20,925	23,700	26,500	29,275

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc. 2009.

For the City of Cumming, preparing for growth has, appropriately, focused primarily on ensuring that adequate water and sewer facilities will be in place to serve new development within the city and its larger service area. As other sections of this Partial Plan Update show, Cumming has prepared and implemented a capital improvement program for its water and sewer facilities, and in that regard it meets the spirit and intent of this quality community objective. The city has recently prepared, in a map format, updated master plans for water and sanitary sewer facilities within its service area. It is desirable that the city keep these master plan maps updated, and further, it is desirable that it reconsider those master plans after doing more quantitative analysis of future needs, via population, housing, and employment projections.

The city has also planned ahead for its future administrative space needs, by constructing a city hall which will serve its facility needs for several years to come. It has also planned improvements at city parks and at the fairgrounds.

Rapid growth in Forsyth County has stressed the road system, particularly state routes. For its part, Cumming has widened to four lanes major local roads leading to and within the city, including Veterans Memorial Parkway, Castleberry Road, and Tribble Gap Road. It has also participated with the county in other local road improvements to Mary Alice Park Road and the extension of Market Place Boulevard, among others.

While Cumming has anticipated and been responsive to future demands on the local road system, the state route system is largely outside the scope of the city's responsibility and must receive financial attention of the Georgia Department of Transportation. Significant improvements over time have occurred to address traffic congestion on states routes in Cumming, such as the installation of a one-way pair system of roads between GA 400 and downtown (i.e., Pirkle Ferry Road and Maple Street), but it is generally accepted that potential remedies to traffic congestion are limited and that the state is largely unable to improve further the traffic flow on state routes in downtown Cumming. As stated in Forsyth County's Partial Plan Update:

“Projections show that, even after the 2030 road improvements are completed, 35 percent of Forsyth County roadways will operate at a level of service (LOS) of E or F. If funding shortfalls arise and some projects are not completed, those roadways could experience increased congestion resulting in countywide traffic problems. All but four of the Forsyth County roads that are projected to operate at a LOS of E or F in 2030 are state routes.”

### **Population Projections for Infrastructure Decisions**

Prior subsections of this section of the plan update describe overall population and employment projections for the city, which have been used in arriving at the existing master plans for infrastructure. However, as also noted above, the city has an extraterritorial water and sewer service area (i.e., it extends well beyond the current city limits, as shown in the adopted comprehensive plan. It is desirable that the city continue to update the projections of population and employment in the city's entire water and sewer service area. The city's short term work program includes this update as a future planning effort.

### **Compatibility of Projections with School Board Projections**

A search for population projections by the Forsyth County Board of Education did not yield any results. Therefore, at this time no comparison of the school board's projections with the city's can be made, to determine the degree of compatibility or incompatibility.

### **Review of Zoning Code and Development Regulations**

Cumming comprehensively revised its zoning ordinance and official zoning map in 2003. In 2005, it amended the zoning ordinance. In May 2005, the city amended the zoning regulations to provide new regulatory chapters on conservation subdivisions and stream buffers. At that time,

it also rewrote and adopted the model ordinances required for local governments within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. Such regulations included revised flood damage prevention, soil erosion and sediment control, and subdivision and land development ordinances, as well as a new/revised stormwater ordinance. In 2008, the city adopted a comprehensive sign ordinance, and in 2009, the city adopted a new multi use zoning district as a part of the Cumming Zoning Ordinance. Generally, Cumming has met the spirit and intent of this program consideration by keeping its regulations up to date, particularly in light of state and regional mandates.

### **Understanding of Land Development Processes**

This section combines several considerations suggested in the DCA QCO assessment tool, including the clarity and ease of understanding of development requirements, efforts to educate the citizens about land development processes, and efforts to maintain public awareness about planning and development issues.

Cumming's land development process is not complex or burdensome. Some but not all of the forms required to undertake development or to obtain a permit from the city are available from the city via its webpage under the Planning and Zoning Department.

The application form for a land disturbance (grading) permit is simple, at one page, and available from the city's planning and zoning department website for download. Fees are indicated on the permit application form. However, applicants may not know whether their project is "major" or "minor," and there are no definitions in the form or reference to them available on the web page. The applicant is asked whether the project is a development of regional impact (DRI) or not yet may not know whether its project qualifies or not as a DRI. Also, the process of following the city's regulations is not summarized, and the regulations for issuing land disturbance permits are not available for download directly from the city's website. It is clear that the city requires that land development applicants submit their soil erosion plans separately to the Upper Chattahoochee River Soil and Water Conservation District prior to the city's approval. The process for inspections for land development does not appear to be specified.

The web-accessible information is also not as clear as it could be regarding the relationship of land disturbance permit approval to utility permitting. The city is the water and sewer utility provider, and the city also controls all utility approvals in-house. Fee amounts are available from the City of Cumming Utility Department's webpage, which is separate from the main web page of the city. There is also a section titled "4-Developers" which explains the fee requirements. Utilities-related ordinances are available for download, including stormwater management requirements. It is not immediately apparent how an applicant would navigate the utility site to inquire about approval of all plans, but all of the construction specifications (standard drawings) are available from the utilities web page and are available for download.

Given this brief review of land development permitting information via the web, it appears that the city's process is understandable but could be facilitated more easily with enhancements, additions, and cross-links to web-accessible information. While these observations apply only to the land development permitting process, they are likely to be applicable to several other permit

processes such as sign permitting and the rezoning, conditional use, and variance processes. Furthermore, the city should look for additional permitting processes specified in its ordinances and provide information for them on the appropriate website.

### **Capital Improvements Program**

The city's comprehensive plan includes a capital improvement program, which emphasizes water and wastewater improvements. As a part of this plan update, the city had updated the capital program as needed.

### **Designated Areas for Growth**

The city's future land use plan map has been updated as a part of this planning process. All vacant lands are anticipated to be developed during the 20-year planning horizon and are available for future development in accordance with the city's future land use plan map and zoning regulations.

## **EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

**“Appropriate Business Objective:** The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

**“Employment Options Objective:** A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

**“Educational Opportunities Objective:** Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

### **Summary**

Cumming is in compliance with these Quality Community Objectives, as Table 7 indicates. The paragraphs which follow describe the extent to which the city complies with the various considerations suggested in the QCO assessment tool.

**Table 7  
Summary Assessment: Employment and Education QCOs**

<b>QCO Considerations</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Analysis of Types of Existing Businesses	Fully Compliant	Analysis updated in this document
Diversity of Job Base	Fully Compliant	Analysis updated in this document
Business Development Strategy	Fully Compliant	See Chamber of Commerce
Plans to Recruit Compatible Businesses and Industries	Fully Compliant	Plans articulated by Chamber of Commerce
Entrepreneur Support Program	Fully Compliant	Chamber of Commerce
Workforce Training Options	Fully Compliant	See Lanier Technical College
Higher Education Opportunities	Fully Compliant	North Georgia College & State University

**Analysis of Types of Existing Businesses**

As the only incorporated municipality and the central economy hub of Forsyth County, the City of Cumming has a very strong economic base and a wide variety of businesses and sources of jobs. At the outset, it is noted that data for employment within municipalities is generally not available. One of the best sources of employment data at the municipal level is the U.S. Census Bureau’s Economic Censuses. The adopted comprehensive plan reported data for 1997, then the most recent census available, and which presented some statistics for the City of Cumming’s economy. The last economic census published and available is for the year 2002. While the economic censuses do provide information for some cities, they do not report all industry sectors in the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS), which replaced the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) coding system which was used before.

Table 8 provides data for the number of establishments and employees by reported industry sector. This is not a complete picture of total employment, as several industry types (NAICS) are not reported in the 2002 Economic Censuses and therefore not shown in Table 8. Furthermore, the Economic Censuses do not include government employees and self-employed persons.

As is evident in Table 8, Cumming is the location for a substantial share of the county’s employment, totaling almost 30 percent of those industry sectors shown in the table. As of 2002 Cumming had 42 manufacturing establishments employing 2,374 workers, or more than one-third of manufacturing employment in Forsyth County. The most significant manufacturers in Cumming is Tyson’s Foods, with a reported employment of 1,200.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Georgia 2000 Information System, Georgia Manufacturers Directory. Original Source: Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, 2001.

**Table 8**  
**Establishments and Employment**  
**by Reported Industry Type, 2002, City of Cumming**  
 (see text for industry sectors excluded)

2002 NAICS Code	Industry	Forsyth County, 2002		City of Cumming, 2002		
		Establishments	Employees	Establishments	Employees	% of County Employment
31-33	Manufacturing	169	6,712	42	2,374	35.4%
42	Wholesale Trade	348	3,364	53	354	10.5%
44-45	Retail Trade	358	5,185	115	2,672	51.5%
51	Information	51	2,583	19	296	11.5%
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	152	469	42	152	32.4%
54	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	490	2,342	104	346	14.8%
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Service	213	5,853	27	966	16.5%
61	Educational Services	18	98	4	56	57.1%
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	171	1,792	86	958	53.5%
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	37	428	6	54	12.6%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	127	2,376	48	1,015	42.7%
81	Other Services (Except Public Administration)	184	902	47	244	27.1%
Total	Selected Industries Shown (Source Reported)	2,318	32,104	593	9,487	29.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder. 2002 Economic Census. Geographic Area Series: Economy-Wide Key Statistics: 2002. Note: Data not reported for certain NAICS codes.

As of 2002, Cumming had more than one-half of all retail trade jobs and more than 42 percent of all jobs in the accommodation and food services industries in Forsyth County. Since 2002, retail trade establishments have grown in a decentralized pattern throughout much of Forsyth County, but expansion of retail trade along Market Place Boulevard has been substantial and Cumming is still expected to have a majority or nearly a majority of the retail trade establishments and employment in Forsyth County. Similarly, Cumming is the services center for the county, with a majority of the jobs in educational services and health care and social assistance in the county as of 2002. While not shown in Table 8, Cumming is also the government center of the county, with a concentration of city, county, state, and federal government offices as well as a significant number of the county's public schools. Again, the figures in Table 8 do not represent a complete picture due to data reporting limitations of the U.S. Census Bureau in its Economic Censuses. More recent employment data by industry are provided for Forsyth County in Table 9. These figures include government employment data.

The figures in Table 9 provide data on government employees, which as alluded to before is quite significant. Local, state, and federal government employment in Forsyth County grew by nearly 500 persons in a single year, totaling almost 6,500 persons in Forsyth County as of the

first quarter of calendar year 2008. As noted, a significant share if not a majority of government employers are located within the city limits of Cumming.

**Table 9**  
**Establishments and Employment by Industry Type**  
**2006, 2007, and 2008 Forsyth County**  
**(by Place of Work)**

2002 NAICS Code	Industry	Forsyth County, 2006 (County Business Patterns)		Forsyth County, 2007 (Ga. Dept. of Labor)		Forsyth County, 2008 (Ga. Dept. of Labor)	
		Establishments	Employees	Establishments	Employees	Establishments	Employees
11	Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, & Ag Support Services	5	D	14	107	14	95
21	Mining	5	111	5	100	5	83
22	Utilities	4	D	3	D	3	D
23	Construction	731	7,979	767	7,462	802	7,043
31-33	Manufacturing	198	7,461	225	8,718	231	8,832
42	Wholesale Trade	387	4,614	515	5,393	553	5,361
44-45	Retail Trade	447	6,676	406	6,322	449	6,596
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing	90	1,297	86	820	89	854
51	Information	70	1,229	57	618	66	643
52	Finance & Insurance	245	1,525	254	1,719	276	1,545
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	279	592	269	531	266	529
54	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	676	2,734	767	3,529	845	4,353
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	21	1,250	20	D	17	D
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Service	294	3,761	378	4,595	402	4,698
61	Educational Services	52	426	66	412	77	456
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	238	2,798	283	3,686	311	4,176
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	38	556	41	550	49	562
72	Accommodation & Food Services	187	3,736	211	3,873	224	4,201
81	Other Services (Except Public Administration)	301	2,007	270	1,272	278	1,327
99	Industries Not Classified	8	D	82	67	92	64
Total	Private Sector (Total Shown)	4,276	48,752	4,719	49,774	5,049	51,418
Total	Private Sector (Source Reported)	4,276	49,101	4,721	50,441	5,049	52,140
	Federal Government	NR	NR	8	204	8	199
	State Government	NR	NR	17	239	16	236
	Local Government	NR	NR	38	5,566	38	6,061
Total	Government	NR	NR	63	6,009	62	6,496
Total	Private Sector and Government	NR	NR	4,784	56,449	5,111	58,636

Note: "D" = withheld due to non-disclosure requirements.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. June 30, 2008. American FactFinder. *County Business Patterns, 2006*. Georgia Department of Labor. 2008. *Georgia Employment & Wages 2007 Averages*. Georgia Department of Labor. November 24, 2008. *Area Labor Profile, Forsyth County* (data for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2008 only).

## **Diversity of Job Base versus a Reliance on Single Industries**

One can conclude from the foregoing analysis of industries that the city has a well-diversified economic base, one that is especially strong in government, retail trade, manufacturing, and health care, but that also maintains substantial shares of total county employment in other industry sectors such as real estate and significant shares in others such as information. Cumming's revised future land use plan provides for expansion of all major sectors of the economy. There is considerable vacant acreage for the expansion of retail trade, office-professional establishments, and services, health care in particular. And there are still properties within Cumming that can be developed for light industrial and manufacturing establishments. Hence, Cumming provides significant opportunities now and is poised to continue being the location for a wide variety of jobs for skilled labor, unskilled labor, recent college graduates, and professionals and managers.

## **Analysis of Strengths/Weaknesses and Business Development Strategy**

The Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce is a joint effort between the city and the county to provide information and resources to the citizens both within the city limits and in the unincorporated areas. The Chamber provides information on community events, education, economic development, new arrivals, and sporting events.

According to Forsyth County's Partial Plan Update, The Development Authority of Forsyth County, in conjunction with Forsyth County government and the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce, recently completed a target market analysis for Cumming and Forsyth County. This analysis covers strengths, challenges, and opportunities for both the city and county which was incorporated into the development of the county's business strategy plan.

The analysis determined that despite the recent decline in activity, the sagging national housing market, and the dipping consumer confidence, Forsyth County has and will continue to experience growth due to factors such as its location within the Atlanta metropolitan region, its workforce talents, and its lower tax rate in comparison to surrounding jurisdictions. The business analysis strategy has taken into consideration not only the factors listed above, but also input from the community, the existing economic base, and desired industries as well as national industrial trends (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

## **Plans to Recruit Compatible Businesses and Industries**

Pharmaceutical manufacturing and testing is a new growth industry target that the County is interested in pursuing (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

## **Entrepreneur Support Program**

The Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce operates a small business center which develops programs and initiatives to assist the local small business community. Forsyth has been labeled as Georgia's 30th Entrepreneur Friendly County, and through the Chamber it offers year

round small business classes such as long range strategic planning, job market trends, and advertising 101, in addition to a business expo and entrepreneur conference. In 2008, the Chamber created the community's first small business accelerator which is designed to seek out small business owners and entrepreneurs who are established and ready to grow in their business. This service also provides mentoring and business coaching through community business leaders and stakeholders to foster business growth, and create an initiative centered around new job creation and community based "economic gardening." (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

### **Workforce Training Options**

Lanier Technical College serves as the leading workforce development resource for eight counties, including Forsyth, by providing adult education and technical training to support the economic development and well being of the community. Lanier Technical College has a branch located in Forsyth County which provides an economic development program called Quick Start. This program specializes in customized workforce training free of charge to qualified businesses in Georgia. Today, the program is one of the state's key assets for supporting new and expanding industries by training and educating residents within the community to successfully obtain and excel in various employment opportunities (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

### **Existence of or Proximity to Higher Education Opportunities**

North Georgia College and State University has a satellite Masters in Business Administration (MBA) program in the City of Cumming. It operates out of the fourth floor of Cumming City Hall. There are plans immediately underway for North Georgia College and State University to build a new campus on city-owned property between Pilgrim Mill Road and Georgia 400, which will further enhance higher education offerings in the locality. Cumming is located within convenient travel distances to other universities and colleges in Gwinnett and Fulton Counties.

## **HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

**"Housing Opportunities Objective:** Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community."

**"Traditional Neighborhood Objective:** Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity."

**"Infill Development Objective:** Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community."

**Summary**

When Cumming prepared its current comprehensive plan in 2003, it was aware of the state’s Quality Community Objectives and indeed adopted the QCOs. Cumming scores relatively well with regard to implementation of all measures associated with these three QCOs. It meets virtually all housing opportunities considerations although there are some additional recommendations for Cumming that flow from this analysis. Cumming’s Central Business District clearly matches the description and vision for the traditional neighborhood development QCO. Furthermore, the city has put in place appropriate mixed use development opportunities and has amended the future land use plan map to accommodate stand-alone traditional neighborhood development.

**Table 10  
Summary Assessment: Housing, Traditional Neighborhood and Infill QCOs**

<b>QCO Considerations</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Mixed Use Districts	Fully compliant	CBD; new mixed use zoning district
Traditional Neighborhoods	Not fully compliant	See revised future land use plan map
Infill Development	Fully compliant	Revised existing land use inventory showing vacant sites
Redevelopment	Partially compliant; implementation needed	SR 9 corridor and CBD identified; more detailed planning suggested
Brownfield and Greyfield Development	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance Section 719
Nodal Versus Strip or Linear Commercial Development	Not compliant	Land use plan recognizes linear commercial zoning patterns
Small Lot Residential Development	Not compliant	Generally inconsistent with city land use policies; some prospects exist, however
Development Following the Pattern of the Original Town	Compliant to the extent applicable	Policy support in comprehensive plan
Allowance for Accessory Housing Units	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance Table 5.1 and Section 702
Affordable Housing for Workers in the Community	Fully compliant	Wide variety of affordable housing opportunities exist in the city
Sufficient Housing for Each Income Level	Fully compliant	Wide variety of affordable housing opportunities exist in the city
Options for Loft living and Downtown Living	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance CBD zoning district; loft project in CBD complete
Other Allowances for Multi-family Housing	Not compliant – reconsideration suggested	Prescriptive standards for amount of bedrooms should be evaluated against market needs
Vacant and Developable Land Available for Multi-family Housing	Compliant	One large site available and zoned; more prospects exist for multi-family housing within mixed use developments
Community Development Corporations	Not compliant	No known CDCs operating in Cumming
Households with Special Housing Needs	Fully compliant	Zoning ordinance is permissive

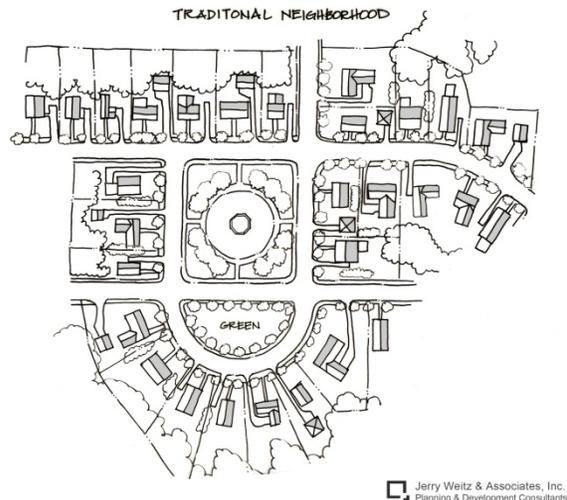
With regard to the infill development QCO, the city complies with this objective by updating its existing land use inventory, promoting concentrated development in its CBD, and with plans to pursue redevelopment along the Atlanta Street (SR 9) corridor and in the CBD.

### One or More Mixed Use Districts

Most of the zoning districts established in Cumming’s zoning ordinance are single purpose such as for residential, institutional, commercial, etc. Single-family, detached dwellings are permitted outright in several non-residential zoning districts, including office-professional, institutional, neighborhood commercial, and highway business. This means that any one of those zoning districts can have a mixture of single-family and non-residential uses (i.e., “horizontal mixed uses”). The Central Business District (CBD) zoning district allows dwellings, located within a building containing another principal use, which is a form of “vertical” mixed use. In addition, the city in 2009 amended the zoning ordinance to create a new mixed use district. Therefore, the city authorizes the mixing of uses in a limited fashion in non-residential zoning districts and to a more formal extent in the CBD and the mixed use zoning districts. The city therefore complies with this criterion.

### Traditional Neighborhood Development by Right

There are a few existing neighborhoods close to the central business district with some of the characteristics of traditional neighborhoods. As noted elsewhere in this plan update, many of these neighborhoods are older (1950s and 1960s) and may become “areas requiring special attention” because of probable land use transitions to other uses and/or the need to target them for community development programs. Revisions have been made to the future land use plan to accommodate stand-alone traditional neighborhood development.



**Illustrative Traditional Neighborhood**

Also, as noted above under “mixed uses,” Cumming’s zoning ordinance allows relatively small lots to be used for single-family dwellings in several non-residential zoning districts. Generally, Cumming’s zoning ordinance does not define traditional neighborhood development, nor are there guidelines or principles which are designed to particularly encourage this form of development. That is proposed to change in the implementation component. Again, the CBD zoning district and the new mixed use district both accommodate the basic principles of traditional neighborhood development.

### Prospects for Infill Development

As a part of this plan update, a revised existing land use inventory was completed by the city’s planning consultant. It updated land uses as of March 2009. That inventory reveals that there

are still several places in the City of Cumming that are ripe for nonresidential and residential infill development, many of which were under active development at the time of this writing.

Despite the downturn in the economy in 2008 and 2009, there is still significant building in the city. In particular, the city's office market is blossoming with several office developments currently under construction, including the infilling of (1) vacant tracts around the location of the old hospital site just west of the Central Business District (photo right); (2) additional property between East Maple Street and Pirkle Ferry Road; and along the south side of West Maple Street near its intersection with Kelly Mill Road.



**Office complex under construction at Samaritan Drive and SR 20. Through infill development, an institutional-medical office complex is forming around the site of the old hospital.**

With regard to commercial and office infill development, there are a number of vacant lots which are appropriate for additional commercial and office development.

According to Forsyth County's Partial Plan Update, the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce maintains an inventory of vacant sites and buildings in the county that are available for redevelopment or infill development using the CoStar Real Estate Database (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

### **Areas in Need of Redevelopment**

With regard to redevelopment, though scattered sites exist which are in need of redevelopment, there is no significant pattern or concentration of parcels in need of redevelopment, except for the Atlanta Road (SR 9) corridor south of the CBD. The adopted comprehensive plan recognizes the need to revitalize this part of the city, and the work program calls for a special study and plan to help implement this objective. Similarly, the adopted comprehensive plan is supportive of redevelopment in the CBD.



**Atlanta Highway (SR 9), south of downtown, could benefit from revitalization and redevelopment strategies.**

### **Promotion of Brownfield and Greyfield Development**

Though not considered “brownfields” in the traditional sense of that term, Cumming has an old landfill site and other parcels in the city which are known to pose substantial public environmental concerns. Several parcels are identified in the zoning ordinance, Section 719, as “Environmentally Sensitive Parcels.” These areas have unstable ground or other situations that require environmental monitoring or compliance. Environmentally sensitive parcels are declared to be unsafe for building without additional technical review. A land reuse study and environmental strategy are required to be submitted prior to redevelopment.

### **Nodal Versus Strip or Linear Commercial Development**

To some extent, Cummings future land use plan and zoning ordinance provide for a nodal development pattern with respect to neighborhood commercial uses. Examples of such neighborhood commercial nodes include the both intersections of Dahlonega Highway (SR 9) with SR 306, as well as the intersection of Nicholson Road and Castleberry Road.

However, the remainder of commercial zoning and development areas, which are mostly auto-oriented in nature, are spread out along major thoroughfares of the city, including SR 9 (Atlanta Road) from the southern city limits into the downtown, SR 20 west of the city, and along Market Place Boulevard which itself might be considered a regional shopping node. While some planning principles would suggest that strip or linear commercial development should be limited, it has been in existence in Cumming for more than 30 years and as such is unlikely to be altered to any significant degree.

### **Small Lot Residential Development (5,000 square feet or less)**

Cumming does not have a small lot, single-function residential zoning district. The smallest lot size in R zones is 12,500 square feet in the R-3 zoning district. Small lot (6,000 square foot) development is permitted for single-family dwellings in several non-residential zoning districts, including office-professional, institutional, neighborhood commercial, highway business, and central business district. However, an overall cap in density of three units per acre is imposed, in order to prevent the large-scale use of those non-residential zoning districts for single-family use. Generally, Cumming elected in 2003 (as part of its zoning ordinance rewrite) to concentrate density vertically, in the downtown (CBD zoning district), as opposed to having small lot subdivisions.

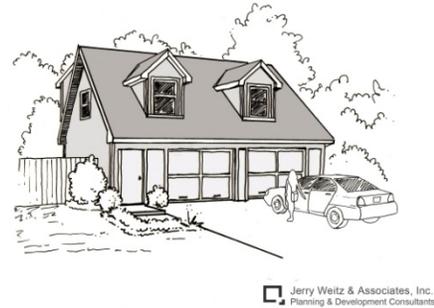
### **Development Following the Pattern of the Original Town**

Unlike some of the older “county seat” towns in Georgia, Cumming has a relatively limited “grid” network in its downtown. Virtually all of the blocks resembling a grid pattern in the downtown are occupied by office, institutional, government, and commercial uses. Given the unique way in which Cumming developed, it has relatively few “in-town” neighborhoods that were developed close to the Central Business District (CBD) with a grid network pattern of streets. Because of the way major thoroughfares radiate in a diagonal fashion outward from the

central business district, extension of a downtown grid pattern of streets has not taken place. Topography has also constrained the extension of a grid pattern outside the CBD. With these limitations noted, however, the CBD policies fully support a more “fine-grained” development of small blocks. There are also some opportunities for extension of the denser network of streets found in the CBD, which again are recognized and encouraged in the comprehensive plan. Additionally, the city’s plan policies support extension of a grid network of streets along Pilgrim Mill Road as new residential development occurs (see also discussion under the transportation alternatives QCO).

### **Allowance for Accessory Housing Units**

Article II of the Cumming Zoning Ordinance defines both “detached” and “attached” accessory apartments. Attached accessory apartments are allowed outright in R-2 and R-3 zoning districts and permitted via conditional use in R-1 and R-1A zoning districts. Detached accessory apartments are allowed only by conditional use permit in R-2 and R-3 zoning districts (Table 5.1). All accessory apartment units are further regulated by Section 702 of the zoning ordinance, which specifies that units shall be at least 400 square feet and no larger than 1,000 square feet.



**A dwelling unit above a garage is one example of an accessory housing unit, conditionally permitted by Cumming’s zoning ordinance.**

### **Affordable Housing for Workers in the Community**

Cumming provides a concentration of many, diverse types of housing which are relatively non-existent in unincorporated Forsyth County. Beginning with what is usually considered the most private affordable housing type, Cumming has one mobile home park in the northern part of the city. New manufactured home parks are permitted in the city, but only after a conditional use permit is secured and only in the R-3 zoning district. Second, Cumming has a housing authority which operates housing for low- and moderate-income households.



**Housing operated by the City of Cumming Housing Authority, along Tolbert Street and extending to the south side of West Maple Street. This complex provides significant housing for low- and moderate income households.**

Third, the city has some “in town” neighborhoods close to the Central Business District which provide modest, affordable, single-family detached homes, some of which contain duplexes. Fourth, the city is home to a significant number of apartment complexes. Affordable apartment homes exist at several locations, including those along the east and west sides of Castleberry Road near Hutchinson Road and Tolbert Street, an older multi-family complex south of Meadow

Drive just west of Atlanta Road (SR 9), and a complex west of Bald Ridge Road fronting on the south side of East Maple Street. Fifth, some townhouses have been constructed, and as noted earlier, Cumming allows for accessory apartments to be constructed in certain zoning districts.

Median family and non-family household incomes in Forsyth County have risen extensively over the past decade, such that other low and moderate income housing opportunities are less necessary, to the extent they are not already provided by Cumming's existing housing stock. Also, it is believed that there is more than a fair share of affordable housing opportunities in Cumming when considered in the context of the county as a whole.

### **Sufficient Housing for Each Income Level**

As noted above, the City of Cumming has a wide variety of single-family dwellings, duplexes, some manufactured homes, townhouses, apartments, and public housing that collectively meet the needs for housing for each income level in the community. As noted in the county's partial plan update, although the county does not currently meet the need for affordable housing nor does it sponsor any programs that focus on households with special needs, the county, along with North Fulton, Cherokee, and Dawson County merged to form Habitat for Humanity-North Central Georgia in 2006. To date, Habitat for Humanity-North Central Georgia has built over 250 homes throughout their service area (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 draft).

### **Options for Loft living and Downtown Living**

The city's CBD zoning district provides opportunities for the development of mixed-use projects, including downtown loft living. There is one project already under construction that will provide Cumming's first downtown loft living opportunities (picture right).



**Cumming Station, nearing completion, is in the CBD and provides lofts for downtown living.**

### **Vacant and Developable Land Available for Multi-family Housing**

As noted previously, the city made a decision back in 2003 to concentrate its multi-family housing stock in the downtown CBD, as opposed to spreading out such development opportunities in various parts of the city. Nonetheless, Cumming has one large site on the east side of Pilgrim Mill Road which is zoned for a large apartment complex. In addition, there are some extensive tracts of vacant land in Cumming which are most likely to be appropriate for large mixed-use developments, which will probably include multi-family housing.

### **Other Allowances for Multi-family Housing**

Cumming's zoning ordinance (Section 714) provides some unique provisions with regard to future multi-family development. All developments containing twenty-five (25) or more dwelling units shall have a clubhouse, swimming pool, and tennis court(s). This provision was required so as to ensure that new apartment complexes provided sufficient on-site, active recreational facilities and to avoid overwhelming the city's park and recreation facilities. While the public purpose behind requiring these amenities is certainly justified, it may have the effect of discouraging additional multi-family dwellings in the city.

Section 714 of the zoning ordinance is also quite prescriptive in terms of specifying the mix of one-bedroom (at least 40 percent of the total units provided), two-bedroom (no more than 50 percent of total), and three-bedroom apartments (no more than 10 percent of total units).

### **Community Development Corporations**

Cumming does not operate or cooperate with any known community development corporations.

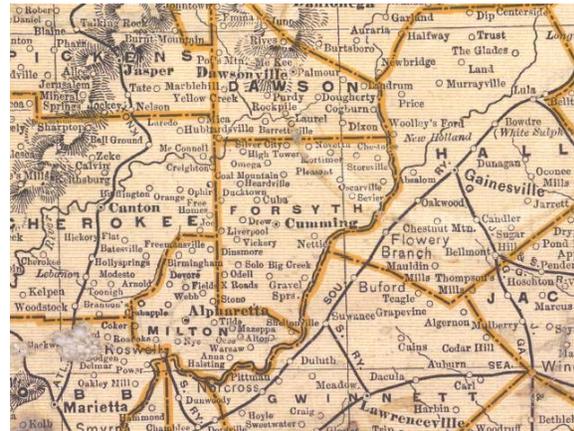
### **Households with Special Housing Needs**

Cumming's zoning ordinance is reasonably permissive with regard to institutions and households with special housing needs. Institutional residential living and care facilities are defined in the zoning ordinance to include assisted living facilities, intermediate care homes, nursing homes, and personal care homes. Such facilities, when they serve no more than seventeen persons, are permitted uses in multi-family residential, office-professional, institutional, central business, and highway business zoning districts. Such homes with more than seventeen persons are permitted outright in institutional, central business, and highway business zoning districts and conditionally permitted in office-professional zoning districts.

In addition, Cumming's zoning ordinance allows for smaller homes in single-family neighborhoods. The definition of family reads: An individual, or two (2) or more persons related by blood, marriage, adoption or guardianship, or a group of not more than six (6) unrelated persons, occupying a single dwelling unit and using the same cooking facilities; provided however that domestic servants employed on the premises may be housed on the premises without being counted as a separate family or families. Any group which is licensed by the State of Georgia, or any political subdivision thereof, which contains up to six (6) developmentally disabled persons and up to two supervisors or surrogate parents residing on the premise at one time shall constitute a family." Therefore, Cumming's land use policies with regard to specialized housing arrangements are permissive and meet the spirit and intent of the housing needs QCO.

**SENSE OF PLACE, COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AESTHETICS**

**“Heritage Preservation Objective:** The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”



**Cumming in Regional Context, 1899**

**“Sense of Place Objective:** Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

**Summary**

Cumming is in compliance with some but not all of these Quality Community Objectives, as Table 11 indicates. The paragraphs which follow describe the extent to which the city complies with the various considerations suggested in the QCO assessment tool.

**Table 11  
Summary Assessment: Character and Design-Related QCOs**

QCO Considerations	Degree of Compliance	References/Notes/Comments
Characteristics of the Region	Fully Compliant	City capitalizes on Lake Lanier
Distinct, Recognizable Aspects of the Community	Mostly Inapplicable	Key landmarks, Buford Dam and Sawnee Mountain, lie just outside the city limits
Historic Districts and Historic Preservation Commission	Mostly Inapplicable	No local historic district exists; City has made efforts to preserve historic structures
Areas of Historical Importance	Fully Compliant	City purchased and rehabilitated the Cumming School
Ordinances Regulating Signage	Fully Compliant	City adopted sign ordinance in 2008
Ordinances Regulating Aesthetics	Partially Compliant	City has elected to regulate aesthetics through rezoning conditions, but does not have a specific aesthetic ordinance
Development Guidebook and Design Guidelines	Partially Compliant	City provides design guidance or development guidance on a case-by-case basis rather than through a guidebook
Plan for Protecting Designated Farmland	Inapplicable	Remaining agricultural lands are slated for development per 2003 policy

QCO Considerations	Degree of Compliance	References/Notes/Comments
Street Tree Ordinance	Not Compliant	Development regulations could be reexamined
Street Tree Planting Campaign	Partially Compliant	Street trees installed as a part of streetscape improvements; addition to programs recommended
Clean and Beautiful Programs	Fully Compliant	Keep Forsyth County Beautiful

**Characteristics of the Region**

While Cumming and Forsyth County are becoming increasingly absorbed into the metropolitan Atlanta area, as one leaves Fulton County along Georgia 400, he or she enters the territory of Lake Lanier. While not recognized as a region onto itself, the vast Lake Sidney Lanier encompasses parts of Forsyth, Hall, Dawson, and Lumpkin Counties in the Georgia Mountains region. The lake is a common bond among these counties, forming important economic linkages as well as regional recreation opportunities.



Lake Lanier in March 2009, still well below its normal pool elevation of 1071.

**Distinct, Recognizable Aspects of the Community**

Two distinct landmarks exist in the Cumming area, Buford Dam (forming Lake Lanier and pictured right) and Sawnee Mountain. Cumming is associated with both, as Buford Dam Road crosses the dam and intersects with Atlanta Highway (SR 9) south of the downtown, and Sawnee Mountain (see prior discussion) lies just northwest of the city limits.



Buford Dam

**Historic Districts and Historic Preservation Commission**

The 2015 comprehensive plan recommended that the city adopt a citywide preservation ordinance and strive to become a certified local government. These recommendations were not implemented, primarily because there were very few historically and architecturally significant structures in the city and a decade later, those recommendations were dropped from the city’s plan. Cumming therefore does not have any designated historic districts.

The most significant concentration of historic resources, some of which still exist, is along Kelly Mill Road. The Kelly Mill Road area in Cumming was previously identified in the 2015 General Plan and the Historic Resources Survey as having the greatest potential to be designated as an historic district. However, there are not sufficient historically or architecturally significant structures remaining along Kelly Mill Road to warrant designation as a local historic district. However, the City has made efforts to assist preservation of those assets both through private restoration (the Redd House on Kelly Mill Road) as well as through city funded restoration of historic properties (the Cumming School House and the Brannon-Heard Hotel). While Cumming elected not to establish one or more historic districts, it did adopt historic preservation policies including nominating worthy structures to the National Register of Historic Places and encouraging adaptive reuse of historic resources for government uses, among others. As noted below, Cumming has implemented those policies.

### **Areas of Historical Importance**

Historic preservation has been considered in past comprehensive planning efforts. The General Plan for the Year 2015, the plan preceding the current adopted comprehensive plan, contained an inventory of historic resources and landmarks. The plan notes that according to a 1996 survey, there were 47 historic properties within the city limits of Cumming. Historic resources were mapped in the city's 2003 comprehensive plan (see Chapter 6, historic resources). While some of these historic properties remain both in restored and unrestored status, many have not been preserved either due to lack of architectural significance or degradation of the structure to the point of making it impossible to preserve or restore.

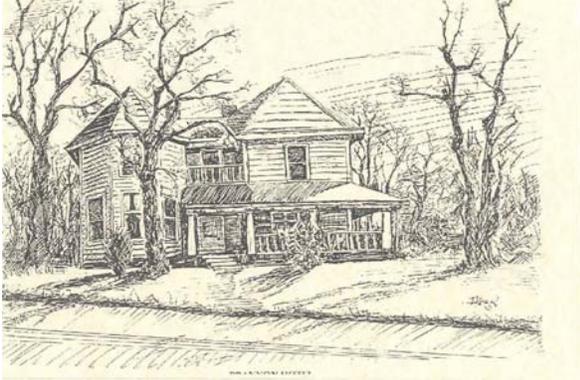
However, Cumming purchased and renovated the Cumming School, located at the northwest corner of School Street and Pilgrim Mill Road (pictured right). It is an old school house which later served as an office for the Forsyth County Board of Education. It was constructed in about 1923. This structure is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It houses a city department and also the Historical Society of Forsyth County, Inc.



**Cumming School, renovated by the City, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

In addition, the City of Cumming purchased and completely refurbished the Brannon-Heard House, located at 111 Pilgrim Mill Road near the intersection with Pirkle Ferry and Highway 9/20. This structure was the only remaining travelers' hotel from the early 1900's remaining within the city. Built in 1905 by Charlie Brannon as a hotel, the structure was subsequently used as a boarding house, a dentist's office, divided into apartments and then purchased by Clifton Heard in 1945 and made a single family dwelling, finally operating as Heard's Antiques. The city purchased the dilapidating structure in 2006 and after three years of meticulous renovation and expansion, it re-opened to the public in May, 2009. The Brannon-Heard House has been used to date for the Sawnee Artist's Association "Art in Historic Cumming" and The Cumming-

Forsyth Fibre-Artist's "Rug Exhibition." It is presently serving the community as a cultural events center geared toward presentation and preservation of local art and history.



**Sketch of Original Brannon-Heard House**



**Brannon-Heard House as restored by the City,  
Now a Cultural Arts Center**

### **Ordinances Regulating Signage**

In February 2008, the City adopted a sign ordinance. Other than some regulations which applied only to the Georgia 400 corridor, until 2008 signage in Cumming was largely unregulated.

### **Ordinances Regulating Aesthetics**

The city does not have any special regulations that govern the aesthetics of development. Rather, the city has implemented imposition of aesthetic requirements as conditions of rezoning and development of property on a case by case basis.

### **Development Guidebook and Design Guidelines**

The city does not have any development or design guidelines.

### **Plan for Protecting Designated Farmland**

Cumming elected back in 2003 to discontinue its agricultural zoning, thus eliminating its agricultural zoning district. There is still some agricultural land in Cumming, located between Dahlonega Highway (SR 9) and Pilgrim Mill Road (photo right). However, no specific plans exist for the retention of land for agricultural use, since during the planning horizon it is expected that agricultural lands will convert to housing or other uses.



**Horses are still kept inside the city limits, such as on  
this property east of Camilla Street.**

## Street Tree Ordinance

In 2002, the city comprehensively rewrote its subdivision and land development regulations. Section 525 of that ordinance addresses street tree requirements. However, it simply provides that “street trees and other shrubbery that may be retained or planted shall be placed or retained so as not to obstruct sight distances at street intersections.”



**Market Place Boulevard, terminating at Bald Ridge Marina Road (currently outside the city limits), is a recent road improvement that could benefit from the installation of street trees.**

Therefore, that code provision is not proactive in terms of requiring the planting of street trees along the public road frontages of new developments and alongside new public streets to be dedicated to the city. There is also an opportunity, not yet implemented, to install street trees when major road improvements are made in the city.

## Street Tree Planting Campaign

With the exception of planting street trees in the downtown area (CBD) of Cumming as a part of overall streetscape improvement projects, Cumming has not formally engaged in any street tree planting campaigns. As noted above, there are opportunities to beautify the city streets by engaging on its own initiative, or through cooperative efforts with other agencies, to provide street tree plantings during road improvements or to beautify existing streets in the city.

## Clean and Beautiful Programs

Although the city does not operate its own clean and beautiful program, Forsyth County does on a countywide basis. According to the county website, Keep Forsyth County Beautiful was formed in 1993 and in June 21, 1994, that organization received certification as an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc. The mission of Keep Forsyth County Beautiful is to cooperate with government, businesses, schools, civic organizations and citizens in a joint effort to improve beautification, litter reduction and recycling. The organization also sponsors annual events to promote volunteerism and increase public awareness of environmental issues, including but not limited to Christmas tree recycling, the Great American Cleanup, and a “Rivers Alive” Waterway Cleanup.

**MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION**

**“Transportation Alternatives Objective:** Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

**Summary**

When Cumming prepared its current comprehensive plan in 2003, it was aware of the state’s Quality Community Objectives and indeed adopted the QCOs. It prepared its comprehensive plan in a manner that acknowledges and implements the transportation alternatives QCO. Therefore, Cumming complies in its entirety with the various considerations suggested by the state assessment tool for quality community objectives relative to multi-modal transportation. The paragraphs in this section articulate the extent to which the city complies with the suggested benchmarks and other considerations of the state’s QCO assessment tool. The findings are summarized as follows:

**Table 12  
Summary Assessment: Transportation Alternatives QCO**

<b>Transportation Consideration</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Evaluation of Sidewalk Network	Fully compliant	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan
Sidewalk Requirements for New Development	Fully compliant	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan; Sections 526 and 529 subdivision regulations
Connection of New Sidewalks to Existing Network	Fully compliant	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan; Sec. 529 subdivision regulations
Sidewalk and Vegetation Maintenance	Compliant; policy supportive	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan
Plan for Bicycle Routes	Fully compliant	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan
Safe Biking Routes to Schools	Compliant; policy supportive	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan
Multi-Use Trail System Development	Policy supportive; implementation required	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan; opportunity reiterated in this update
Public Transportation	Compliant; policy supportive	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan
Connectivity of Development	Fully compliant	Section 904 zoning ordinance
Shared Parking Allowances	Fully compliant	Sections 901.6 and 913 zoning ordinance
Continuation of Existing Street Design	Compliant; policy supportive	Chapter 10, comprehensive plan

**Evaluation of Sidewalk Network**

Cumming’s adopted comprehensive plan includes a transportation element which provides an inventory and assessment of the city’s sidewalk network. Map 10.6 in the adopted comprehensive plan shows the existing sidewalk network, and Table 10.16 of the plan provides a tabular inventory of the existing sidewalk network on the arterial and collector road system in Cumming as of June 2003. In contrast with many small cities, Cumming is very well accessible via pedestrians due to its prior commitment to constructing adequate sidewalks along major city streets. The comprehensive plan also provides in Table 10.18 and Table 10.19 specific needs for sidewalk additions and improvements through the year 2025, and a sidewalk improvement plan

is provided in tabular format in Table 10.20 of the plan and Maps 10.8 and 10.9 illustrate the planned sidewalk network.

Cumming has also ensured the installation of sidewalks in new road improvement projects, such as Mary Alice Park Road (figure right). This is a good example of the city's and county's commitment to improve the sidewalk network, in and around the city. The sidewalks along Mary Alice Park Road now provide for safe pedestrian access all the way from SR 9 (upon improvement of that intersection in the near future) with Mary Alice Park on Lake Lanier, more than a few miles away.



**Sidewalks, including ramps for handicapped access, were installed on both sides of Mary Alice Park Road as a part of a recent roadway improvement.**

Cumming is compliant with this QCO in terms of providing detailed inventories, assessments, and plans for the long-range improvement of its citywide sidewalk network. Also, a review of the 2003 sidewalk plan for the year 2025 reveals that Cumming's adopted plans score highly with respect to assuring that neighborhoods are linked with pedestrian access to various destinations, that neighborhoods have good pedestrian access to schools, and that there are multiple, safe walking routes to schools.

### **Sidewalk Requirements for New Development**

Cumming's subdivision and land development regulations, rewritten in 2002, provide some requirements for the installation of sidewalks. Section 526 of that ordinance provides sidewalk specifications including standard widths of five feet in residential areas and eight feet in commercial areas. Section 529 that subdivisions and land developments that abut and access an abutting public street, shall have sidewalk and other road improvements installed along all abutting public streets. Therefore, Cumming complies with this consideration.

### **Connection of New Sidewalks to Existing Network**

Cumming's adopted comprehensive plan contains a transportation element (Chapter 10) which includes policies for pedestrians and other travel modes. It specifically includes a policy that "individual developments, except for detached, single-family lots, shall provide direct pedestrian access ways to all public sidewalks or multi-use trails when located on a public street abutting the property to be development. While this policy is considered enforceable at the time of land development, Cumming should strengthen this policy with code requirements in its subdivision and land development regulations that specifically require these improvements. The subdivision and land development regulations specifically require in Section 529 that subdivisions and land developments that abut and access an abutting public street shall have sidewalk and other road improvements installed along all abutting public streets.

## Sidewalk and Vegetation Maintenance

Cumming’s comprehensive plan specifically calls for adequate funding to make repairs and to maintain the existing sidewalk network that is the city’s responsibility (as opposed to state routes or county roads). Therefore, the city complies with this consideration.

## Plan for Bicycle Routes

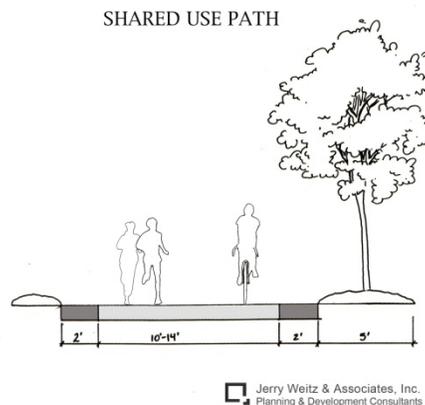
Cumming’s comprehensive plan, transportation element (Chapter 10) is supportive of the provision of bicycle facilities. It calls for the city to encourage bike path opportunities in conjunction with other projects and programs, especially for access to schools (see discussion below). Furthermore, it calls for improvements to the transportation system over the long range (year 2025) to add bicycle travel lanes to the city’s transportation system. It also calls for shared bicycle facility travel improvements along Kelly Mill Road and extension of the county’s plan for a bikeway east of Georgia 400 (probably along Market Place Boulevard). Long-range improvements for bike facilities include these projects, as articulated in Table 10.22 of the comprehensive plan. The city’s comprehensive plan also articulates standards for bicycle facilities. The *Atlanta Region Bicycle Transportation & Pedestrian Walkways Plan* identifies three roadways in Forsyth County as “strategic bicycle corridors,” two of which are partially within the City of Cumming: State Route 9 and Buford Highway SR 20. Also, Forsyth County has adopted a Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan, and in 2008 it was updated by the county.

## Safe Biking Routes to Schools

The City of Cumming’s Transportation Element (Chapter 10 of the adopted comprehensive plan) specifically articulates a policy to work with the County school board to coordinate the provision of bicycle facilities at existing and proposed school facilities. Cumming is therefore in compliance with this aspect of the transportation alternatives QCO.

## Multi-Use Trail System Development

The adopted comprehensive plan specifically calls for Cumming to extend a multi-use trail proposed by Forsyth County east of Georgia 400 and to explore possibilities to connect to the county’s proposed greenway to Sawnee Mountain. Forsyth County’s Big Creek Greenway multi-use trail is currently under construction. This is a three-phase project. Future trail plans suggest a connection of the Big Creek Greenway with the Sawnee Mountain Preserve.



**Cross Section of Shared Use Path**

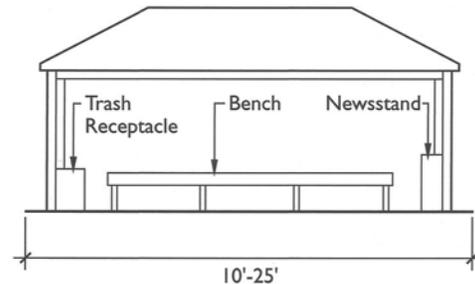
As indicated on the maps of areas requiring special attention, there is an opportunity for Cumming to provide a greenway that will provide the desired link.

## Public Transportation

Due to existing socioeconomic characteristics, the city's comprehensive plan (prepared in 2003) does not anticipate a significant shift from auto travel to public transit. As of 2009, that conclusion has not changed significantly. Nonetheless, the city's comprehensive plan, transportation element (Chapter 10), specifically supports the improvement of public transportation in the city. Policies include support for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority to provide park and ride lots and implement express bus service from the county to the North Springs MARTA station.

The lack of public transportation in the county is a concern for some businesses relocating into the area. Per the Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, Forsyth County provides public transportation to all of its citizens through the Dial-A-Ride program. The Dial-A-Ride program is operated by the public transportation division of the Forsyth County Fleet Services Department. The program is funded by the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners, the Georgia Department of Transportation, and passenger fees. Fees are based on the number of stops a person must make. The five vans operate Monday through Friday by appointment only. The vans are utilized for medical appointments, shopping, employment, education, and personal errands (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 Draft).

Forsyth County also has one park and ride lot for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) Xpress bus. This lot is located on the southbound side of Georgia 400, off of Georgia 400 exit 14 near the Lakeland Plaza shopping center, just outside the current city limits of Cumming (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 Draft).



**BUS SHELTER AMENITIES**

Source: Khaled Shammout.

**Bus shelters when installed at park and ride lots contribute to the comfort of patrons.**

## Connectivity of Development

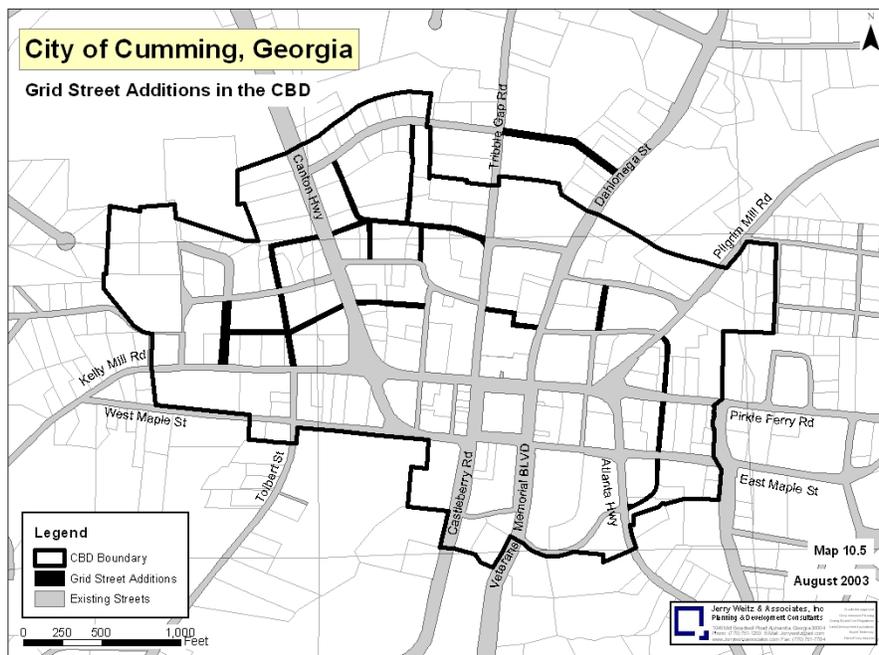
Section 904 of the city's zoning ordinance addresses requirements for interparcel access. In cases of new development or major building renovation and repaving projects in office, institutional, and commercial, zoning districts, inter-parcel access for vehicles between abutting properties shall be provided so that access to individual properties can be achieved between adjacent developments as an alternative to forcing all movement onto abutting highways and public roads. Therefore, the city complies with this consideration of the transportation alternatives QCO.

## Shared Parking Allowances

One of the purposes of the parking regulations in the City of Cumming's zoning ordinance (Section 901.6) is to promote flexible approaches to the provision of off-street parking, including shared parking arrangements. Per Section 913 of the zoning ordinance, the Zoning Administrator may authorize a reduction in the total number of required off-street parking spaces for two or more uses jointly providing parking facilities when their respective hours of need of maximum parking do not normally overlap, provided that the developer submits sufficient data to demonstrate that the hours of maximum demand for parking at the respective uses do not normally overlap. The required spaces assigned to one use may not be assigned to another use at the same time, except that one-half (1/2) of the parking spaces required for churches, theaters or assembly halls whose peak attendance will be at night or on Sundays may be assigned to a use which will be closed at night or on Sundays. Therefore, Cumming complies with this consideration.

## Continuation of Existing Street Design

Cumming is specifically in compliance with this consideration of the transportation alternatives QCO, since it has policies in Chapter 10 of its comprehensive plan to extend the grid street pattern in the Central Business District as new development and redevelopment occurs (see figure below from the comprehensive plan); furthermore, it includes an adopted policy which calls for extension of a grid pattern or modified grid pattern as residential uses develop along both sides of Pilgrim Mill Road (the primary residential development opportunity area remaining in the city). Therefore, Cumming complies with this consideration.



**REGIONALISM AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION**

**“Regional Identity Objective:** Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

**“Regional Cooperation Objective:** Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

**“Regional Solutions Objective:** Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

**Summary**

When Cumming prepared its current comprehensive plan in 2003, it was aware of the state’s Quality Community Objectives and indeed adopted the QCOs. It prepared its comprehensive plan in a manner that acknowledges and implements the transportation alternatives QCO. Therefore, Cumming complies in its entirety with the various considerations suggested by the state assessment tool for quality community objectives relative to multi-modal transportation. The paragraphs in this section articulate the extent to which the city complies with the suggested benchmarks and other considerations of the state’s QCO assessment tool. The findings are summarized as follows:

**Table 13  
Summary Assessment: Regional and Coordination QCOs**

<b>QCO Consideration</b>	<b>Degree of Compliance</b>	<b>References/Notes/Comments</b>
Joint Comprehensive Planning	Not compliant	City and county have separate plans
Regional Economic Development Organizations	Fully compliant	Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce
Regional Environmental Organizations and Initiatives	Historically inapplicable; opportunities exist	Environmental organizations include primarily those associated with Lake Lanier
Provision for Sharing of Services and Joint Service Delivery	Compliant; policy supportive	Several services of the city and county are consolidated; policies support coordination
Satisfaction with Service Delivery Strategy	Fully compliant	Service delivery strategy to be renegotiated in the short term
Connections to the Surrounding Region for Economic Livelihood	Mostly inapplicable	Lake Lanier is the major connection of Cumming to adjacent local governments in terms of economic livelihood
Businesses Drawing on Regional Heritage	Mostly inapplicable; partially compliant	Restaurant contained within Cumming School, a significant historic resource

### **Joint Comprehensive Planning**

In the early 1980s, Cumming operated a joint planning commission and planning department with Forsyth County. However, long ago it decided to provide its own planning and zoning department and to prepare its own comprehensive plan. Prior comprehensive plans by the city were prepared in 1991 and 2003, independently of but coordinated with Forsyth County's comprehensive plan

### **Regional Economic Development Organizations**

Forsyth County participates in the Lanier Joint Development Authority, created in 1995 and administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs with neighboring Hall County. Regional partnerships are rewarded in the State of Georgia in the form of additional job tax credits for companies hiring new employees (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 Draft). The Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce is a countywide economic development organization that is supported financially by both the city and the county.

### **Regional Environmental Organizations and Initiatives**

A number of organizations have developed with an eye toward protecting the water quality and environmental conditions surrounding Lake Lanier. In the past, Cumming has very little frontage on Lake Lanier proper. However, with annexation of Mary Alice Park, Cumming now has a more significant presence on the lake, and therefore, its participation in lake-oriented environmental organizations and initiatives should correspondingly increase.

### **Provision for Sharing of Services and Joint Service Delivery**

The city and county share those services which have made the most sense from a production and efficiency standpoint. Cumming is a part of the county's fire, 911, and emergency management facilities and services. Economic development is consolidated in the sense that both local governments financially support the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce. Cumming provides water and sewer services to a service area that extends beyond the city limits to a significant portion of unincorporated Forsyth County, while the county provides water and sewer services to the remainder of the county. Libraries and schools are also provided on a countywide basis, as are the traditional countywide functions like sheriff, coroner, family and children services, and public health, among others. Cumming provides its own park and recreation services, which are now extensive and include the fairgrounds and Mary Alice Park. And, as noted above, the city provides its own planning and zoning department. The staffs of the city and county cooperate on a daily basis with regard to information sharing such as GIS data files among others.

### **Satisfaction with Service Delivery Strategy**

In 2004, Forsyth County and the City of Cumming completed an update to their Service Delivery Strategy. The currently adopted comprehensive plan recognizes the service delivery strategy and

alludes to major intergovernmental agreements. It is expected that service delivery strategies will be renegotiated in the short term. One of the primary issues that is expected to receive attention and debate is the renewal of the water services agreement which expires in the year 2012.

### **Connections to the Surrounding Region for Economic Livelihood**

This consideration is considered largely inapplicable to the city, though it is recognized that Lake Lanier is a major feature that the city shares with some adjacent local governments.



**Aerial View of Lake Lanier**

### **Businesses Drawing on Regional Heritage**

As noted under the discussion of the historic preservation QCO, the city does not have very many historic resources remaining and therefore does not have a discernable regional heritage to maintain or promote. Therefore, this consideration is largely inapplicable in Cumming. However, the city has combined a business opportunity with heritage preservation and promotion by providing for a restaurant within its restored historic property, the Cumming School (picture right).



**The Cumming School, purchased and refurbished by the City in 1999, draws on the history of the city and at the same time, incorporates a restaurant, thus contributing to desired mixed-use character of the CBD.**

### **Regional Tourism Partnerships and Promotion of Tourism Opportunities**

According to the county’s partial plan update, Forsyth County has partnered with the City of Cumming for inclusion in the Georgia 400 Hospitality Highway tourist campaign that draws attention to cultural events while engaging multiple communities across the corridor. The particular slogan for Forsyth County and the City of Cumming is “Come Play in Our Backyard” with a lake symbol emphasizing the recreational opportunities of Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River. The purpose of this campaign is to attract tourists to the myriad of entertainment opportunities provided, many of which relate to the county’s customs. This heritage is expressed, for example, by the Cumming Country Fair and Festival which has grown to an eleven day event which highlights the agricultural and rural lifestyle once prevalent in the county (Forsyth County Partial Plan Update, 2009 Draft).

## **CHAPTER 2 AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION**

This section constitutes a second required component of the partial update of the comprehensive plan for the City of Cumming. It consists of a narrative description of “areas requiring special attention” per the partial plan update requirements of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Generally, this component is an assessment of existing land use conditions and trends, with attention toward identifying specific areas that deserve additional policy formulation or regulation. The discussion in this chapter is divided into the categories of areas of special attention as outlined in the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (Local Planning Requirements).

### **AREAS LIKELY TO BE ANNEXED**

The rules for Partial Plan Updates suggest that areas likely to be annexed during the planning horizon be included in the analysis of areas of special attention. This partial plan update includes a map of areas which may be likely for annexation over the next twenty years. This map does not commit the city to annexing these lands, as it is most likely going to require consent and application by the property owners in order for the City of Cumming to annex these lands. In a few instances in the northern part of the city, there are “unincorporated islands” which per state law the city could annex without the consent of the property owners. Pursuit of this annexation plan would tend to “round out” or “square off” the city limits, to 5,184 acres (an increase of 1,334 acres or more than one-third).

### **SIGNIFICANT NATURAL OR CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The adopted comprehensive plan contains a detailed natural resources inventory and refers to past historic resource surveys. There are no natural resources that have not already been identified along with programs and/or policies and regulations to implement natural resource protection, with one exception – a map of difficult to develop sites is included as an area requiring special attention, since there are some properties that remain vacant in the city due to steep slopes and/or flood plains. The intent of this map is to further acknowledge the difficulty of developing these sites, establish policies for them, and to call for consideration of additional regulations with regard to steeply sloping lands. Some of these, appropriately, have already been set aside as open space or conservation areas.

### **AREAS WHERE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE IN LAND USES IS LIKELY TO OCCUR**

In order to accomplish this consideration, the city has updated its existing land use inventory and its future land use plan maps (see Chapter 4). These are citywide maps and thus not “areas requiring special attention.” However, the maps were prepared in order to gain updated knowledge as to what vacant lands still exist in the city, and thus where rapid development may take place in the near future or during the 20-year planning horizon. Also, there is a map

showing residential neighborhoods which are undergoing some transition or may need to be targeted for community development.

### **AREAS OUTPACING AVAILABILITY OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Generally, Cumming is adequately served with all of the community facilities and services needed to serve additional growth and development, including water, sewer, schools, and so forth. There are congested arterials which are the responsibility of the state, as noted elsewhere (see discussion of “Growth Preparedness” QCO). There are, therefore, no areas that have been identified where development threatens to outpace community facilities and services in Cumming.

### **AREAS IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT OR SIGNIFICANT AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT**

While Cumming is similar to other local governments in having some scattered, vacant or underutilized properties, it really does not have a significant concentration of properties that are in significant need for redevelopment. Two exceptions exist to this finding, however. As recognized in the adopted comprehensive plan, the Atlanta Highway (SR 9) corridor has been identified as an area in need for significant aesthetic improvement and with some redevelopment opportunities. That corridor is shown on a map and labeled as an area requiring special attention. In addition, the city’s central business district has a number of redevelopment opportunities and is also shown on a map and labeled as an area requiring special attention. Generally, Cumming’s CBD is free from blight, and so identifying it as an area requiring special attention in this category should not be implied as suggesting urban blight. Rather, it is an area where the existing comprehensive plan recognizes that concerted redevelopment efforts, intensification strategies, and streetscape improvements are appropriate.

### **LARGE ABANDONED SITES OR STRUCTURES**

Cumming is fortunate not to have any large sites that have been abandoned. Therefore, this consideration does not apply, and there are no such areas to map as “areas requiring special attention.”

### **AREAS WITH SIGNIFICANT INFILL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**

The existing land use map provides an updated inventory of vacant lands in the city. There are substantial opportunities for new development in the city, and given that Cumming is the central urban area for the entire county, development on such vacant lands would be considered “infill.” The existing land use plan map while not labeled as such provides a map of infill via the vacant land and agricultural land use designations.

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT DISINVESTMENT, LEVELS OF POVERTY, OR UNEMPLOYMENT**

Cumming is relatively small in terms of land area, and there are no statistics reasonably available which would further inform this analysis. Generally, because of the excellent central location of Cumming in Forsyth County within a high-growth area, there are few if any areas of significant, concentrated disinvestment. Properties that were previously developed generally do not go unused for very long, given the strength of the local economy and advantages of central location. Poverty statistics are available for the year 2000 in the city and are addressed in the adopted comprehensive plan.

There are no figures available for unemployment locally within the city; however, the Georgia Department of Labor routinely publishes unemployment rates by county of residence. Table 14 provides recent trends in the employment and unemployment of the civilian labor force in Forsyth County.

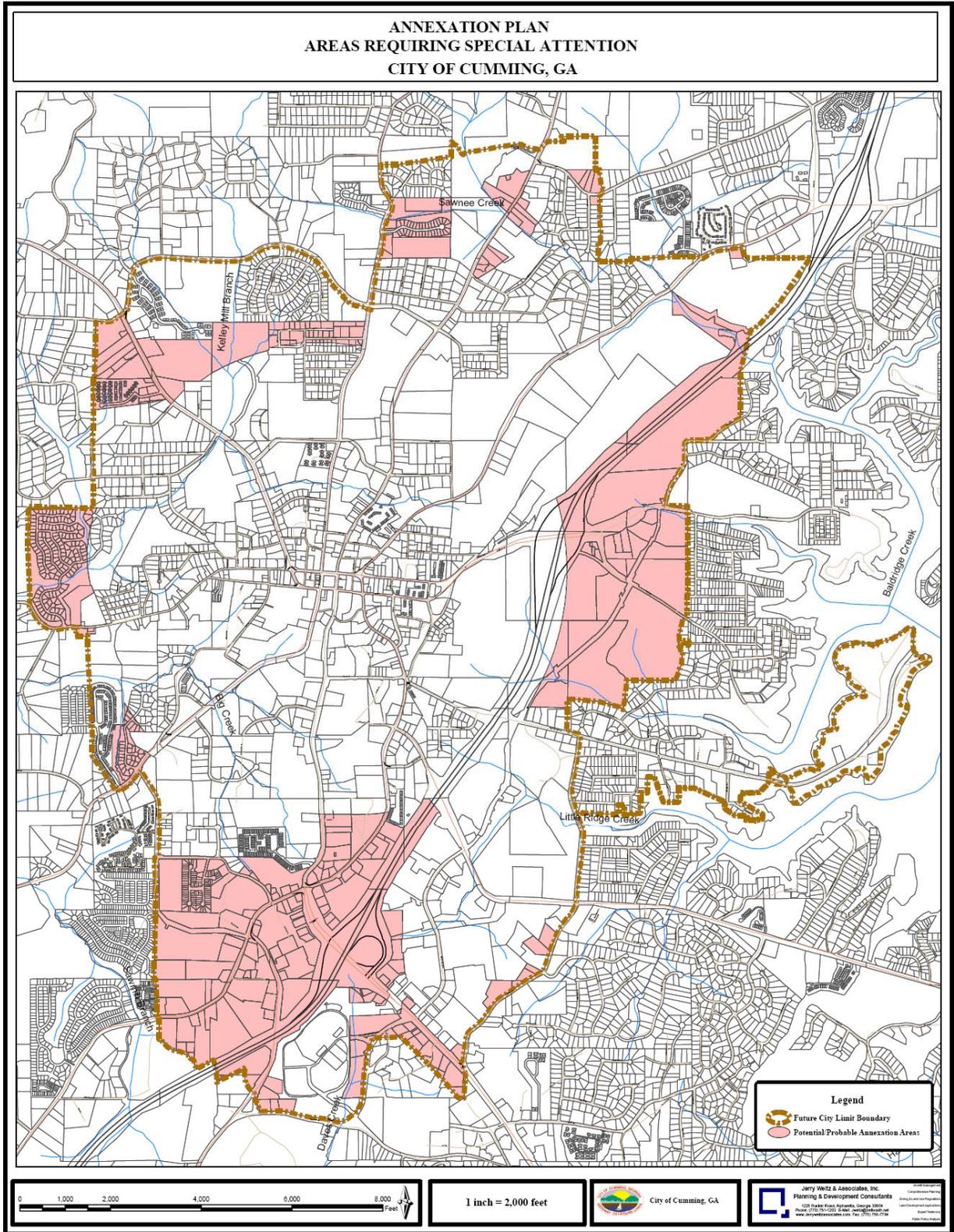
**Table 14  
Labor Force and Unemployment, 2004-2008, Forsyth County  
(By Place of Residence)**

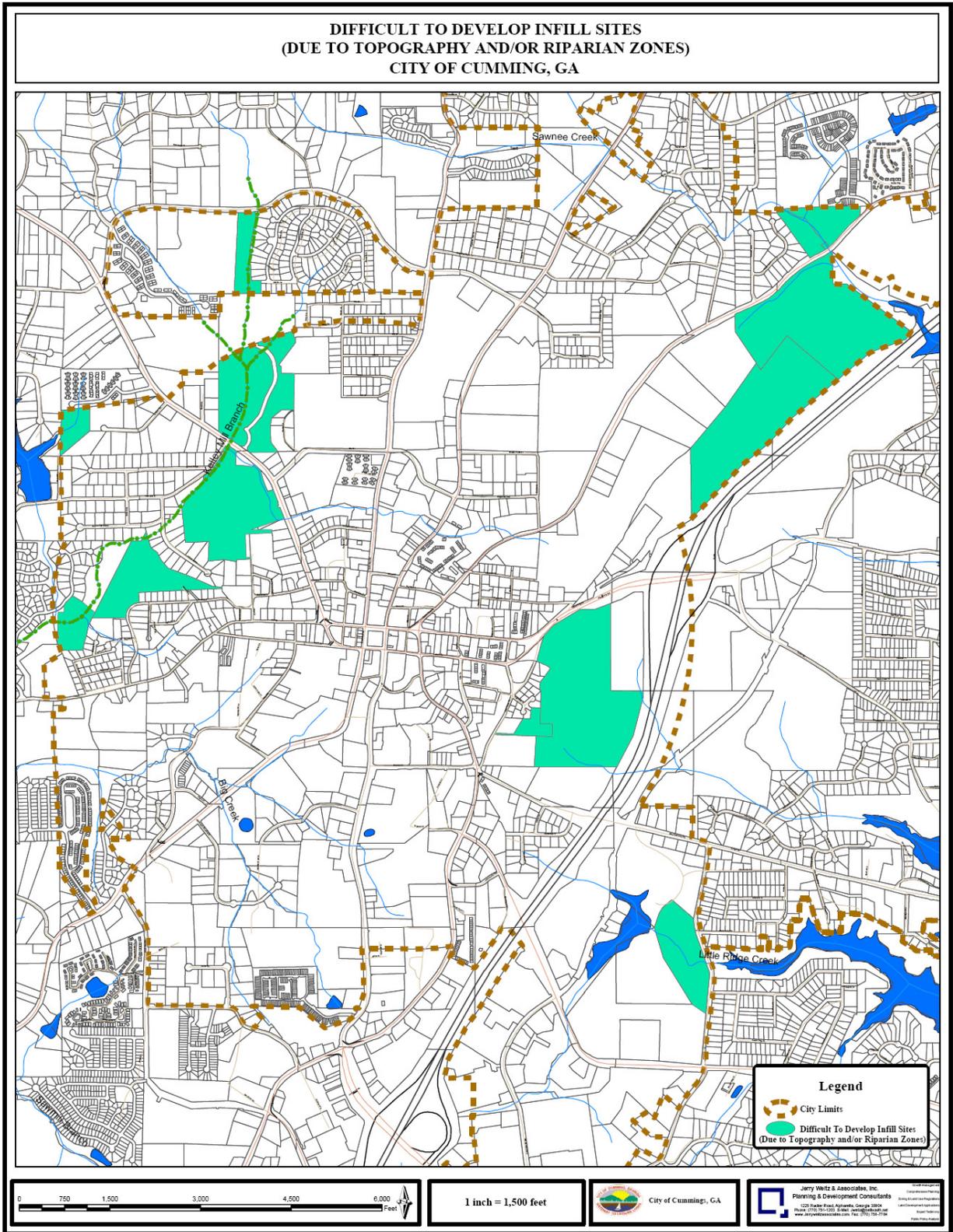
<b>Forsyth County</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Civilian Labor Force	70,499	75,494	80,091	82,291	84,607
Employed	68,082	72,811	77,571	79,680	80,512
Unemployed	2,417	2,683	2,520	2,611	4,095
Unemployment Rate	3.4%	3.6%	3.1%	3.2%	4.8%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. Georgia Employment and Wages Averages.

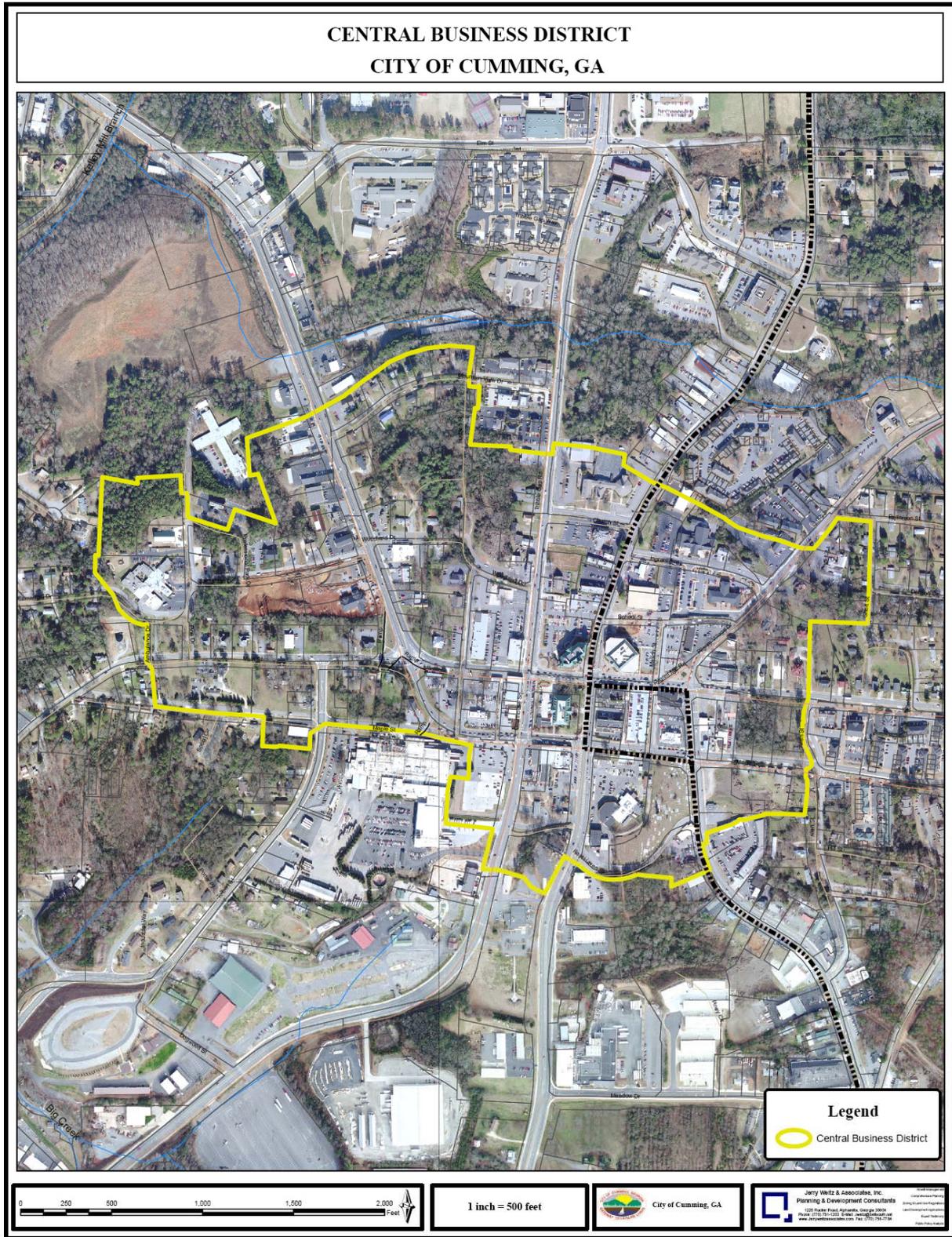
Unemployment rates for Forsyth County’s residents have remained considerably lower than other parts of the metropolitan Atlanta region and the state. Even with the substantial downturn in global and national economies, Forsyth County and its residents have generally weathered the economic recession quite well. It is important to note, however, that the 2008 figures may not capture the full impact of unemployment in Forsyth County during 2008, nor do the figures in Table 14 reflect the stifling losses of jobs that occurred in the first quarter of 2009 nationally, some of which were bound to affect businesses and industries in Forsyth County.

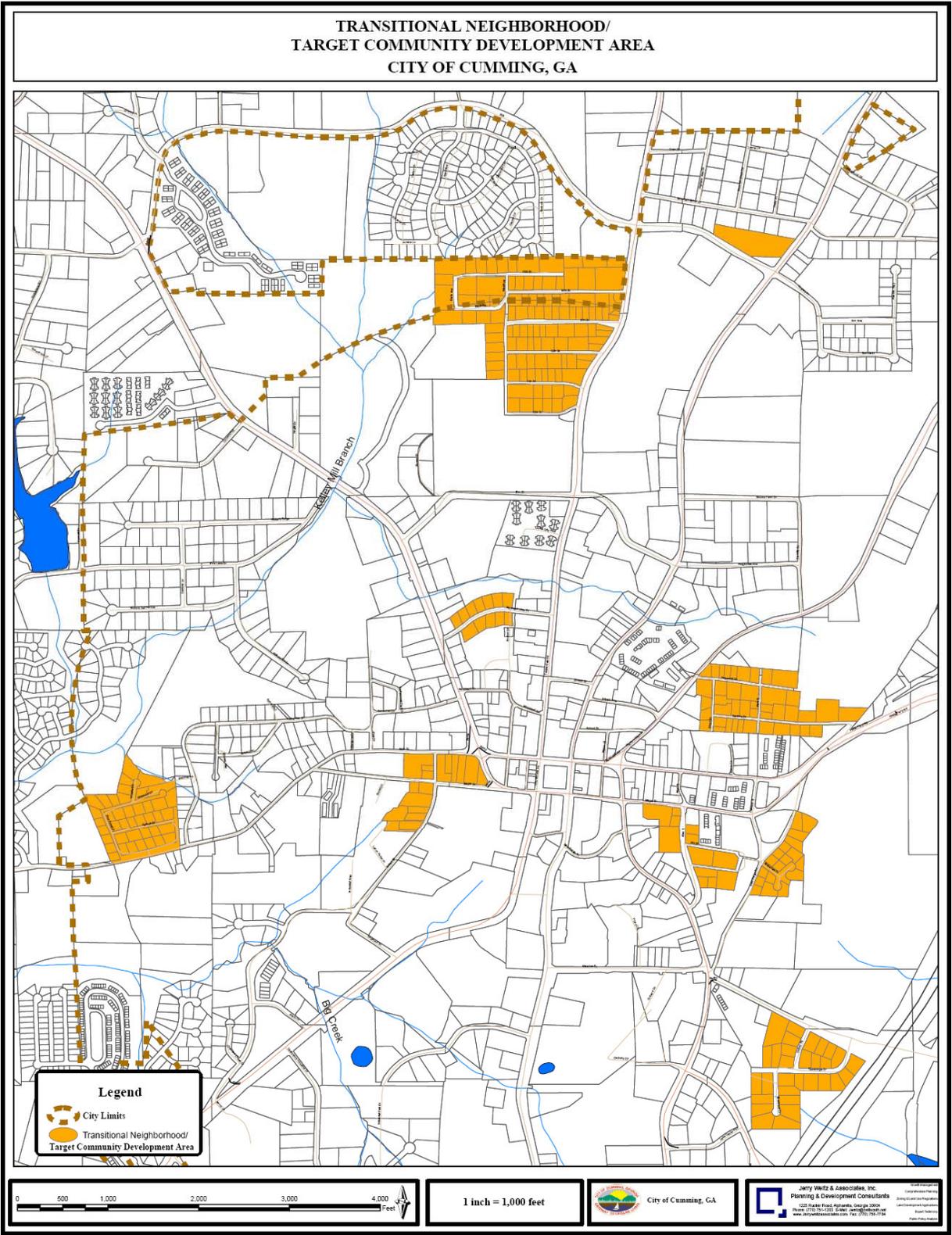
Although such data are limited, this partial plan update does include a map of neighborhoods potentially undergoing transition of land use and/or which may be concentrations of low income households, or both. These areas are mapped as an area requiring special attention.











## CHAPTER 3 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section of the partial plan update takes the discussion of consistency with QCOs and the “areas requiring special attention” by more fully articulating the various issues and opportunities that can be drawn from those preceding analyses. Where the QCO analysis suggests less than full compliance with a particular QCO, this section elaborates on the current situations and how to improve them. The “issue” or “opportunity” is first described, then various alternatives or solutions which are readily available are analyzed, and then finally, implementation measures are described, which are usually in the form of additional policies and/or individual entries in the city’s updated “short-term work program.”

### NATURAL RESOURCES

#### Greenspace Protection

Cumming has a long-term lease for Mary Alice Park, which will ensure that lands along Lake Lanier will continue to be preserved in its natural state, along with active recreational opportunities along the shoreline. At issue is whether that major step forward toward greenspace preservation will be sufficient for the next five years and beyond. Are there other opportunities, and/or should Cumming do more in the long run to improve its percentage of open space (as a percentage of total land area in the city)?



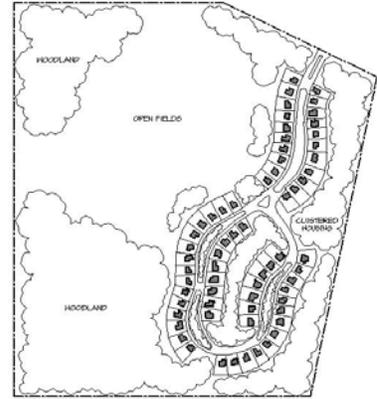
**Aerial View of Mary Alice Park**

On the one hand, Cumming has invested significantly in its prior efforts, and as noted in the discussion of the open space Quality Community Objective (QCO), it has taken other steps such as required dedication of open spaces and recreation sites within multi-family developments. That policy is appropriate to help the city meet longer term recreation needs but does not in itself ensure or guarantee permanently protected open space.

One tool that has not yet been utilized in Cumming is the “conservation” subdivision, and there are significant opportunities for such land development technique to take place. While permitted in Cumming via a 2005 ordinance amendment, and though there are built-in incentives by way of reduced development costs for developers to take advantage of that technique, there is still no guarantee that conservation subdivisions will be constructed.

One alternative is for the city to acquire more conservation lands. This is easier said than done in today’s economic recession. The city can and should plan to include more open space in the acquisition of any future park and recreation lands (a policy is included to that effect), thus continuing and enhancing its positive step of getting Mary Alice Park under long-term lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Another possible step is for the city to more strongly encourage, or even require, conservation subdivisions. As noted, there are places with flood plains and steeply sloping lands (see “areas requiring special attention”) that are prime candidates for conservation subdivision development. At minimum, a strong policy statement in the land use plan suggesting that conservation subdivision techniques are encouraged in areas mapped as “difficult to develop.” Such a policy is included in this plan update. Cumming should monitor how development in these areas, if it occurs, uses conservation subdivision techniques, and if conservation subdivision techniques are not adequately employed, stronger measures such as a mandate (regulation) could be instituted.



**Conservation Subdivision**

With regard to implementation, two additional policy statements as described in “possible solutions” above have been added to the revised set of policies. The short-term work program recognizes the opportunity for a greenway along Kelly Mill Branch and calls for acquisition and development of a greenway that connects with the county’s greenway to Sawnee Mountain.

### **Development Practices for Steeply Sloping Lands**

As noted in the discussion of the environmental protection QCO, Cumming has adequate regulations in place to protect its most environmentally sensitive lands. However, some of the most difficult to develop lands still remain in the city, and as other vacant land is consumed, these parcels will be increasingly eyed for development. If development takes place improperly on these sites (i.e., with little attention to increased erosion potential and aesthetics), the mark on the ridges and steep slopes will be left forever for all to see.

The city could rely on its existing ordinances and hope that development will be sensitive to the viewsheds along steeply sloping lands. Or, it could take a more proactive approach. It could develop policies in its plan that articulate the desire for more sensitive development along ridge lines and parcels with steep slopes. The city could develop some basic guidelines and attempt to enforce them in the rezoning, subdivision, and land development process. Finally, a stronger step would be to prescribe additional regulations for these sites.

The short-term work program calls for a combination of design guidelines and regulations that will ensure more sensitive and environmentally appropriate development on ridgelines and steep slopes.

### **Tree Protection**

As noted in the review of the environmental protection QCO, Cumming does not have sufficient regulations in place to ensure tree protection. This plan update includes additional policies for the protection of trees.

## **HOUSING AND LAND USE**

### **Land Development Process**

A basic review of the application forms and processes available on the city's web page, conducted as a part of this plan update, reveals that improvements can be made to make the land development process more easily understandable and accessible to permit applicants. Some of the suggestions are articulated in the discussion of the "growth preparedness" QCO. The short-term work program calls for the city to reevaluate and improve its web-based development guidance and technical assistance products, with particular attention paid toward unifying the city's information on the utilities and home web pages.

### **Promotion of Traditional Neighborhood Development**

As noted in the discussion of Quality Community Objectives, Cumming made a decision in 2003 not to opt for a future development pattern that would involve the creation of dense neighborhoods surrounding the Central Business District. Instead, it opted for a policy of more "horizontal" than "vertical" residential development, concentrated in the CBD, and also incorporated policies to extend the grid street pattern evident in parts of the CBD. While this is considered a noteworthy example of promoting neotraditional development principles in light of the city's preferences, there are additional opportunities for promoting traditional neighborhood development.

Cumming expects that several large tracts of agricultural, vacant or underutilized land will get developed as master planned, mixed use communities. The city has adopted a new multi use (MU) zoning district and has articulated the desire to see mixed use development with traditional neighborhood development principles occur in both the new MU district and the CBD. Further, there are opportunities to guide residential portions of those future mixed use, master planned communities in the direction of traditional neighborhood development principles. Policies are included in this partial plan update to encourage adherence to traditional neighborhood development principles in future mixed use master planned communities. The short-term work program also calls for more development guidance in the form of a development guidelines document.

### **Redevelopment**

The city's adopted comprehensive plan already recognized the need for redevelopment in two areas, the Central Business District (CBD), and the Atlanta Road (SR 9) corridor south of the CBD. This partial plan update maintains and reinforces the adopted plan by calling for more detailed subarea plans for the CBD and the Atlanta Street corridor delineated on maps under "areas requiring special attention." Preparation of subarea plans is included in the city's short-term work program.

## **Multi-Family Housing Allowances**

The discussion of the housing QCO revealed that Cumming’s zoning ordinance is very prescriptive in terms of specifying the proportions of one-bedroom and two-bedroom units to be provided in apartment complexes. Because such prescriptive standards may not be consistent with changes to the housing market over time, they should be reconsidered and if appropriate, amended. A study of the appropriateness of Section 714 of the zoning ordinance is called for in the short-term work program, in order to decide whether amendment of its prescriptive bedroom ratio standards are still necessary and appropriate.

## **Design Guides and Aesthetics**

Review of the “Sense of Place” QCO revealed that the city does not have much by way of formal guidelines to improve the aesthetics of development. It was not until 2008 that the city prepared and adopted a comprehensive sign ordinance. As Cumming extends its plan to another 20-year horizon and specifies new activities and programs for the next five years, it is appropriate that the city provide additional guidelines in various arenas. As already noted, guidance is needed for steeply sloping lands and traditional neighborhoods within larger-scale, mixed use, and master planned developments which are anticipated to take place in the future in the city. It would therefore be appropriate, since additional guidance is called for elsewhere, that design guidelines documents be broad enough to include general aesthetic improvement. The short-term work program reflects that position.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION**

### **Population Projections for Infrastructure Decisions**

Cumming’s adopted comprehensive plan provides projections of population, and though this plan update revises them as appropriate, the city does have a detailed set of projections for its entire water and sewer service area. The importance of having reliable projections of future growth in the water and sewer service are cannot be overemphasized – providing for too much growth via oversized water and sewer lines and treatment facilities is a waste of public dollars, while undersizing of those facilities can also result in the inefficient revision or retrofit of infrastructure and facility master plans. Given this importance, the short-term work program calls for the city to update its existing, detailed projections of population, housing, and employment (load generators) on the city’s water and sewer systems in the entire service area (both unincorporated and incorporated) to yield reliable long-term demands for the city’s water and sewer system.

### **Street Trees and Street Tree Planting Programs**

Also under the “sense of place” QCO, there were opportunities described with regard to providing better street tree canopy in the city. Many suburban communities require street tree plantings as a part of new land developments, and Cumming needs to move in that direction,

with revisions to regulations that ensure trees will shade public rights of ways and tree canopies will enhance the aesthetic character of the city.

There is also an opportunity to partner with Keep Forsyth Beautiful in coordinating street tree planting efforts within the city limits of Cumming. Additionally, the design guidelines document called for elsewhere in this plan update is an opportunity to address street tree planting specifications.

### **Multi-Use Trail System Development**

As discussed elsewhere in this plan update, Forsyth County has long-range plans to provide a greenway along Big Creek that will ultimately connect to the Sawnee Mountain Ridge preserve. There is an important opportunity to preserve additional flood plains along Kelly Mill Branch in the western part of the city that will enable a greenway link from the county's project improvement to the city's neighborhoods and schools. This opportunity is recognized in the plan update (see difficult to develop sites under "areas requiring special attention") and the short-term work program of the city.

### **Service Delivery Strategy**

One of the primary issues that is expected to receive attention and debate is the renewal of the water services agreement which expires in the year 2012.

## **CHAPTER 4 LAND USE**

While not essential to meet the minimum standards of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for partial plan updates, the City of Cumming has elected to update its existing and future land use maps as a part of this update. The review of Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) in Chapter 1 revealed suggestions about development patterns, and there is a major opportunity for the city to revise and refine its future land use map and related policies, in order to more closely align them with the QCOs.

### **LAND USE TRENDS, 2003-2009**

This section updates and supplements, but does not replace, the analysis of land use provided in the land use element of Cumming's comprehensive plan. During the past six years, the City of Cumming has witnessed among others the following major land use trends.

#### **Single-Family Residential Development**

Generally, the city has not witnessed much additional single-family residential development. This is not surprising, in that the city's future land use plan map does not promote very many opportunities for additional subdivision tract development. As noted under the discussion of the "growth preparedness" QCO in Chapter 1 of the plan update, new single-family residential development has been limited mostly to a new subdivision in the western part of the city, north of Kelly Mill Road, which added approximately two-dozen new homes to the city's housing stock. There have also been a few "infill" dwellings constructed along Samaritan Drive just north of Kelly Mill Road. Also, a small number of older residential structures along Pirkle Ferry Road and E. Maple Street has been demolished, in anticipation of new office development. The net result is that few single-family dwellings have been added to the city's housing stock during this reporting period.

#### **Multi-Family Residential Development**

As noted under the discussion of the "growth preparedness" QCO in Chapter 1 of the plan update, the city has witnessed a significant increase (more than 200 units) in the number of townhouses in two locations since 2003. There was no new apartment or multi-family condominium housing constructed in the city during this reporting period.

#### **Public-Institutional Development**

Cumming is the major institutional center of Forsyth County. As of 2003, it already had extensive areas of institutional development including Northside Hospital (Cumming campus), city and county government buildings and properties, the City of Cumming Fairgrounds, numerous churches, and other smaller institutional properties.

During the reporting period, there have been some significant expansions of public-institutional uses, including but not limited to additions at the Northside Hospital campus and the building of additional county offices at the northwest quadrant of Georgia 400 and Bald Ridge Marina/Pirkle Ferry Road interchange.



**Northside Hospital has expanded its facilities.**

At the time of this writing (April-May 2009), another major institutional property under city ownership is being developed. Between Pilgrim Mill Road and Georgia 400, just west of the Pilgrim Mill Road/GA 400 interchange, a large institutional campus is being developed which will include the city's new aquatic center, a new state driver's license facility, an armory, and a new campus for North Georgia College and State University. As this property has not been fully developed, it shows as vacant on the existing land use map.

### **Office-Professional Development**

Cumming has witnessed significant additional office-professional development and is there is active construction of offices in the city. There are two primary locations that are significant in this regard. First, the area containing the one-way pairs (Pirkle Ferry Road and East Maple Street) into downtown has been the location of significant and ongoing expansion of office developments. Secondly, the area around the old hospital has continued to evolve as a concentration of office uses (picture right). New offices are under construction on the south side of East Samaritan Drive (just west of SR 20), and a new office park is under construction on the south side of West Maple Street.

A few conversions of residences to offices have occurred along Kelly Mill Road, as well. Additional office park tracts are now available in the Mary Alice Office Park between Atlanta Road (SR 9) and Georgia 400 on the south side of Mary Alice Park Road.



**Office park with available space**

## Commercial Development

The most significant additions to the commercial development stock in Cumming have taken place along Market Place Boulevard. The new “planned shopping center” regional commercial node has expanded as planned, first along that part of Market Place Boulevard between SR 20 and Buford Dam Road, then along the west side of Market Place Boulevard between Buford Dam Road and Mary Alice Park Road. In the latter area, Cumming has added major “big box” stores grouped in a “power center” type pattern.



**Recently completed retail development off of Market Place Boulevard, not yet occupied.**

In addition to the major concentration of commercial retail uses along Market Place Boulevard, Cumming has also had some additional commercial development infilling existing locations, such as along SR 20 (bank and restaurant) and office-commercial development along Conner Parkway. Though some changes in businesses have occurred, the Atlanta Road (SR 9) corridor has generally remained unchanged, and that corridor remains a target for redevelopment strategies. Significantly, Cumming now has its first true “mixed use” development, Cumming Station, in the Central Business District.

## Industrial Development

With the exception of some infilling of manufacturing and industrial development in the existing industrial park along Castleberry Industrial Drive, the city’s already significant industrial base has remained relatively unchanged during this reporting period.

## Transportation/Communication/Utilities

The most significant trend with regard to this land use is the major expansion of the electric utility substation on the north side of Mary Alice Park Road, just west of Georgia 400 (picture right).



**Substation expansion north of Mary Alice Park Road**

## **Park/Recreation/Conservation**

Cumming has witnessed a significant increase in the amount of park, recreation, and conservation land during the last six years, some well recognized and others of a much more subtle nature. First, as townhouse and single-family residential development has taken place during the past six years, small areas of active recreation (e.g., tennis courts, club houses, etc.) have been constructed, and some conservation lands have been set aside. While these areas may not have public access and are designed to serve the private residential developments, they are noteworthy additions to the recreation and open space network. More significantly, Cumming through its annexation and long-term lease of Mary Alice Park has added substantially to the active recreation land and conservation land under the control of the city. Furthermore, the imminent addition of the aquatic center on the large, city-owned institutional tract at Pilgrim Mill Road and Georgia 400 is yet another major expansion of the city's active recreation space.

## **Agricultural and Vacant Land**

Despite all of the significant development trends occurring now in Cumming, as summarized in the preceding paragraphs, there are large tracts of agricultural and vacant land that have huge potential for new development. These new growth areas are almost too numerous to summarize here, but include the following:

- A major holding of currently agricultural land surrounded by SR 9 on the west, Brooks Farm Road and Camilla Street on the south, and Pilgrim Mill Road on the east.
- Large land holdings north of Pirkle Ferry Road, west of Pilgrim Mill Road, and west of Georgia 400, along both sides of Bald Ridge.
- A large land area north of the utility substation on the north side of Mary Alice Park Road, south of E. Maple Street/Pirkle Ferry Road, west of Georgia 400. This area also is topographically influenced by Bald Ridge.
- Almost all of that area bounded by Buford Dam Road on the south, Market Place Boulevard on the west, Mary Alice Park on the north, and Sanders Road on the east.
- Significant land holdings east of existing commercial development, south of Buford Dam Road, and west of Sanders Road.
- Vacant lands surrounding the Northside Hospital, Cumming Campus.
- Significant vacant and agricultural tracts along both sides of Veterans Memorial Boulevard, south of Meadow Drive and north of SR 20/SR 9.
- Difficult-to-develop tracts along Kelly Mill Branch, north and south of SR 20.
- Vacant infill sites on the south side of Kelly Mill Road.
- Infill sites along Connors Parkway, north of the CBD, west of Dahlonega Highway (SR 9) in the northernmost part of the city, and north of Charles Place east of Dahlonega Highway (SR 9).

It is also important to note that the existing land use inventory marks significantly underutilized land as "vacant." To explain, there are significant tracts of land which contain a single-family home, on tracts north of the CBD, along the west side of Dahlonega Highway (SR 9), along the east side of Pilgrim Mill Road, and along the west side of Veterans Memorial Parkway, which

have significant development potential and are not expected to be retained in their current land uses over the long-term planning horizon. Hence, in order to fully capture the growth potential and so as not to overestimate the amount of single-family development, these large tracts with single-family homes are classified as “vacant.”

**SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAND USE IN 2009**

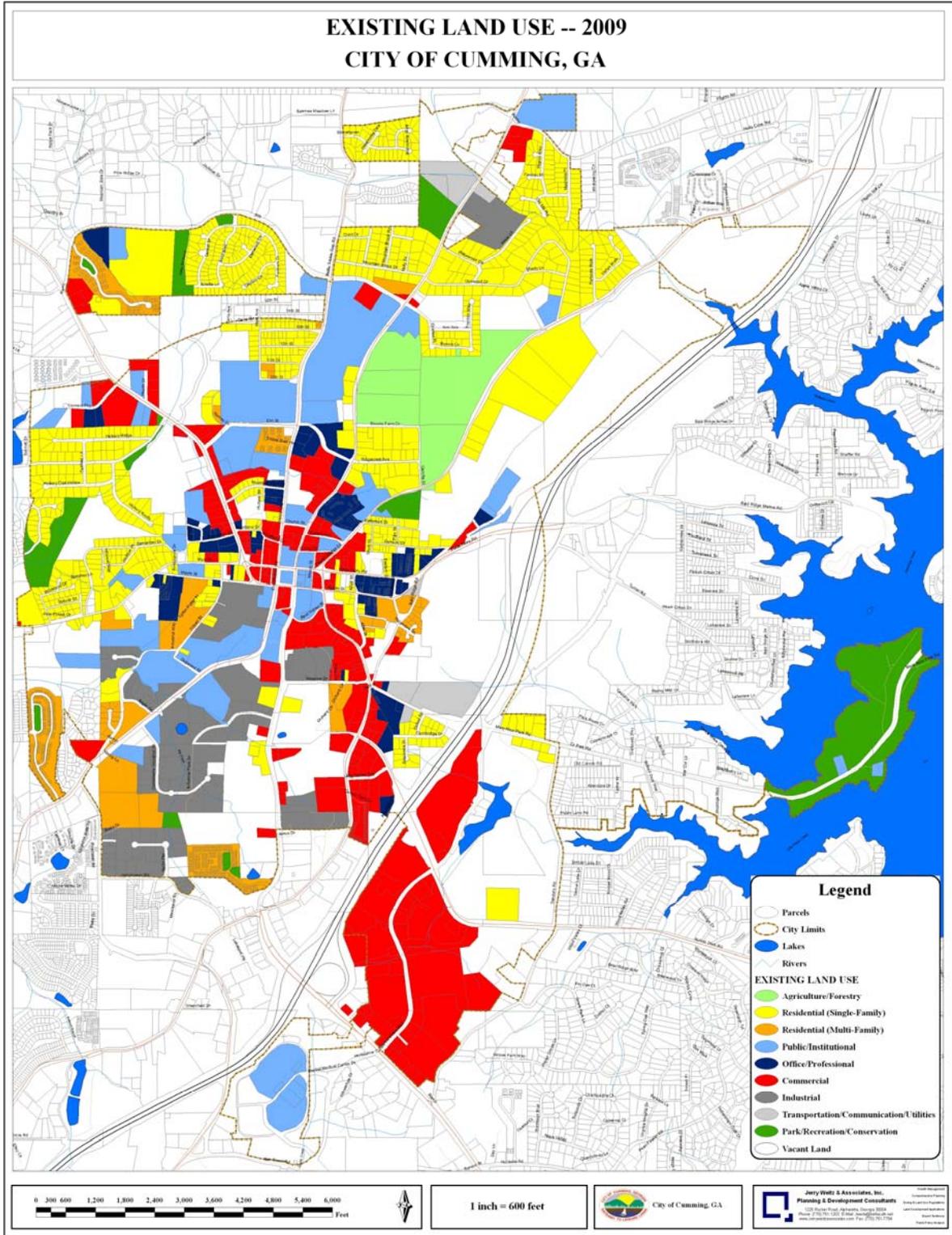
Table 15 provides a summary of existing land use as of April 2009. Existing land use categories are the same as those described in the adopted comprehensive plan and do not require elaboration here. The agricultural land use category, coupled with the vacant/undeveloped category, provides a strong indicator of Cumming’s unrealized development potential.

**Table 15  
Existing Land Use, April 2009  
City of Cumming**

Land Use	April 2009	
	Acreage	Percent of Total Area
Agriculture and forestry	120.0	3.1%
Residential, Single-Family	723.4	18.8%
Residential, Multi-Family	162.1	4.2%
Public-Institutional	345.4	9.0%
Transportation/Communication/ Utilities	43.2	1.1%
Office-Professional	94.3	2.5%
Commercial	458.7	11.9%
Industrial	218.8	5.7%
Parks, Recreation, Conservation	169.5	4.4%
Public Right-of-Ways	574.2	14.9%
Vacant/Undeveloped	940.9	24.4%
Total (Cumming City Limits)	3,850.5	100%

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc. Existing land use inventory updated April 2009. Calculations of acres by GIS.

It is also noted that the adopted plan provides the existing land use data for both the 1991 and the 2002 existing land use inventories. While those figures are interesting and could give some basis for understanding land use change over the past twenty years, they are not included here because of some concern about their comparability with the method used in the 2009 existing land use inventory. Generally, the classification of land uses in 2009 was enabled by the use of high-resolution aerial photography which was not available for prior inventory tasks. This means that the updated existing land use inventory is considered much more accurate and reliable than prior inventories, and thus comparisons with historic data risks conclusions that might be misleading.



## EXAMINATION OF THE 2025 FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

### An Opportunity for Reexamination

From the foregoing analysis, it is possible to take a new look at the evolving development patterns in the city and to reexamine the future land use map in light of evolving and desirable development patterns. In 2003, the city's revision of land use policy via the future land use plan and 2003 zoning ordinance retained the overall outlook of a suburban municipality with major employment, but also called for more intensive development in the Central Business District (CBD). This section of the plan update looks back to the thinking involved in developing the 2025 future land use plan map and critically reassesses it based on new knowledge, general market prospects, considerations of balance among land uses, and additional progress toward housing and land use-related Quality Community Objectives (QCOs).

### Office-Commercial Multi-Story Designation

The 2025 plan called for the very large, vacant land holdings along both sides of Georgia 400 to become office and commercial mixed use development in campus-style settings. This recommendation seemed reasonable at the time, as it was thought that Cumming's evolving land use pattern would resemble those of Roswell and Alpharetta in the Georgia 400 corridor to the south. Specifically, it was thought that a new class "A" office node would likely emerge in Cumming.

That thought prevailed in light of the major commercial activity center at Market Place Boulevard and SR 20, which has since expanded north along the extension of Market Place Boulevard. At that time, it was thought that the retail market was unlikely to support huge, additional commercial complexes in the Georgia 400 corridor. Furthermore, with two major developed commercial corridors (SR 9 north and south and SR 20 west of the CBD) and a concentration of commercial uses in the CBD itself, serious concern existed at that time about providing too much land for more retail uses in the context of an environment where an "over-retailization" of the Atlanta market was the norm.

Now, in 2009, the prospect of several millions of new square feet of office buildings in a campus-style environment seems much less feasible and unlikely.<sup>3</sup> The city's planning consultant considered suggesting the elimination of this category from the land use plan altogether, given the unlikelihood of support in the market in the short-term and even the long-term. However, it still appears to be a good match for undeveloped lands surrounding the Northside Hospital, Cumming Campus. In that location, substantial expansion of the hospital is still possible, but it is also likely that extensive medical office development will occur at that location, consistent with the general land use pattern around hospitals. Moreover, the hospital

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<sup>3</sup> With almost 200 vacant acres assigned to the commercial-office mixed use category in the 2025 plan, and the prospect of development at floor-area ratios of 1.5 or more considering zoning ordinance permissions and topographical challenges of the sites in question (i.e., Bald Ridge), an estimated 13 million or more square feet of office-commercial space could be constructed per the 2025 plan in the Georgia 400 corridor and vicinity.

campus area though only a short drive from the restaurants and shops along Market Place Boulevard, could benefit from restaurants and other retail and business services developed as a part of the hospital campus itself. The existing “institutional” zoning district would provide for some but not all such complementary uses, and, if developed under the institutional zoning district (a floor-area ratio of 0.7), would resemble more of a suburban than urban land use pattern.

Not only is there concern about the prospect of so much office space planned for the Georgia 400 corridor, but the suggested pattern of campus office-commercial parks separated from any living opportunities raises concerns about future traffic patterns. To further substantiate the need for change, one simply has to look at the fact that office development is occurring in other locations in Cumming, further weakening market prospects for new, stand-alone, office-dominated employment campuses. Though no formal market study was completed as a part of this plan update, it is reasonably safe to conclude that Cumming is unlikely to absorb anywhere near the capacity of its 2025 land use plan for office development during the planning horizon.

Therefore, the 2030 land use plan retains the office-commercial, multi-story future land use district but assigns it only to a limited area surrounding the hospital campus. To make the zoning ordinance and map consistent with the future land use 2030 map, rezoning of hundreds of acres would be required.

### **Re-designation of OCMS Parcels as Multiple Use (MU)**

Given the city’s recent (2009) adoption of a new multiple use zoning district, and the input from city planning and zoning staff, the 2030 plan map designates the OCMS-designated parcels as multiple or mixed use. Such a change is likely to lead to much greater flexibility in the future development of these large sites, to include appropriate residential development, and probably a lot less office development.

### **Central Business District (CBD)**

Cumming took a bold, forward-thinking step in 2003 and 2004 by designating a central business district and potentially allowing high density residential development within it. As noted in Chapter 1 of this plan update, Cumming seeks to achieve the vision of a pedestrian-friendly, more urban CBD than it currently has, consistent with principles of smart growth and the state’s QCOs. And, as also pointed out in Chapter 1, Cumming now has its first true mixed-use development, Cumming Station, which provides for loft dwellings above retail and service spaces in the CBD. That development is not constructed anywhere near the allowed building height (8 stories) or the maximum floor-area ratio allowed in the CBD zoning district, that project is a positive and significant step toward revitalization and recreation of an urban CBD in Cumming.

When the 2003 zoning ordinance was written and adopted, it designated all of the CBD as it appears on the 2025 future land use plan map as CBD zoning. That decision was entirely appropriate especially in the context of “consistency” between land use plans and official zoning

maps, and again it also was consistent with the vision of the city to promote a more urban CBD and infuse significant new housing opportunities in the downtown.

The 2025 plan provided for a CBD boundary (an overlay boundary, of sorts) but designated individual land uses for individual blocks and properties within the CBD, such as public-institutional and commercial. This was done because: (1) some of the blocks such as the city hall and county properties were considered unlikely to change or intensify; and (2) to get an accurate estimation of buildout potential of individual land use categories. In critically re-examining the future land use plan map, it is evident that there are some blocks of land in the CBD that were suggested as appropriate for CBD mixed use (including residential up to 30 units per acre) but which are unlikely to change from their current land uses. That re-examination led to some land use changes within the CBD for individual blocks and uses.

The net result of those changes is a scaling back of sorts of properties shown as appropriate for high density residential mixed use. This is viewed as more realistic in terms of predicted land use change in the CBD. And while it does not appear that even new development will approach the maximum heights and floor-area ratios allowed in the CBD zoning district, it relieves some potential stress on the CBD's road infrastructure if developers were to take advantage of allowable maximums for height and bulk.

### **Stand-Alone Office Development along Pilgrim Mill Road**

It might be repetitive but it is critical to point out again that the 2025 future land use plan was heavy in terms of allocating office uses. In addition to the Office-Commercial Multi-Story designation, which has been unrealized so far in the city in terms of development potential, offices are allowed to be constructed in all commercial districts in addition to the office-professional and institutional zoning district. And, as already noted, the prime hot-spots for office development have been close to the old hospital, and along the one-way pairs of Pirkle Ferry Road and East Maple Street between the CBD and Georgia 400. One must also consider that a substantial portion of the future medical office growth Cumming might absorb during the planning horizon is likely to locate within the Northside Hospital campus.

All of these findings call into question seriously the designations of stand-alone future office development along both sides of Pilgrim Mill Road. Much of the land (220 acres total) designated for office-professional development in the 2025 plan was to be located in that corridor. With other locations becoming hot spots for office growth, better locations elsewhere, and the unlikelihood of absorption of that much new, stand-alone office space as designated in the 2025 plan, it is wise to reconsider and reclassify the extensive properties designated for stand-alone office-professional land uses along the Pilgrim Mill Road corridor.

### **Re-Designation of Pilgrim Mill Road Corridor for Other Uses**

It is worth articulating all possibilities for the future land use pattern in the area along Pilgrim Mill Road. The plan, in other location, appears to fully saturate market potential for most commercial and retail uses, and especially for office space. That makes those uses improbable, though they should not necessarily be "zoned out" of the area, either. Light industrial

development is at least possible, but the city has concentrated its light industrial areas in the southwest part of the city. It is neither necessary nor desirable to add a new industrial area to the city, especially given the mostly residential and open space character along Pilgrim Mill Road. Similarly, there are multiple opportunities for expansion of public-institutional uses (see discussion elsewhere of the city's property which will house a new college campus, aquatic center, driver's license office, and armory, on property further north of the office designations on Pilgrim Mill Road.

With institutional, industrial, commercial, and office uses mostly ruled out for this location, what does this leave? It leaves open space (which is unrealistic), mixed uses (which are already adequately provided for in other locations including due east of the subject area), and residential uses of some form or fashion.

Before examining prospects for residential use, some review of past policy discussion is in order. One option is to pursue master planned residential communities. In 2003, the Cumming City Council and Planning and Zoning Board raised concern about the form of planned unit developments, given a lack of guidance on development outcomes, and high densities allowed.<sup>4</sup> This means that higher density residential development is not considered an acceptable development prospect for the Pilgrim Mill corridor. Cumming capped multi-family densities at 6 units per acre outside the CBD, and as a result, residential regulations have led to approximately 200 or more townhouses built at that maximum density of six units per acre. Given that the vast majority of residential development experienced in Cumming during the last six years has been townhouses, designations for more townhouses would not appear to be desirable from a policy standpoint nor prudent from a market perspective.

Cumming's future land use plan really does not provide much opportunity for new, detached, single-family housing. To some extent, at least, the lack of very many opportunities for additional, detached single-family dwellings was also a conscious policy choice of city leaders. That policy decision, not to encourage a lot of detached, single-family dwellings in Cumming is substantiated in part by the massive amounts of single-family subdivisions developed during the past 15 years or so in all parts of unincorporated Forsyth County. In short, Forsyth County is by and large a low-density, bedroom community and Cumming is, by and large, the major employment center.

From two standpoints, however, there are reasons for the city to re-evaluate the prior policy of not promoting more detached, single-family dwellings within the city limits. First, the land use plan, and the overall land use mix in the city, risks becoming imbalanced if the current policy of not providing for new, single-family detached dwellings is continued. Second, with the exception of the new townhouse units that have been recently constructed, the city's housing stock gets progressively older with each decade unless newer units are constructed. As the city's detached residential neighborhoods age, the opportunity for existing residents to "trade up" or upgrade to newer detached units becomes highly constrained, unless new subdivisions are constructed.

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<sup>4</sup> Prior zoning regulations which were repealed via the 2003 zoning ordinance, would have allowed up to 15 units per acre of residential development. City leaders decided then they did not want to promote high density development in locations other than within the CBD.

## **FUTURE LAND USE PLAN 2030**

While no longer required by the minimum local planning standards of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs,<sup>5</sup> Cumming has elected to retain and update its future land use plan map. The preceding section has already alluded to the rationales for making some significant changes to the 2025 future land use plan map. This section summarizes major changes to the future land use map, 2025 and 2030 versions, in addition to those described in the previous section of this chapter.

First, the 2030 plan map consolidates all single-family residential categories into a single category. The 2025 plan map showed different single-family residential categories based on slight differences in density and corresponding with the city's single-family residential zoning districts. It was decided that these different categories could be consolidated to simplify the future land use plan map. Few rezoning issues are evident in Cumming with regard to these single-family categories, and it was decided that policies (see Chapter 5) would suffice in terms of guiding any future rezoning decisions with respect to single-family residential zoning districts.

The future land use plan map has been redrawn to include a new category of predominantly low-density residential use, but one that comes with significantly more flexibility for neighborhood-scale non-residential uses. Furthermore, this category provides an opportunity for the city to capture an evolving market for elderly housing, such as within continuing care retirement communities. That category, which is explained further in the next section, is referred to as mixed use residential, TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development). It is believed that this new designation is highly appropriate for the Pilgrim Mill Road corridor and as a transition in areas between lakefront residential subdivisions (in unincorporated areas) and the mixed use and commercial designations in the eastern part of the city.

The categories shown on the future land use plan map are summarized below. See also policies for several of these individual categories.

### **Residential, Single-Family**

The predominant use of land within this category is detached, single-family dwellings under fee simple ownership. This category is implemented in the City of Cumming Zoning Ordinance with three residential zoning districts: R-1, Single-Family Residential District; R-1A, Single-Family Residential District; and R-2, Moderate-Density Residential District. The minimum lot sizes for these districts are 30,000 square feet, 18,000 square feet, and 15,000 square feet, respectively, and they permit subdivisions with densities ranging from 1.5, to 2.5, to 3.0 units per acre, respectively. Two-family dwellings (duplexes) are also permitted, but only in the R-2

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<sup>5</sup> Under the minimum standards effective May 1, 2005, which were adopted after Cumming developed its current comprehensive plan, the state made future land use maps "optional" rather than required. Instead, the 2005 standards require a "future development map" which is to be based on "character" as opposed to individual land uses. It is the consultant's position, generally, that the future land use plan map remains an essential policy guide for the City of Cumming (or any locality with a zoning ordinance) and should provide the overall framework for the locality's zoning ordinance and subsequent zoning and rezoning decisions.

zoning district. If densities and compatibility or maintained, through the conditional use (discretionary review) process, other dwelling types can be permitted but only in the R-2 zoning district.

### **Residential, Multi-Family**

This category includes apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and some duplexes and triplex units. An existing manufactured home park is also included in this category. This future land use category is implemented with the R-3, Multiple-Family Residential District in Cumming's zoning ordinance. The overall density of R-3 districts shall not exceed six (6) dwelling units per acre. Some of the properties designated as such were built to densities higher than currently permitted by the R-3 zoning district and are therefore nonconforming with regard to density.

### **Residential, Mixed Use TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development)**

This is a new category introduced in the Future Land Use 2030 plan map. It is proposed to be implemented with a zoning district of the same name, generally, but which has not been included in the Cumming zoning ordinance at the time of this writing. The following parameters are established for this future land use – a future zoning ordinance may refine these parameters:

1. **Predominant Use.** Uses within this future land use category shall be predominantly detached, single-family dwellings.
2. **Ownership, Unit Options, and Height.** Ownership options to fee simple title, such as single-family detached, condominium ownership, are permitted. Not more than 15 percent of the total units in the development may be attached units, but in no case shall there be more than 30 such units in any individual development. No such units or building shall exceed three stories or forty feet in building height.
3. **Density.** The overall density of residential development cannot exceed a net density of 2.5 units per acre, calculated on the basis of all lands devoted to residential uses (i.e., excluding any nonresidential uses). Minimum lot sizes for all individual single-family lots abutting an existing public street, such as Pilgrim Mill Road, shall be 18,000 square feet. The development overall, except for when lots abut an existing public street, may consist have smaller lots (minimum of 12,500 square feet), provided that the overall density of the development does not exceed 2.5 units per acre, calculated on the basis of all lands devoted to residential uses (i.e., excluding any nonresidential uses).
4. **Design Principles and Open Space.** Careful design of the development is required, and the design is expected to adhere to principles of “conservation subdivisions” as described in Article XVIII of the Cumming Zoning Ordinance and/or Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) as customarily accepted by the Planning and Zoning Director and/or as may be elaborated upon in design guidelines adopted pursuant to the comprehensive plan. Open spaces should consist of from 25 to 40 percent of the total development's area, depending on design principles applied. Uses within the development must be linked together for pedestrian accessibility and scaled to the pedestrian.

5. **Other Uses.** Offices, personal service establishments, enclosed retail trade establishments, day care centers (no more than 17 persons served), finance, insurance and real estate establishments, sit-down restaurants, institutional residential living and care facilities (no more than 17 persons served) are permitted, subject to the following which are intended to keep such uses small, pedestrian-oriented, and scaled to serve primarily the development itself. Active recreation buildings such as community centers or civic meeting rooms approved by the Planning and Zoning Director are allowed in the development but are not subject to these limitations.
- (a) No individual business or establishment shall exceed 5,000 square feet of floor space.
  - (b) All such uses combined cannot exceed 2,500 per gross acre of land involved in the development or 75,000, whichever is greater.
  - (c) No individual building shall include more than 15,000 gross square feet of space.

### **Public/Institutional**

This category includes state, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, public works facilities, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc. Facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accurately in another land use category, are not included in this category. For example, publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities are placed in the Park/Recreation/ Conservation category; landfills (none existing) fall under the Industrial category; and general office buildings containing government offices are placed in the commercial category. This category is implemented by an institutional zoning district in the Cumming zoning ordinance.

### **Office Professional**

This land use category applies to stand-alone office buildings and office parks consisting of multiple buildings. All ranges of professional and medical offices are permitted, but outside storage is not allowed. This land use category is implemented with an Office Professional zoning district in the Cumming zoning ordinance.

### **Commercial**

This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, organized into general categories of intensities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building. This category is implemented in the Cumming zoning ordinance with Neighborhood Shopping, Highway Business, and Central Business District zoning classifications.

### **Office-Commercial Multi-Story**

This future land use category is intended to provide for office buildings with accessory commercial uses in buildings with heights (up to six stories) which are greater than those allowed in other office and commercial districts. Taller buildings are intended to encourage efficient construction which will better facilitate increased landscaping and greenbelt areas and improved aesthetic qualities in a campus-style environment. This future land use category is implemented with an Office-Commercial Multi-Story zoning district in Cumming's zoning ordinance.

### **Mixed Use - Commercial**

This category is intended to provide for a combination of commercial and residential and other uses. It is implemented with the multi-use zoning district adopted by amendment to the zoning ordinance in 2008.

### **Mixed Use - CBD**

This category corresponds with properties within the Central Business District zoning classification in the Zoning Ordinance which are anticipated to be available or desirable for redevelopment, including mixed uses and residential units up to 30 units per acre (subject to a conditional use permit).

### **Industrial**

This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses, which may be organized into general categories of intensity.

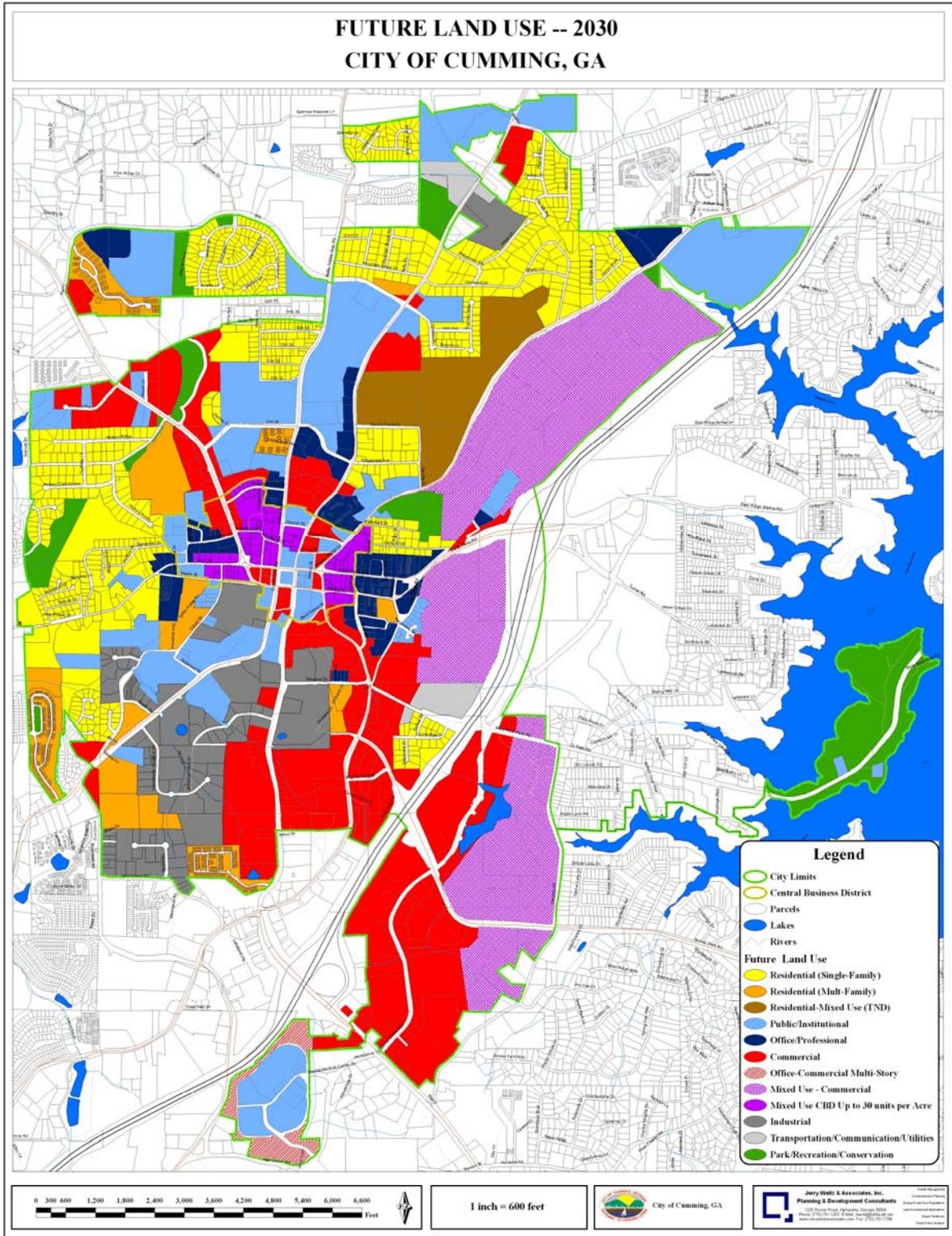
### **Transportation/Communication/Utilities**

This category includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, port facilities or other similar uses.

### **Park/Recreation/Conservation**

This category is for land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers and similar uses.

Table 15 provides estimates of acreage in each of the aforementioned categories, along with comparisons with existing land use (2009) and summaries concerning anticipated land use change during the 20-year planning horizon.



**Table 16  
Future Land Use 2030 and Comparison with 2009  
City of Cumming**

Land Use	2009		2030		Net Change in Acreage
	Acreage	Percent of Total Area	Acreage	Percent of Total Area	
Agriculture and forestry	120.0	3.1%	0	-	-120.0
Residential, single-family	723.4	18.8%	638.7	16.6%	-84.7
Residential, multi-family	162.1	4.2%	187.4	4.9%	+25.3
Residential, mixed use (TND)	NC	--	123.8	3.2%	+123.9
Public-Institutional	345.4	9.0%	545.1	14.2%	+199.7
Office-Professional	94.3	2.5%	133.7	3.5%	+39.4
Commercial	458.7	11.9%	670.9	17.4%	+212.2
Office-Commercial Multi-Story	NC	--	30.1	0.8%	+30.1
Mixed Use (Commercial)	NC	--	533.8	13.9%	+533.8
Mixed Use (CBD)	NC	--	58.6	1.5%	+58.6
Transportation/Communication/ Utilities	43.2	1.1%	36.3	0.9%	-6.9
Industrial	218.8	5.7%	265.5	6.9%	+46.7
Parks, Recreation, Conservation	169.5	4.4%	189.3	4.9%	+19.8
Public Right-of-Ways	574.2	14.9%	437.3	11.4%	-136.9
Vacant/Undeveloped	940.9	24.4%	0	--	-940.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,850.5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,850.5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>--</b>

Source: Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc. Revised May 20, 2009. NC = not classified

## **CHAPTER 5 POLICIES**

The partial update of the comprehensive plan is intended to provide a guide to everyday decision-making for use by local government officials and other community leaders. The requirements for partial plan updates specify that the local government will include any policies the local government will adopt to provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with addressing the identified issues and opportunities. The state's standards also suggest that local governments refer to recommended policies listed in the State Planning Recommendations for suggestions.

Cumming's adopted comprehensive plan contains numerous policies articulated under each of the respective plan elements. This update to the comprehensive plan incorporates the major goals and policy statements – with selected revisions, in this document. Therefore, this plan update goes beyond the minimum requirements of a Partial Plan Update to include a comprehensive synthesis and re-adoption of the city's comprehensive plan goals, policies, objectives, and implementation strategies. This is done for two reasons – first, it is easier to research and cite policies when they are organized in one place – this chapter. Second, it might be more challenging for the reader to review this plan update and the original comprehensive plan document, if only those policies related to the task were included here. Since it is desirable to have the policies consolidated in one single place, this update reincorporates (with revisions if appropriate) all policies. While the adopted comprehensive plan document remains valid and useful, it is no longer necessary to look to it for policy guidance, upon the adoption of this chapter and the rest of the plan update.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

#### **General Environmental Policies**

1. Limit development to a level that does not exceed the capabilities and requirements of a healthy environment.
2. Limit development in environmentally sensitive areas such as water supply watersheds, severe topography, and areas with drainage problems.
3. Restrict development within flood plains.
4. Provide permanent buffers to protect critical environmental features.
5. Conserve and protect natural resources, including air quality, trees, natural vegetation, existing topography, streams, creeks, wetlands, watersheds, and water quality.
6. Evaluate each proposed development's compatibility with the existing environment to determine the limitations and capabilities of the site for development.

7. Restore and enhance environmental functions damaged by prior site activities.
8. Development should respect, and blend with, the existing topography of the land.
9. Ensure that the City, in its own activities, follows the same environmental policies as required of private developers.
10. Seek out opportunities to acquire conservation lands and park spaces.
11. Conservation subdivision techniques are strongly encouraged in areas mapped as “difficult development sites” in this plan, and for properties proposed for development in the residential, mixed use (TND) category as shown on the future land use plan 2030 map.
12. The city expects sensitive development practices along steeply sloping lands and ridgelines of the city such as Bald Ridge. Development along ridge lines and on parcels with steep slopes should adhere to any design and development guidelines made a part of the comprehensive plan or as adopted by the city.

### **Flood Plain and Tributary Protection**

1. Restrict or prohibit land disturbing activities, adjacent to tributary streams, which lead to increases in erosion or to increased flood heights and velocities.
2. Prohibit development within floodways and restrict or prohibit development in flood plains. If development within flood plains is allowed, flood plain storage should not be decreased from its present state. In no event shall development be permitted that inhibits the flow of floodwaters.
3. Continue to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Periodically amend the flood damage prevention/floodplain management ordinance to comply with changes to ordinances specified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

### **Wetlands**

1. Design around significant wetlands.
2. Preservation is preferred over any form of destruction with mitigation. When roads must cross wetlands, they should be designed to cross at the point of minimum impact, ordinarily the narrowest point.
3. Establish upland buffers around retained wetlands and natural water bodies.
4. Any proposal for development involving the alteration of, or an impact on, wetlands should be evaluated according to the following (based on Ga. DNR Rule 391-3-16-.03):

- Whether impacts to an area would adversely affect the public health, safety, welfare, or the property of others.
- Whether the area is unique or significant in the conservation of flora and fauna including threatened, rare, or endangered species.
- Whether alteration or impacts to wetlands will adversely affect the function, including the flow or quality of water, cause erosion or shoaling, or impact navigation.
- Whether impacts or modification by a project would adversely affect fishing or recreational use of wetlands.
- Whether an alteration or impact would be temporary in nature.
- Whether alteration of wetlands would have measurable adverse impacts on adjacent sensitive natural areas.
- Where wetlands have been created for mitigation purposes under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, such wetlands shall be considered for protection.

### **Watershed Protection Generally**

1. Soil and erosion best management practices should be required on all sites regardless of size and soil erosion control plans should be required to be submitted and approved for all site larger than one acre per applicable state law and regional regulatory policy.
2. The effectiveness of storm water BMPs depends on design consideration. All structural BMPs should be required to be consistent with the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual. Specific measures to provide additional water quality improvements, in addition to the hydrologic controls, should be incorporated to maximize water quality benefits.
3. All significant sources of aquatic contamination and degradation should be excluded from streamside zones located directly adjacent to the stream this zone. Uses within this area should be restricted to flood control and bank stabilization. Land disturbances including clearing should be prohibited except for specified managed uses when no practical alternative exists. Permitted uses within the managed zone include recreational activities, storm water BMPs, greenway trails, bike paths, utilities, and lawns.
4. Better Stormwater Site Design Practices include the following which will be implemented in the city:
  - Preserve undisturbed natural areas where possible.
  - Preserve riparian buffers.
  - Avoid development in floodplains.
  - Avoid development on steep slopes.
  - Minimize the siting of development on erodible soils.
  - Consider hydrology in the development site design process.
  - Locate development in less sensitive areas.
  - Reduce the limits of clearing and grading where possible.
  - Utilize open space development.

- Consider and permit creative development designs.
- Reduce roadway lengths and widths where possible.
- Reduce building footprints and parking footprints.
- Reduce setbacks and frontages.
- Use fewer or alternative cul-de-sacs.
- Create parking lot stormwater “islands.”
- Maximize pervious surfaces.
- Use natural drainageways instead of storm sewers where appropriate.
- Use vegetative swales instead of curb and gutter where possible.

### **Big Creek Watershed**

1. Improve/maintain water quality of Big Creek and its tributaries.
2. Maximize recreation potential/value.
3. Minimize property damage, flooding, and stream impacts due to stormwater runoff.
4. Educate the watershed’s users about the resources.
5. Develop a framework for intergovernmental cooperation in protecting the watershed.
6. Insure compatibility of watershed plans developed by individual jurisdictions.

### **Big Creek Ecological Greenway**

1. Adopt a multi-jurisdictional greenway plan and policy to guide the development of greenway segments across jurisdictional boundaries.
2. Make greenway connections across jurisdictional boundaries.
3. Develop and adopt unifying design guidelines and principles to guide the implementation of the greenway system across jurisdictions.
4. Adopt the conceptual greenway plan into local comprehensive plans and show preservation areas and greenway corridors on local comprehensive land use maps.
5. Incorporate greenway system implementation and preservation of conservation areas and corridors into local development codes and ordinances.
6. Develop a management plan, which ensures the long-term maintenance and protection of the greenway system.
7. Establish multi-jurisdictional agreements that protect and preserve the integrity of the greenway system.

8. Restore greenway corridors in developed areas.
9. Restore greenway corridors in developed areas.
10. Require dedication of greenway corridors and linkage through the development review process.
11. Adopt tree ordinances that allow tree mitigation banking in greenway corridors.
12. Establish a watershed-wide monitoring program.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

1. Encourage the eventual inclusion of all worthy historic buildings, structures, and districts in the listing of the National Register of Historic Places and the Georgia Register of Historic Places.
2. Educate the general public on the importance and benefits of preserving historic resources.
3. Utilize regional, state, federal, and university programs which provide funding, staff and services to enhance the city's historic preservation program.
4. Encourage property owners to take advantage of federal and state investment tax credits available for the rehabilitation of historic structures.
5. Consider the adaptive use of historic structures for government uses, where appropriate.

## **HOUSING**

1. Provide a range of housing size, cost, and density to make it possible for a significant number of people who work in the community to also live in the community.
2. Continue to provide, in the city's zoning regulations, for opportunities for accessory apartments and homes for the developmentally disabled.
3. Avoid regulations and practices that would discourage the provision of housing for persons with disabilities.
4. Maintain an overall maximum density limit of six (6) units per acre for multi-family properties.
5. Continue to provide, in the city's zoning regulations, for opportunities for nursing homes and other care facilities, continuing care retirement communities, and senior living.

6. Encourage “life cycle” or “mixed generation” communities that provide for persons of different age groups (including seniors) to live in the same community as they age.
7. Where allowed by the zoning regulations, encourage developments that mix different types of housing units (detached single family, attached single family, duplex, quadraplex, etc.) on the same site or within the same development.
8. Monitor housing conditions in neighborhoods identified in this comprehensive plan as possibly needed targeted community development activities, and develop a program to administer such activities if needed, during the planning horizon.
9. Upgrade or eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing. Encourage the demolition or removal of vacant dilapidated housing units which are beyond repair if such units contribute to the instability of the residential neighborhood and/or cause an immediate or foreseeable threat to public health, safety, or general welfare.
10. Consider and make use of incentives, state and federal funding, and/or any other available programs to encourage homeowners to improve and upgrade their homes so that they will remain owner-occupied so as to avoid a disproportionate number of renter-occupied housing units.
11. Stimulate infill housing in existing neighborhoods, especially owner-occupied housing.
12. Identify, through the land use element, infill development opportunities and ensure that there are no significant barriers to housing construction on infill sites in the city.
13. To address the small number of units that may be overcrowded and which may present an issue of overcrowding, the city should ensure that it has adopted and enforced a housing code.
14. A recent trend in metropolitan Atlanta is to require the periodic inspection of rental housing complexes to ensure safe, adequate, and lawful living conditions. If conditions with regard to overcrowding worsen, the city should consider such an inspection program.
15. In planning for and redeveloping Cumming’s city center into a mixed-use downtown, the city and development community should focus on providing higher-end, owner-occupied condominiums to upgrade the overall city housing stock and provide buying power for increased commercial opportunities in the downtown.
16. Collect and monitor any additional available data on special housing needs in the city and county.
17. Identify private and other special housing needs providers such as Habitat for Humanity, religious institutions, community development corporations, and non-profit social service

and advocacy groups, and determine how the city can participate to some degree in encouraging private-sector responses to such needs.

18. Evaluate the city's public housing program and the city's housing authority in terms of existing assets, housing conditions, and future options in light of changing federal housing policies.
19. Consider the extension of sanitary sewer to the city's housing that is not yet connected to the city's sanitary sewer system, if costs are reasonable and can be equitably distributed.
20. Consider the eligibility of any homes fifty years old or older as "historic" if the homes are grouped together in a neighborhood, have architectural significance and are worthy of a historic designation.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Promote and enhance the City of Cumming as the commercial and service center for Forsyth County and the immediate region.
2. The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in the city should be suitable for the City in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the City or region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities (Quality Community Objective, Appropriate Business).
3. A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce (Quality Community Objective, Employment Options).
4. Maintain a diverse economy in the city, to ensure it does not rely upon any one employment sector or industry (e.g., government).
5. Promote the role the city plays as the medical office center for Forsyth County and the immediate region.
6. Continue to pursue manufacturing and industrial establishments to locate in any remaining lots in existing industrial parks and on light-industrially zoned land outside of industrial parks.
7. Target new businesses that are looking for existing facilities, and encourage them to locate in existing, vacant commercial/industrial buildings, or to adapt such buildings and structures for their reuse.
8. Capitalize on the city's access to Georgia 400 and its close proximity to Lake Lanier and the Atlanta region.

9. Plan for expanded infrastructure (water, sanitary sewer, roads, drainage facilities, etc.) as may be needed to accommodate future office, commercial, and light industrial development.
10. Emphasize the need for and encourage the revitalization and redevelopment of existing developments in the Atlanta Road (SR 9) corridor.
11. City leaders should be closely involved in major development efforts.
12. Make maximum use of Lanier Technical Institute's Adult Literacy Program to improve literacy levels of the city's population.

## **LAND USE**

### **Established Single-Family Neighborhoods**

1. Maintain and preserve quiet, stable neighborhoods of detached, single-family residences in a conventional suburban design and layout at low densities.
2. New residential development should provide for recreational opportunities such as greenspace, swim and tennis facilities, and for developments with more than 100 units, community buildings or multi-use recreation centers.
3. Applications for conditional uses should be carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood's residential character.
4. When acting on requests for re-zoning to single-family residential zoning districts (i.e., R-1, R-1A, and R-2), the city will consider the compatibility of the proposed (or permitted) lot sizes of the development in relation to those in the vicinity of the proposed rezoning.

### **Multi-Family Residential Development**

1. Triplexes, quadraplexes, townhouses, and detached single-family condominiums may be appropriate, subject to approval as conditional uses and if designed to be in keeping with the character of existing development in R-2 districts. They are permitted in R-3 zoning districts.
2. New residential development should provide for recreational opportunities such as greenspace, swim and tennis facilities, and for developments with more than 100 units, community buildings or multi-use recreation centers.
3. The overall density of new residential development in R-3 districts shall not exceed six (6) units per acre.

4. Applications for conditional uses should be carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood's residential character.

### **Central Business District (CBD)**

1. Development in the CBD may consist of greater lot coverages, building heights, and building intensities and little or no front and side building setbacks.
2. Development that is adequately served by public parking or on-street parking, or which qualifies for exemptions, should have reduced minimum off-street parking requirements.
3. Permitted uses in the CBD include those that contribute to a pedestrian-friendly design and that maintain the character of the district as the governmental office, financial, and commercial business center for the City of Cumming.
4. Automobile-related facilities and services are not appropriate in the CBD because they do not facilitate pedestrian friendly design, and thus, new highway business uses are not permitted in the CBD.
5. Pocket parks, or greenspace amounting to 20 percent of the total site area, shall be provided as a part of mixed-use developments in the CBD.
6. Housing, up to 30 units per acre, may be appropriate as part of mixed-use or multi-use developments and redevelopment projects in the CBD, subject to conditional use approval, on properties designated for mixed-use development or redevelopment according to the future land use map.
7. Where an extension of the grid street system is illustrated by development concepts for the CBD or on the future land use plan map, the development shall incorporate the proposed grid-pattern street extension (with small block patterns).

### **Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND)**

Encourage adherence to traditional neighborhood development principles in areas designated for: commercial, mixed use; and residential, mixed use (TND) on the future land use plan 2030 map.

### **Neighborhood Shopping**

1. Neighborhood Shopping districts are intended to provide areas for limited, small-scale commercial uses of a convenience nature serving nearby residential neighborhoods as opposed to a regional market.
2. With the exception of convenience stores with gasoline pumps, neighborhood shopping districts do not permit or accommodate automotive uses or other types of more intensive highway business activities, or those uses that generate excessive traffic, noise, odors,

pollution, safety hazards, or other adverse impacts which would detract from the desirability of adjacent properties for residential use.

3. Uses within neighborhood shopping districts generally occur within enclosed buildings with no outside storage and limited outdoor display of goods and merchandise.

### **Highway Commercial Corridors**

1. Along certain designated portions of state highways other than Georgia 400, highway commercial districts are established to provide suitable areas for those business and commercial uses which primarily serve the public traveling by automobile and which benefit from direct access to state highways. HB districts are generally designed so that the automobile has precedence over the pedestrian.
2. Automobile sales and service, lodging, and mini-storage facilities are representative uses. Open storage and open-air business uses are also permitted, subject to certain screening requirements.
3. The creation of new highway business districts without frontage on a state highway is strongly discouraged. Great scrutiny will be given to any requests for rezoning to extend highway business zoning districts. Substantially compelling evidence of the need for additional highway business uses in Cumming must be presented to support such a change.

### **Planned Shopping Centers**

1. Planned shopping centers serve as major regional shopping destinations for retail goods, dining, building supplies, indoor commercial recreation, and personal and lodging services. Uses permitted within planned shopping centers include certain highway business and open-air business uses.
2. Planned shopping centers are generally designed so that the automobile has precedence over the pedestrian (i.e., in a conventional, suburban layout with abundant off-street parking in front of commercial buildings) but such areas must safely accommodate pedestrians.
3. New planned shopping centers should provide interparcel connections, limited curb cuts on minor and major arterials, and generous landscaping and shade trees.
4. A natural buffer replanted where sparsely vegetated with a width of not less than fifty (50) feet shall be provided and maintained along all property lines abutting or adjoining single-family residential development, including subdivisions in unincorporated Forsyth County.

### **Office-Commercial Multi-Story Development**

1. Office-commercial multi-story (up to six stories) development is permitted in designated areas adjacent to Georgia 400.
2. Taller buildings are intended to encourage efficient construction which will better facilitate increased landscaping and greenbelt areas and improved aesthetic qualities in a campus-style environment.
3. Off-street parking is in almost all circumstances required to be provided in parking decks, due to higher floor-area ratios permitted.
4. These districts are not intended to allow substantial building height above the ridgelines. Where steep or relatively steep topography exists, office-commercial multi-story development should fit with the original land forms and topographic contours as much as possible.
5. A campus-style master plan and development features should include walking trails and other outdoor recreational amenities to serve workers of the office-commercial multi-story campuses.

### **Office Development**

1. Office-professional districts are intended to encourage and provide suitable areas for professional, medical, and general offices and certain related activities.
2. Office-professional districts can serve as a transition between one or more commercial zoning districts and one or more residential zoning districts.

### **Institutional Districts**

1. Institutional districts are established for a variety of public and semi-public uses, including public and private elementary, middle, and secondary schools, city, county, and state government offices, municipal fairgrounds, hospitals, churches, institutional residential facilities such as nursing homes and care centers, parks, public land, open space, public utilities, and other institutions and public uses.
2. Pedestrian access should be provided to and from all institutional districts.

### **Industrial Districts**

1. Industrial land uses should be limited to areas with relatively level topography, adequate water and sewerage facilities, and access to arterial streets.

2. New industrial operations should be limited to those that are not objectionable by reason of the emission of noise, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors or radiation and that do not create fire or explosion hazards or other objectionable conditions.
3. New industrial development shall connect to existing industrial development, where such connection would facilitate traffic through light industrial parks and individual developments.

### **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

1. Areas of flood plain should be set aside for greenspace.
2. Areas designated as “environmentally sensitive parcel” according to the city’s zoning ordinance have unstable ground or other situations that require environmental monitoring or compliance. Environmentally sensitive parcels are declared to be unsafe for building without additional technical review. Environmental mitigation or remediation recommended by a qualified professional may be made a condition of approval for any building permit on an environmentally sensitive parcel.

### **Land Development Process**

Critically re-evaluate and continuously improve the land development process in Cumming, particularly through the availability of clear, web-accessible instructions, guidelines, and resources.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES**

### **General Policy for Siting Community Facilities**

1. The City of Cumming will strive to locate and expand municipal offices in the downtown central business district of the city.
2. The city encourages Forsyth County to maintain its major administrative and governmental offices in the downtown central business district of the city.

### **Water**

1. Update the existing water Master Plan, including demand forecasts, and maps of the service delivery system, including lot lines, location/size/type of mains, valves, pumping stations, blowoffs, storage tanks, etc.
2. Complete upgrades to the pipeline system in major roadways as suggested in capital improvement programs.
3. Promote extension of distribution systems and connection with County/regional systems.

4. Update the Raw Water Intake Agreement and Wholesale Water User's Agreement with Forsyth County for the specified periods, as applicable.
5. Deliver safe, potable water of approved quality at reasonable cost.
6. Comply with the water quality standards of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, as amended. Monitor other water quality standards and be responsive to citizen complaints with regard to water quality
7. Operate the water delivery system on a 24 hour basis, 365(6) days of the year.
8. Meet average and peak water service demands.
9. Maintain water pressure between 40 and 60 pounds per square inch (psi), not to drop below a minimum of 20 psi for firefighting purposes, with a maximum of 100 psi to restrict potential for leakage.
10. Maintain a target water flow standard of 1,500 gallons per minute for firefighting commercial structures, although between 2,000 and 2,500 gallons per minute is considered optimum.
11. For firefighting a residential fire, establish a minimum water target of 1,000 gallons per minute, although up to 1,500 gallons per minute is considered optimum.
12. Provide sufficient storage of treated water to permit normal delivery of all but the most severe emergencies and level out high peak flows.
13. Develop and enforce water conservation measures in all new development in the City.
14. Require developers of residential subdivisions to install the appropriate water mains, fire hydrants, and other appurtenances.

### **Sanitary Sewer**

1. Protect the quality of the natural waters and waterways.
2. Assure cost effective service delivery that protects the health and welfare of the community's households, businesses and institutions.
3. Update the existing Sanitary Sewer Master Plan every 5 years, including generation factors and demand forecasts.
4. Target sanitary sewer expansion to areas to be developed as commercial and residential subdivisions with the goal of providing service to 80 percent of the service area by 2021.

5. Operate, maintain, expand, and replace components of the wastewater system to assure uninterrupted wastewater collection and transportation, and adequate waste processing treatment and proper disposal or reuse of reclaimed waters and of waste treatment by-products.
6. Assure that the collection system has the hydraulic capacity and physical integrity to convey all sanitary wastewater flows to the wastewater treatment plant without bypassing these flows into receiving waters and without causing waste backups that store sanitary sewage on private property.

### **Stormwater Management**

Develop satisfactory municipal capability for stormwater management services, consistent with the city needs and those identified by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.

### **Fire Protection/Emergency Medical Services**

1. Maintain the existing formal service agreement with Forsyth County.
2. Enforce appropriate standard fire codes and city building ordinance which requires automatic sprinkler systems in places of assemblage, and new commercial structures, based on the type of structure, size of structure(s), usage, number of occupants, whether alcohol is served, and other factors.
3. Ensure fire hydrants are installed along new public water lines every 1,000 feet in residential areas and every 500 feet for commercial/industrial development, and by developers in residential subdivisions.
4. Require that fire hydrants be placed such that a hydrant is not located further than 250 feet from the furthestmost rear portion of a commercial/industrial building.
5. Test fire hydrants regularly and institute prompt repairs where necessary.
6. Adhere to all requirements of the Forsyth County Fire Department in order to support a target first response time for properties within the City limits of 3 to 4 minutes.
7. Continue to utilize the fire safety inspector employed by Forsyth County to provide inspections of buildings in the City.
8. Continue to support the Forsyth County Fire Department's educational programs.
9. Work with the Fire Department to reduce the ISO rating where practical and cost effective to do so.

## **Police Department**

1. Ensure that the law enforcement agency has adequate personnel, equipment, and training.
2. Work to improve the technology base to improve customer relations and work flows.
3. Maintain a target officer to population ratio of 2.2 officers per 1,000 population.
4. Strive to uphold an average 3 to 5 minute incident response time.
5. Promote community policing and crime prevention strategies.
6. Continue to provide drug education programs in the public schools.

## **Parks and Recreation/Fairgrounds/Cultural Facilities**

1. Enhance the quality of life for residents through the provision of open space, park and recreation facilities, special events, cultural and entertainment opportunities at the fairgrounds, accessible to all City residents.
2. Prepare a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to address service delivery, deficiencies, recommended improvements and potential funding sources.
3. Dedicate land, where feasible, for passive recreation, public open space, and trails.
4. Encourage developers to build recreational opportunities in conjunction with new residential development, and encourage the use of permanently protected open space in subdivision design.
5. Purchase or annex acreage to provide sufficient parkland to achieve the City of Cumming's adopted level of service standard, as necessary.
6. Continue to maintain an informal usage agreement with the Forsyth County Board of Education, specifically for the 3 school facilities in the City of Cumming, for the usage of basketball courts in gymnasiums, playfields and other facilities, as available.
7. Implement improvements as identified in the Capital Improvements Element.
8. Continue plans to develop a convention center and amphitheatre at the Mary Alice Park site to be sponsored by a private developer, with the City providing funding incentives.
9. Maintain and promote "heritage" villages at the fairgrounds and maintain adequate parking to accommodate annual attendees.

## **Education**

Communicate with the Forsyth County Board of Education concerning future growth areas of the City and the Board's plans for provision of public schools to meet future capacities.

## **General Government, Planning and Administration**

1. Ensure that city government facilities keep pace with growth and develop concurrently with the city's population.
2. Ensure that infrastructure and public services are adequately positioned with personnel and facilities to provide coverage to existing and newly annexed areas.

## **Health and Hospitals**

1. Meet health needs through a combination of public and private sources.
2. Continue to work with the Forsyth County Health Department to develop and expand programming to meet the needs of the citizens of the City of Cumming.
3. Continue to encourage private health care providers to locate in the City.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Highways and Roads**

1. Adequate sight distance. There must be an unobstructed sight distance in both directions on all approaches at an intersection. Any object within the sight triangle that constitutes a sight obstruction should be removed or lowered, including parking, cut slopes, hedges, trees, and bushes.
2. Intersection geometry. Intersecting roadways should cross at, or as close as practical to, a right angle (90 degrees).
3. Correct problem intersections. Seek participation by Georgia Department of Transportation in the design and funding of improvements that will correct poor geometrics at intersections along Atlanta Highway (SR 9/SR 20).
4. Connectivity and direct travel. The city supports the design of its street network so that there will be multiple connections and relatively direct routes.
5. Levels of service (LOS) standards. Seek to maintain an overall LOS "D" for the city's arterial and collector street system.

6. Road maintenance. Reduce the number and percentage of streets with pavement driving hazards. Hazards are large potholes, sharp bumps, drops, or tilts in the driving right-of-way. Cracks in the road shall be sealed, depressions or bumps will be corrected, water ponding of greater than one inch should be corrected, and broken pavement edges, potholes and breaks shall be promptly repaired. Local street maintenance workers should regularly examine streets and roads to rate their surface condition, then determine specific maintenance and repair programs.
7. Pavement management. Prepare a pavement management system for repairing, resurfacing, and rehabilitating existing local roads in the city.
8. Downtown CBD grid extension. As new development or redevelopment occurs in the designated central business district, ensure that the grid pattern of local roads is extended, creating an urban block pattern as proposed in this comprehensive plan.
9. Residential neighborhood road extensions. As properties are developed for residential uses along both sides of Pilgrim Mill Road, a grid pattern or modified grid pattern should be established, extended, and connected with existing residential streets.
10. Traffic Calming. Utilize traffic calming measures for extensions of the grid patterned road network in the central business district, as appropriate, to ensure a pedestrian friendly environment.

### **Alternative Transportation**

1. Sidewalks. Invest in the expansion of the city's sidewalk system to help create a pedestrian friendly community. Design and install sidewalk extension projects based on priorities stated in this comprehensive plan. Subject to funding limitations, sidewalks should be placed on both sides of arterial and collector streets.
2. Sidewalk maintenance. Provide adequate funding for repairs and maintenance on that portion of the sidewalk network that is the city's responsibility.
3. Pedestrian safety. Make existing pedestrian facilities safer with streetlights, signalized pedestrian crossings (mid-block if necessary), and brightly painted crosswalks.
4. Pedestrian connections to the street sidewalk system. Individual developments, except for detached, single-family lots, shall provide direct pedestrian access ways to all public sidewalks or multi-use trails when located on a public street abutting the property to be developed.
5. Levels of service (LOS) standards. Seek to maintain an overall LOS "C" for the pedestrian system.
6. Bicycle facilities and multi-use paths. Explore opportunities to designate and fund bicycle lanes and bicycle paths in conjunction with other projects and programs. Work

with the County School Board to coordinate the provision of bicycle facilities at existing and proposed school facilities. During the planning horizon, pursue improvements that will add bicycle travel to the city's transportation system. Implement a shared roadway facility for bicycle travel on Kelly Mill Road, extend the multi-use trail proposed by Forsyth County east of SR 400, and explore opportunities to connect a greenway with trail to Sawnee Mountain.

7. Public transportation. Anticipate that MARTA will be extended to Windward Parkway during the planning horizon (to 2030). The city encourages the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority and the Georgia Department of Transportation to accelerate construction of HOV lanes on Georgia 400, provide park and ride lots, and implement or maintain express bus service from Forsyth County to MARTA's North Springs station. The city will cooperate with Forsyth County in providing public transportation that will link to public transportation (heavy rail, express bus, etc.) in Fulton County.
8. Travel demand management. Consider cooperative efforts with Forsyth County to study and implement Travel Demand Management (TDM) programs for local employees: ridesharing, modified work hours, telecommuting, and others.

#### **Other Transportation Policies**

1. Municipal parking. Construct a municipal parking lot in the downtown central business district, to help serve development, redevelopment, and the expansion of county government offices. The city may seek the financial participation of Forsyth County in this regard.
2. Shade Trees. Prepare a public shade tree installation program for the city's arterial and collector road system, beginning with streetscapes in the downtown central business district.
3. Community Improvement Districts. Consider the appropriateness during the planning horizon of establishing community improvement districts for the central business district and the Market Place Boulevard area, to plan and install public improvements such as new roads, sidewalks, streetscapes, and street trees.
4. Corridor Plan for Atlanta Highway. Prepare a corridor plan for Atlanta Highway, to include proposals to consolidate curb cuts and driveways, improve intersections, control signs, conceal poor aesthetics, and beautify the corridor.
5. Land Use Regulations. Periodically review, and revise as necessary, the city's land use regulations to implement the policies of this transportation element.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

1. Consider municipal boundary expansion opportunities as appropriate, including properties identified as potential annexation areas (see annexation plan) and when unincorporated property owners petition for annexation.
2. Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources (Quality Community Objective, Regional Cooperation).
3. Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer (Quality Community Objective, Regional Solutions).
4. Resolve conflicts with other local governments through informal means, including mediation when appropriate, but instituting litigation when necessary to protect the city's interests.
5. Share resources and information with all government entities.
6. Periodically assess existing intergovernmental agreements and develop new agreements as appropriate.
7. Identify further opportunities for joint service delivery between Forsyth County and the city, and maintain and implement agreed upon service delivery strategies.
8. Adopt, and amend as necessary, plans and regulations to be consistent with the mandates and requirements of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.
9. Ensure that goals and implementation programs of the city's comprehensive plan are consistent with adopted coordination mechanisms and consistent with applicable regional and state programs.

## CHAPTER 6 SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM

This chapter describes the initiatives, programs, regulations, and other efforts needed by the City of Cumming to implement its comprehensive plan (this partial plan update) during the next five years. These are all shown in Table 17.

In presenting the short-term work program (Table 17), the city hereby articulates a number of important qualifiers and caveats. The city has included the projects listed in the work program because they were (a) identified by department heads; (b) called for in the previous work program but deferred; and/or (c) suggested by the city's planning consultant based on an analysis of quality community objectives as called for by the state in its local planning standards. Generally, the suggestions in the work program are *discretionary*, not based on critical health and safety concerns.

City leaders believe all of these projects and initiatives are worthy, *if* funding is available. However, this is a time of great uncertainty with regard to municipal revenues for capital projects and new program initiatives. Similarly, some of the work program initiatives may only be feasible if outside funding is obtained, such as a grant. The current economic recession significantly limits, and will most likely continue to constrain, the city's spending with regard to funding capital improvements and initiating new projects as suggested in the work program. Therefore, *implementation of the short-term work program is not guaranteed*. Department heads, the general public, and others must keep these points in mind and cannot cite this suggested work program as a financial commitment by the City of Cumming.

Given the city's current revenue limitations, and uncertainty about its future revenue streams, the projects and activities listed in the short-term work program may be: (a) deferred for one or more years; (b) moved to long-range; (c) reduced in scope if possible; and/or (d) deleted from the work program altogether. The city's administration will evaluate capital improvements and program needs each year during the budgeting process and will use the short-term work program as a guide in recommending priorities to the Mayor and City Council. If the city decides in the future not to implement one or more projects called for in the work program during the next five years, it will do so in a way that ensures the public health, safety, and general welfare will not be negatively impacted. When the city completes a new comprehensive plan during the next three years, it will further assess its funding capacity, re-evaluate the programs and initiatives called for in the short-term work program, and report on its progress toward attaining the important objectives of the comprehensive plan.

**Table 17  
Short-Term Work and Capital Program  
FY 2009-10 to FY 2014-15  
City of Cumming, Georgia**

Description	Year(s) To Be Implemented	Estimated Cost (\$)	Responsible Party	Possible Funding Sources
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>				
Map future conditions floodplain	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	GA DNR; Metro N. Ga. Water	GA DNR; Metro N. Ga. Water
Monitor application of policies for difficult development sites; consider additional regulations if warranted	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Staff Function	Planning & Zoning	Included in General Fund
<b>LAND USE</b>				
Review and revise all web-based materials regarding land development process	FY 2009-10	\$2,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Monitor attainment of community vision and report to city council	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Staff Function	Planning & Zoning	Included in General Fund
Conduct housing trends analysis and reconsider and if appropriate amend Section 714 of the zoning ordinance regarding prescriptions for mix of one- and two-bedroom units in multi-family developments	FY 2010-11	\$2,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Amend Official Zoning Map for consistency with Future Land Use Plan Map 2030	FY 2010-11	\$1,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Prepare redevelopment plan for Atlanta Road (SR 9) corridor	FY 2010-11	\$10,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Prepare design guidelines for difficult development sites, traditional neighborhood development within mixed-use master planned developments, and general aesthetic improvement	FY 2010-11	\$10,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Prepare revisions/new comprehensive plan	FY 2011-12	\$25,000	Planning & Zoning	General Fund
Prepare redevelopment plan for Central Business District (CBD)	FY 2011-12	\$25,000 (\$75,000 w/grant)	Planning & Zoning	General Fund; Atlanta Regional Comm. Livable Centers Initiative
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES: STREETS</b>				
Maintain, repair, replace all equipment according to pre-determined schedule, including forklift, ditchwitch, skid steer, loader, tractor, cat, crane, compressor(s)	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Annual to be determined	Streets	General and/or Capital Fund
Partner with Keep Forsyth Beautiful to institute tree planting programs along road rights of ways in the city	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$37,500 (\$5,000 annually)	Streets	General Fund
Institute a computerized pavement maintenance and resurfacing program	FY 2010-11	\$15,000	Streets	General Fund
Resurface streets based on pre-determined prioritization program	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$100,000 annually	Streets	General Fund; Local Assistance Road Program
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES: POLICE</b>				
Add additional sworn officers to maintain level of service for police force	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$40,000 ea. Plus benefits	Police	General Fund

**Partial Comprehensive Plan Update (May 20, 2009), City of Cumming, GA**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Year(s) To Be Implemented</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (\$)</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
Replace patrol vehicles as needed	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$26,000 ea.	Police	General Fund
Replace radios in vehicles and dispatch equipment as needed	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$2,800 ea.	Police	General Fund
Add discreet shotgun racks to two patrol vehicles	FY 2010-11	\$700	Police	General Fund
Add a walk-through magnetometer to the Municipal Court	FY 2010-11	\$2,500	Police	General Fund
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES: FAIRGROUNDS</b>				
Reseal all Heritage Village buildings	FY 2010-11	To be det.	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Repaint or reseal all Indian Village buildings	FY 2010-11	To be det.	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Repaint steel beams for covered arena	FY 2011-12	To be det.	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Install sun and wind screens on sides of arena	FY 2011-12	\$15,000	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Resurface roadways within fairgrounds	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15 annually	\$5,000	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Erect 8-10 foot retaining wall in front of arena and barn to enlarge vendor and sponsor area	FY 2010-11	\$100,000	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Add additional audio speakers to arena sound system	FY 2010-11	\$50,000	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Extend arena roof at rear of building (60-75') for more staging and floor seating area	FY 2011-12	\$350,000	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Acquire church property at Tolbert St. and Dogwood Street for future expansion	FY 2011-12	\$200,000	Administration; City Council	Capital Fund
Relocate all Heritage Village buildings to new church property, freeing up more vendor and rides space on lower grounds	FY 2011-12	\$25,000	Fairgrounds	General Fund
Acquire Elzey property on Tolbert Street to provide for future expansion of fairgrounds	FY 2012-13	\$600,000	Administration; City Council	Capital Fund
Install pedestrian bridge across Castleberry Road from parking lot #3	FY 2013-14	\$500,000	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Acquire old county site (25 acres) on Kelly Mill Road and Tolbert Street for additional parking and other city facilities	FY 2014-15	\$1,200,000	Administration; City Council	Capital Fund
Remediation of 25-acre site (upon acquisition)	Long Range	Unknown	Administration	Capital Fund
Lease portion of 25-acre site (upon acquisition) to hotel chain for construction of convention and meeting building	Long Range	Unknown	Administration; Chamber of Commerce	Capital Fund
Develop additional parking facilities at 25-acre site (upon acquisition)	Long Range	Unknown	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Acquire Flex-Fab property (now industrial) for expansion of Indian Village and Fairgrounds	Long Range	Unknown	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Acquire old Wheeler's Lumber Co. property (across Castleberry Road) for expansion of Indian Village and Fairgrounds	Long Range	Unknown	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
Develop old Wheeler's Lumber Co. property (across Castleberry Road) for major hotel and/or condominiums	Long Range	Unknown	Fairgrounds	Capital Fund
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES: UTILITIES</b>				
Update projections of population, housing, and employment for Cumming water and sewer service area to incorporate into master plans	FY 2011-12	\$20,000	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Update comprehensive solid waste management plan	Per recertification deadline	\$5,000	Utilities	General Fund
Upgrade/replace water lines in downtown area	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new 4 MG clear well at PWPF and sludge collection system in 1996 and 1997 plants	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund

**Partial Comprehensive Plan Update (May 20, 2009), City of Cumming, GA**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Year(s) To Be Implemented</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (\$)</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
Upgrade /replace wastewater pumping station and forced main at Ronald Reagan Boulevard	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Upgrade /replace Haw Creek Road gravity sewer	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new wastewater pump station and forced main at Mary Alice Park Road	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Remove wastewater pumping stations #1 and #2 and allow to gravity flow to Sanders Road pump station	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new wastewater pump station and forced main at Baldrige Marina Road	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new wastewater pump station and forced main at Lanier Beach South	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new wastewater pump station and forced main at Settingdown Creek	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new 2 MG elevated water storage tank at old Atlanta Road	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new gravity sewer line, Piedmont Corners	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Upgrade/replace 16-inch water line, SR 9 South	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new 12-inch water line loop from Dr. Bramblett Road to Hendrix Road	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Install new 12-inch water line from Heard Industrial Boulevard to Hammonds Crossing	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Construct new 7.5 MGD Lake Lanier AWRF	Long Range	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
Construct new 12 MGD Potable Water production facility (upgrade capacity to 36 MGD)	Long Range	Unknown	Utilities	Water/Sewer Capital Fund
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES: RECREATION AND PARKS</b>				
Construct a conference center and amphitheater on the 100+acre site at Mary Alice Park	FY 2009-10 to FY 2012-13	\$6,000,000	Recreation and Parks	Special Local Option Sales Tax
Replace/upgrade facilities at Cumming City Park (department's offices, indoor programming rooms, two ballfields (lighting), and pavilion.	FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12	\$650,000	Recreation and Parks	Capital Fund
Acquire land and/or easements for greenway trail along Kelly Mill Branch; complete preliminary design for greenway trail in city	FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12	\$65,000	Recreation and Parks	General Fund; Forsyth County (assistance)
Construct aquatic center at new site at Pilgrim Mill Road (two indoor pools, including a therapy pool and a 50-meter competition pool with seating for 750, and one outdoor "play pool")	FY 2009 (ground-breaking) to FY 2011-12	Unknown	Recreation and Parks	Special Local Option Sales Tax
Expand the number of basketball courts at Dobbs Creek Recreation Center	FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12	\$100,000	Recreation and Parks	Capital Fund
New playground at Cumming City Park (replaces tennis courts and swimming pool )	FY 2011-12	\$150,000	Recreation and Parks	Capital Fund; possible grant
Acquire additional land for expansion of Cumming City Park	FY 2012-13 to FY 2013-14	\$400,000	Recreation and Parks	Capital Fund; Land & Water Conservation Fund
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES – ADMIN.</b>				
Renegotiate County Service Delivery Strategy especially with regard to water use agreement which expires 2012	FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12	Staff Function	Administration	Included in General Fund
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
Implement major and local road improvement programs	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	See Chap. 10 comp. plan	Streets	See Chap. 10 comp. plan

<b>Description</b>	<b>Year(s) To Be Implemented</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (\$)</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
Repair existing sidewalks where needed	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	See Chap. 10 comp. plan	Streets	See Chap. 10 comp. plan
Implement sidewalk improvement plan (see Table 10.20, Chapter 10)	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	\$300,000 annually	Streets	Capital Fund
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>				
Reconsider and revise intergovernmental agreements, as appropriate	FY 2010-11 to FY 2014-15	Staff Function	Administration	Included in General Fund
Revise/seek agreement of countywide service delivery strategy	FY 2010-11 to FY 2011-12	Staff Function	Administration	Included in General Fund
Petition to annex unincorporated islands	FY 2010-11	Staff Function	Administration; Planning & Zoning	Included in General Fund

## APPENDIX REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This report summarizes initiatives, programs, and other efforts completed by the City of Cumming during the last five years. It is presented in tabular form. Each entry to the short-term work program is listed, along with a status of each project or initiative.

Category	Description from Short-term Work Program	Status
Vision Statement (Planning & Zoning)	Monitor attainment of community vision and report to city council	Complete (multiple years) – Also, the plan update confirms attainment of city vision and policies.
Population (Education) (Administration)	Publicize adult education programs in city and related communications venues	Incomplete – the city has relied on the Technical College to market its own programs and initiatives. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Population (Education) (Administration)	Maintain and distribute literature on Lanier Technical Institute’s Adult Literacy Program to the target population in the city	Incomplete – the city has relied on the Technical College to market its own programs and initiatives. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Housing (Code Enforcement)	Adopt/revise housing code provisions for maintenance and overcrowding	Complete (multiple years) – the city has adopted and enforces all standard codes.
Housing (Planning & Zoning)	Monitor the condition of housing units and enforce housing codes in cases of abandoned/substandard housing	Complete (multiple years) – monitoring and enforcement is ongoing.
Housing (Planning & Zoning)	Monitor the condition of housing to ensure additional overcrowding of housing units does not occur	Complete (multiple years) – monitoring and enforcement is ongoing.
Housing (Planning & Zoning)	Prepare a marketing plan to attract developers to construct high-end owner-occupied housing in the downtown upon completion of downtown master plan	Incomplete – the city has not found it necessary to implement this initiative. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Housing (Planning & Zoning)	Collect and monitor any additional available data on special housing needs in the city and county	Incomplete – no additional data were collected but housing needs have been reevaluated in the partial plan update. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Housing (Administration) (Housing Authority)	Evaluate the city’s public housing program and the city’s housing authority in terms of existing assets, housing conditions, and future options in light of changing federal housing policies	Incomplete – the city has not found it to be a high priority to give policy guidance to the independent authority regard to its operations. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Housing (Planning & Zoning) (Main St. Program)	Consider instituting a program of private (bank) funds or public agency funds to provide low interest loans to upgrade smaller, older housing units in the city	Incomplete – most homes needing rehabilitation have been in path of development and demolished. City will continue to monitor existing housing conditions .
Economic Development (Planning & Zoning)	Collect additional information about the city’s economic base upon publication in the Economic Census to gauge attainment of employment diversification policies	Completed 2009. Consultant as part of partial plan update consulted economic census data and updated analysis and projections of employment.
Historic Resources (Main St. Manager)	Nominate all worthy historic buildings, structures, and districts in the listing of the National Register of Historic Places and the Georgia Register of Historic Places	Complete – the only worthy structures noted as Historic are listed on the National Register – by policy the city will continue to encourage such listings of worthy structures are found.
Historic Resources (Main St. Manager)	Include literature on the city’s web site recognizing the importance and benefits of preserving historic resources	Incomplete – insufficient historic resources exist to justify this effort. Dropped from the new short-term work program.
Land Use (Subarea Planning)	Prepare and adopt a subarea plan for the downtown central business district, including design guidelines	Incomplete due to lack of funding. Included in new short-term work program.
Land Use (Subarea Planning)	Prepare and adopt a corridor improvement plan for Atlanta Highway corridor	Incomplete due to lack of funding. Included in new short-term work program.

**Partial Comprehensive Plan Update (May 20, 2009), City of Cumming, GA**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description from Short-term Work Program</b>	<b>Status</b>
Land Use (Sign Control)	Adopt new sign regulations/ extend applicability of existing sign regulations	Complete – ordinance adopted in 2008.
Land Use (Tree Protection)	Consider preparing and adopting a shade tree plan and/or ordinance to guide tree cutting and planting practices in public rights-of-ways	Incomplete – included in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (County Fire)	Invite Insurance Services Organization to resurvey and reclassify city’s fire insurance rating	Unknown – fire services are a function of Forsyth County per intergovernmental agreement.
Community Facilities (Fire)	Require installation of fire hydrants in the city every 1,000 feet in residential areas and every 500 feet in commercial/industrial areas	Complete – this is a regulation and is enforced via the city’s subdivision and land development regulations.
Community Facilities (Police)	Add one new sworn police officer	Completed during 5-year period.
Community Facilities (Police)	Add additional sworn police officers as identified in plan	Incomplete – the city has not added police officers at the recommended level of service standard due to lack of funding.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Prepare Master Plan for Water System; adopt by reference as an element of the comprehensive plan	Partially complete – the city has adopted maps for system but has not updated text – included in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Consider the preparation of contingency plans for dealing with major water line breaks, loss of water sources during drought, and other possible damages to the water system such as flooding	Partially complete – the city has considered these contingencies but has not updated master plan text – included in new short-term work program as part of the master plan update for water system).
Community Facilities (Utilities Division)	Fill engineer position under the umbrella of the Distribution and Collection Division	Complete – this position was filled but then went vacant and is not being filled due to budget considerations (lack of funding).
Community Facilities (Utilities Division)	Create a Geographic Information Specialist (GIS) position within the next 5 years	Complete – the Utilities Department added a GIS Technician position during the last five years.
Community Facilities (Sewer)	Develop and implement program to bring sanitary sewer service to remaining neighborhoods in the city	Partially complete – the city has expanded its sanitary sewer service to several unserved areas; master plan in new short-term work program will address any additional deficiencies and unserved areas.
Community Facilities (Parks)	Construct a conference center and amphitheater on the 100+acre site in the vicinity of Lake Lanier (Mary Alice Park)	Underway – the land has been secured through long-term lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers this project is funded and. Included in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Fairgrounds)	Add maintenance staff	Underway – the city annually evaluates the staffing needs for the Fairgrounds Department and will add additional staffing where warranted, budget permitting.
Community Facilities (Planning)	Add business license inspector position	Incomplete – City Clerk has been assigned function of business license issuance and inspection.
Community Facilities (Buildings & Grounds) Beautification	Establish a citywide clean-up or beautification program	Incomplete – Forsyth County Clean & Beautiful serves this function on a countywide basis. New short-term work program includes efforts for beautification (street tree planting campaign). Item otherwise dropped from work program.
Solid Waste Management (Street Dept.)	Implement the comprehensive solid waste management plan short-term work program (See Table 9.5)	Complete (multiple years). Utilities Department and Street Department assist with implementation.
Transportation (Local Streets)	Institute a computerized pavement maintenance and resurfacing program	Incomplete due to lack of funding – included in new short-term work program.
Transportation (Parking)	Consider need to prepare/adopt citywide parking ordinance	Incomplete – the need for a citywide parking ordinance has not been realized – dropped from work program.

**Partial Comprehensive Plan Update (May 20, 2009), City of Cumming, GA**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description from Short-term Work Program</b>	<b>Status</b>
Intergovernmental Coordination (Service Delivery Strategy)	Revisit and readopt the city-county service delivery strategy	Incomplete – the deadline for this has been moved back and it is included in the new short-term work program.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Recreation)	Consider or revise the cooperative agreement with school system for joint use of facilities	Complete – no change of status.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Water Use Agreement)	Revisit and revise or readopt the wholesale water user's agreement	Incomplete – the agreement expires in 2012 and the city is well aware of the priority to reconsider this agreement – included in new work program.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Fire Services Agreement)	Revisit and revise or readopt the fire services agreement (automatically annually renewed unless otherwise determined)	Complete – automatic renewal per agreement unless otherwise determined by the city and county.
Intergovernmental Coordination (other agreements)	Revisit and revise or readopt other intergovernmental services agreements as may be needed	Complete – no change of status.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Dispute Resolution)	Revisit and revise or readopt the city-county dispute resolution process (annexation/land use)	Incomplete – no revisions to the process have been made – the process has not been used very frequently and neither the city nor county has requested that the process agreement be changed.
Intergovernmental Coordination (DRIs) (Planning & Zoning)	Comply with state procedures for any developments of regional impact	Complete – the Planning and Zoning Department has satisfied its responsibilities with regard to notice and evaluation of DRIs.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Water Planning)	Adopt more detailed water plans in accordance with recommendations of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Partially complete – Cumming has satisfied all mandates of the District so far. Update of water master plan is included in new short-term work program and will address this work program item.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Water Planning)	Increase withdrawal permit to accommodate needs for 2030	Underway. The Utilities Department is working toward this and has long-range intent to increase withdrawal capacity to meet long-term needs.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Water Planning)	Expand water treatment facilities to accommodate needs for 2030	Underway. The Utilities Department is working toward this and has long-range intent to increase withdrawal capacity to meet long-term needs.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Wastewater)	Develop computerized maintenance management system	Complete.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Wastewater)	Participate in the establishment of a septic system inspection and maintenance programs	Incomplete – the Water District dropped this mandate from its wastewater management plan.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Wastewater)	Determine and implement higher levels of treatment according to potable reuse standards	Underway. The Utilities Department is working toward this and will further address this consideration in its revised wastewater master plan which is included in the new work program.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Wastewater)	Assist with the implementation of public awareness and education programs	Complete – as one of its best management practices, the Utilities Department implements educational programs in this arena.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Revise existing regulations or adopt model ordinances prepared by Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Completed in 2005 – all model ordinances of the District were adopted and integrated into city code of ordinances.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Assist with the implementation of public awareness and education programs	Complete – as one of its best management practices, the Utilities Department implements educational programs in this arena.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Create an Environmental Magistrate to handle citations and citizen complaints regarding violations of water quality ordinances	Incomplete – the city has not found it necessary to create another magistrate – city court is capable of handling such complaints. Dropped from work program.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Continue to work toward implementation of the Big Creek watershed study and watershed protection efforts	Complete – city's plan is fully supportive of Big Creek watershed study recommendations and they are integrated into the text of the plan.

**Partial Comprehensive Plan Update (May 20, 2009), City of Cumming, GA**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description from Short-term Work Program</b>	<b>Status</b>
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Participate in Kelley Mill Branch bank stabilization demonstration project	Incomplete – this recommendation was from a prior watershed plan of the county and has not been completed. Dropped from work program.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Establish and operate a water quality monitoring station as called for in district regional plan	Complete – the city’s Utilities Department has established water quality monitoring stations per the regional plan.
Intergovernmental Coordination (Watersheds)	Participate in planning and establishing the Big Creek ecological greenway	Incomplete – the city is monitoring efforts of Forsyth County and has reaffirmed its role to extend the greenway in the western part of the city along Kelly Mill Branch – included in new work program.
Community Facilities (Downtown)	Construct information kiosk and wayfinding system (signs). Add municipal banners to light poles	Incomplete due to lack of funding – dropped from work program pending completion of subarea plan for central business district.
Community Facilities (Downtown)	Extend hexagonal pavers and pedestrian lighting (streetscape)	Incomplete due to lack of funding – dropped from work program pending completion of subarea plan for central business district.
Community Facilities (Recreation)	New playground at City Park	Incomplete – deferred due to lack of funding but included in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Recreation)	Lighting of playing fields at Dobbs Creek ballfields	Incomplete – city does not intend to light these ballfields. Dropped from capital program.
Community Facilities (Recreation)	Add indoor/outdoor aquatic facility at Dobbs Creek recreation center	Underway, at new location. Groundbreaking in May 2009 with completion by 2011.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Replace the 2-inch and 4-inch water distribution lines with minimum 8-inch lines	Partially completed – utilities department has completed some upgrades – other facility upgrades to be described in updated facilities plan called for in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Highway 20 East to an 18-inch water main	Incomplete – facility upgrades to be described in updated facilities plan called for in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Highway 20 West towards Canton to a 12-inch pipeline	Incomplete – facility upgrades to be described in updated facilities plan called for in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Dr. Bramblett Road to a 12-inch pipeline	Incomplete – facility upgrades to be described in updated facilities plan called for in new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Highway 369 to Baldrige Road to a 12-inch pipeline	Incomplete – project priorities will be replaced with new listing in master plan – specific projects deleted from new short-term work program.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Highway 9 south from Old Atlanta Road to Bethelview Road to a 12-inch pipeline	Underway – a 16 inch line is planned for this area during the next five years.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Upgrade Bethelview Road from Kelly Mill Road to Highway 9 to a 12-inch pipeline	Incomplete – determined to be not needed by city since it is in county service area. In lieu of this project the city completed a water loop in area.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Construct a new 1 million gallon storage tank in the vicinity of the intersection of Highway 20 and Highway 9	Incomplete – a new 2 million gallon storage tank is proposed during the next five years for the Old Atlanta Road area.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Wastewater System)	Construct 5 million gallon capacity per day facility and upgrade of the existing facility to meet all recent federal standards and requirements, including retrofitting of the basins with an automated sludge collection system, and a microfiltration or other virus removal system.	Complete – city completed improvements for 5 MGD of additional treatment capacity (8 MGD total now) at cost of \$30 million.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Wastewater System)	Upgrade existing 8, 10 and 12 inch sewer gravity lines to 14, 16, 18, and 24 inch pipelines	Partially complete – the city in particular has added an 18-inch crosstown gravity sewer line.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description from Short-term Work Program</b>	<b>Status</b>
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Wastewater System)	Upgrade existing 6 and 8 inch sewer force mains to 16 and 18 inches.	Complete for Sawnee Creek and Big Creek.
Sanitary Sewer	Repair and replace existing sewer lines as may be needed	Complete (18-inch crosstown gravity sewer line).
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Wastewater System)	Construct 17 pump stations to be operational by 2025	Partially complete – six or more pump stations have been completed as shown on city’s sewer master plan map.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Purchase one utility van for the Pre-treatment Branch for surveillance purposes	Incomplete – purchased pickup truck instead.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Purchase a Yukon or F-550 dump truck to haul biosolids to the Landfill.	Completed in modified form – city elected to go with private hauler service because it was found to be less expensive and safer.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Acquire two additional Remote Terminal Units (RTU)	Duplicate entry – see next item.
Community Facilities (Utilities Division – Water System)	Acquire two upgraded computers for the City’s Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system.	Complete.
Community Facilities (Fire)	Reconstruct Fire Station #1	Complete – the fire station was relocated .
Community Facilities (Police)	Acquire one patrol car annually	Incomplete (duplicate entry) – see prior entry in work program.
Community Facilities (Parks)	Acquire 100 acres for construction of convention center and amphitheatre	Complete – the city has a long-term lease at Mary Alice park for this facility.
Community Facilities (Fairgrounds)	Acquire 20 acres for parking	Complete – the city has expanded parking for fairgrounds significantly during past 5 years.
Community Facilities (Fairgrounds)	Construct Cherokee Indian Village	Complete – due to success the city is considering plans for expansion and relocation and has included those plans in short- and long-range programs.
Community Facilities (Fairgrounds)	Construct Civil War Village	Complete – due to success the city is considering plans for expansion and relocation and has included those plans in short- and long-range programs.
Community Facilities (Fairgrounds)	Construction of additional bathrooms and concession facilities; acquisition of movable picnic tables; an extension of the arena under the shed roof at the back for use as a stage; paving and lighting of parking lots (including a portion of the lots to be used for a park and ride facility); the construction of a bathroom facility by the campground area; and infrastructure improvements	Partially complete – the city’s Fairgrounds Department has updated its capital needs listings which have been integrated into the new short-term work program.
Transportation (Major Roads)	Implement major road improvement program	Partially complete – many state improvements have been delayed. One major project in particular still scheduled for the short-term is the intersection of Atlanta Road (SR 9) and Buford Dam Road.
Transportation (Local Roads)	Implement local road improvement projects	Partially complete – the city with the cooperation of Forsyth County has completed a number of local road improvements using SPLOST funds.
Transportation (Local Streets)	Institute traffic calming project	Incomplete – Project not a priority and lack of funding.
Transportation (Local Streets)	Conduct study of street lighting needs and costs/benefits. Consider developing an ongoing program of analyzing street lighting needs and programming improvements	Incomplete – not a priority due to lack of funding.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description from Short-term Work Program</b>	<b>Status</b>
Transportation (Local Streets)	Continue the city's traffic signal management program, periodically reassess the function and operation of existing traffic signals, and conduct additional traffic signal warrants where necessary.	Complete – the city's Planning & Zoning Director has been assigned these responsibilities. New signalization needs are evaluated as a part of the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process.
Transportation (Sidewalks)	Repair existing sidewalks where needed	Complete – sidewalks are maintained in adequate condition.
Transportation (Sidewalks)	Install shade trees along with sidewalk improvements and along selected major roads	Incomplete – this item is still recommended and is included in the new short-term work program
Transportation (Sidewalks)	Retrofit existing sidewalk system for access by disabled	Partially complete – as a part of SPLOST funding sidewalks with ramps have been installed.
Transportation (Sidewalks)	Implement sidewalk improvement plan (see Table 10.20, Chapter 10)	Partially complete – as a part of SPLOST funding sidewalks have been installed.

CITY OF CUMMING  
COUNTY OF FORSYTH  
STATE OF GEORGIA

RESOLUTION

**A RESOLUTION OF THE  
CITY OF CUMMING CITY COUNCIL  
AUTHORIZING THE TRANSMITTAL OF  
THE DRAFT PARTIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
TO THE GEORGIA MOUNTAINS  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT  
PURSUANT TO REQUIREMENTS OF THE  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

WHEREAS; The City of Cumming prepared a comprehensive plan under the 2004 minimum planning standards of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs; and

WHEREAS, A partial update of the comprehensive plan is required for the City in order to maintain its Qualified Local Government Status; and

WHEREAS; The City of Cumming, Georgia, has prepared a partial update of its comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs require that the Partial Plan Update be submitted for regional and state review; and

WHEREAS; To authorize such review, a resolution of the Governing Body is required; and

WHEREAS; The city held advertised public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council on May 19, 2009, the purpose of which was to inform the public of the contents of the partial plan update and to receive suggestions and comments;

Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Cumming, Georgia, and IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED as follows:

I.

It is hereby authorized that the Partial Update of the Cumming Comprehensive Plan 2025, dated May 2009, shall be submitted for regional and state review in accordance with Requirements for a Partial Update to the Local Government Comprehensive Plan of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

2.

The City of Cumming hereby submits the Partial Plan Update to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center in order for it conduct a completeness check and to complete its review and a report of findings and recommendations, and respectfully requests its favorable determinations.

3.

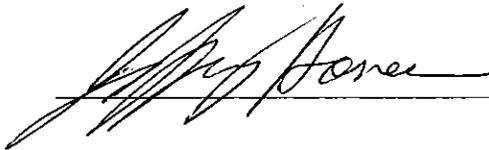
The City of Cumming respectfully requests that the Georgia Department of Community Affairs complete a compliance review of the Partial Update of the Comprehensive Plan and respectfully requests its favorable determination.

Adopted, this the 19<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2009.

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ford Gravitt, Mayor

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeff Honea, City Clerk

CITY OF CUMMING  
COUNTY OF FORSYTH  
STATE OF GEORGIA

**RESOLUTION NO \_\_\_\_\_**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE  
CITY OF CUMMING CITY COUNCIL  
ADOPTING THE  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, PARTIAL PLAN UPDATE**

**WHEREAS**, A comprehensive plan is required for municipalities and counties in Georgia in order to maintain their Qualified Local Government Status; and

**WHEREAS**, In accordance with Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the City of Cumming has prepared a Partial Update of its Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, State administrative rules require that the Partial Plan Updates be prepared and submitted for regional and state review prior to its adoption locally; and

**WHEREAS**, A resolution authorizing regional and state review was approved by City Council, the Partial Plan Update was submitted for review, and the review of the community agenda was completed; and

**WHEREAS**, No changes were required as a result of the regional and state review; and

**WHEREAS**, City Council held an advertised public hearing at a regular meeting on the draft Partial Plan Update, prior to it being transmitted to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center for regional and state review; and

**WHEREAS**, Notice of said public hearing was given in advance; and

**NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Cumming, Georgia, as follows:

1.

Adoption. The Partial Plan Update is hereby adopted.

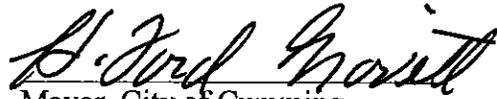
2.

Publication of Plan. City staff is directed to publish the adopted Partial Plan Update and make it available for use by the public.

3.

Transmittal of Adopted Partial Plan Update. A copy of the approved Partial Plan Update and this resolution upon its adoption shall be submitted to the Georgia Mountains Regional Development Center.

RESOLVED this <sup>23<sup>rd</sup></sup> day of June, 2009.

  
Mayor, City of Cumming

ATTEST

  
City Clerk  
City of Cumming