



FOSTER FORSYTH

# FORSYTH COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2017-2037

JULY 6, 2017



**JACOBS**

Kimley»Horn

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## PLANNING TEAM

### Forsyth County Staff

Tom Brown, *Director of Planning and Community Development Department*  
Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, *Deputy Director of Planning and Community Development Department*

### Jacobs

Paul Culter  
Amanda Hatton  
Michael Kray  
Meghan McMullen  
Olivia Norfleet  
Joe Shoffner  
Allison Stewart-Harris  
Camilo Vargas-Lopez

### Kimley-Horn and Associates

Eric Bosman  
Ben Miskelly  
Beth Tucker

# 1. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

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# 1.1 ABOUT THE PLAN

## WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT ISN'T

The *Forsyth County Comprehensive Plan 2017-2037* is the County's official, long-term policy guide and strategy for future growth and development. The *Comprehensive Plan* identifies the community's long-term vision for how it would like to see Forsyth County evolve over time, including guidance for future development in different areas of the County, identification of priorities for the near term, and a five-year action plan to set the community-driven vision and priorities in motion.

## DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The 2017-2037 update was completed during 2016 and 2017, a time of rapid growth and change. The outcome of this community-focused planning process is a plan that emphasizes balanced and responsible growth. There is no "one size fits all" for Forsyth County's future. The plan emphasizes context-sensitive growth by identifying 11 different character areas that require unique and tailored design standards to maintain or enhance the vision for each area. It also recognizes that a strong future means preserving places for more jobs, commercial uses, and centers of community activity. These community nodes are tied to specific places and enable a future that is fiscally responsible and supports and protects the residential areas of the County. Finally, the plan seeks balance among land use, housing, economic development, and transportation needs while understanding that Forsyth County must also protect its great schools, parks spaces, and the natural environment that has made it a desirable place to live for generations.

## PLANNING HORIZON

The *Comprehensive Plan 2017-2037* looks ahead 20 years to frame the County's vision and goals, but focuses on priorities and action items for the next five years, 2017-2021.



## PLANNING ELEMENTS

The *Comprehensive Plan* focuses on four key elements: land use, housing, economic development, and transportation. Land use is at the heart of the plan, as it enables and guides opportunities in the other elements. Throughout the planning process, a quality of life theme emerged; while it is not one of the key planning elements of this plan, quality of life receives focused attention because of the important role it plays in community members' vision for the future.

*More about the practical use of the plan is provided on page 13 of this chapter; see Day-to-Day guide.*



LAND USE



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



HOUSING



TRANSPORTATION

Figure 1.1: Core Plan Elements





## FORSYTH COUNTY, GEORGIA

Forsyth County is located on the edge of the Atlanta Region (Figure 1.32); it is part of a group of counties that are closely connected to the metro Atlanta economy but are part of a transitional area from the urbanized core to the North Georgia mountains. Forsyth County in 2015 had an estimated population of approximately 212,000, and in the last five years was one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Forsyth County contains part of the metro area's most important water resources, including Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee and Etowah Rivers.

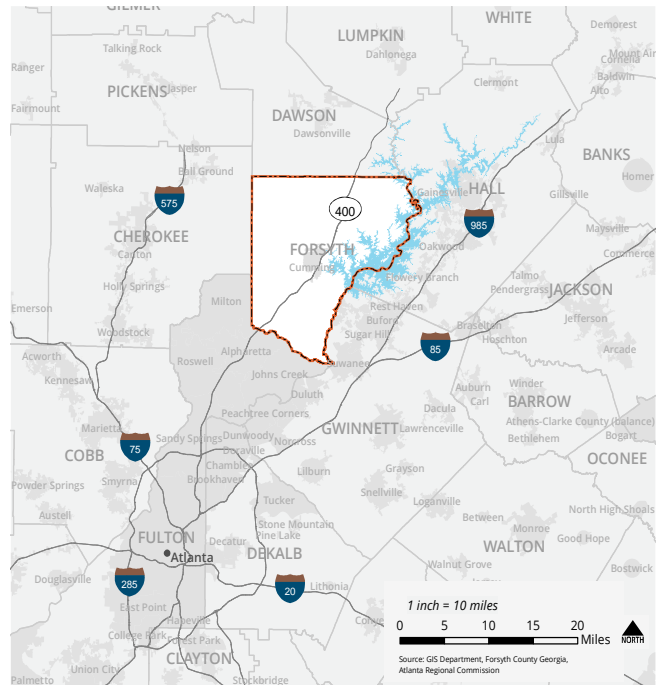


Figure 1.2: Forsyth County in Metropolitan Atlanta

Above: moments in the public outreach process, from top to bottom: 1) Design Workshop, 2) Foster Forsyth website, 3) Implementation Workshop, 4) Visioning Workshop, 5) Implementation Workshop, 6) Steering Committee Meeting

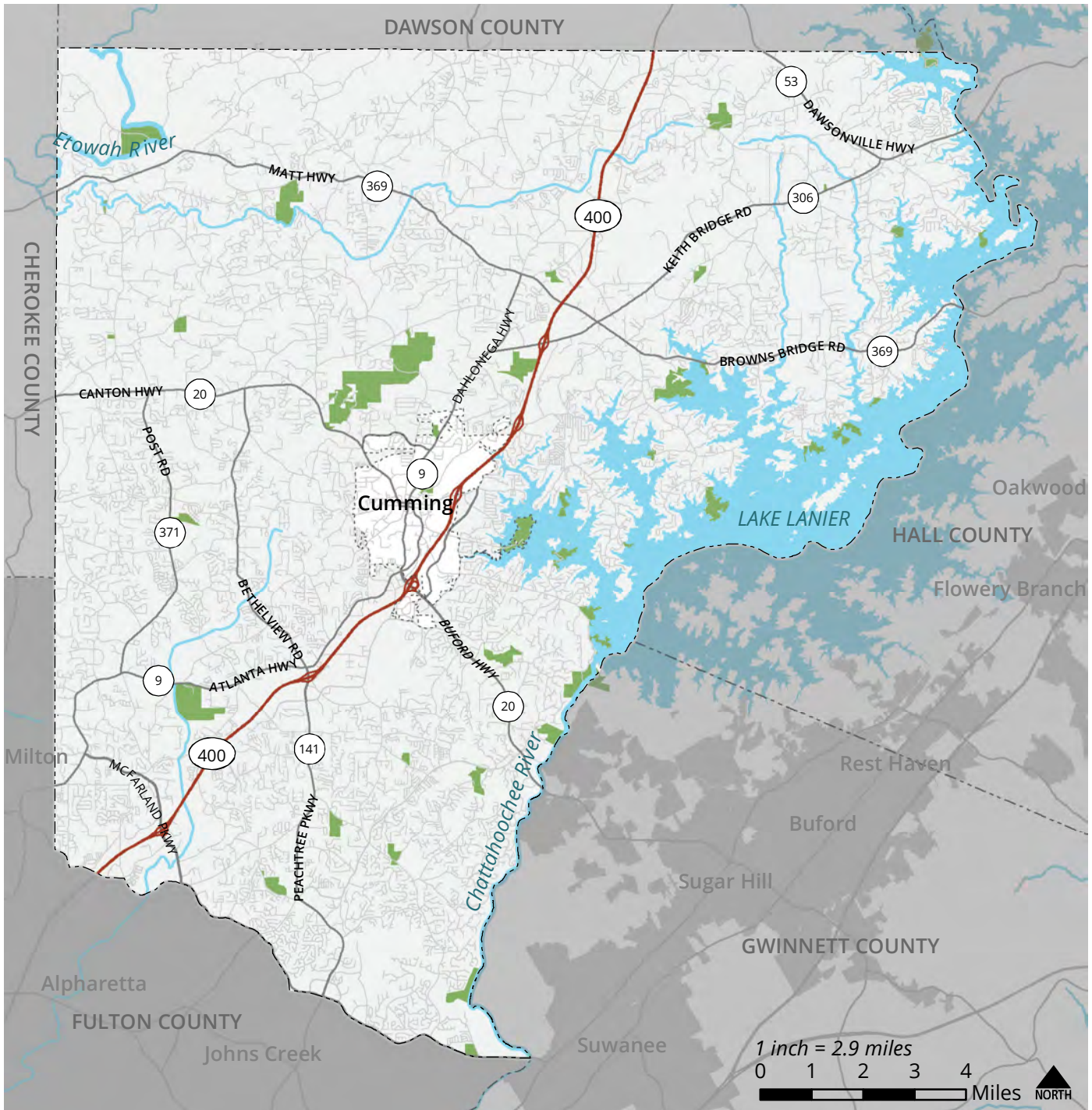


Figure 1.3: Forsyth County Context Map

- [- - -] Forsyth County Boundary
- [.....] City of Cumming
- [Light Blue] Lake Lanier
- [Green] Parks and Recreation Areas
- [Light Blue Line] Rivers and Major Streams
- [Red Line] Georgia Hwy 400
- [Solid Grey Line] Major Roads



## 1.2 FOSTER FORSYTH PROCESS

The update process, branded as *Foster Forsyth*, occurred over several months in 2016 and 2017, with final review occurring in spring of 2017. The plan was developed through the following five chronological tasks, as depicted in Figure 1.4:

1. Project Initiation
2. Existing Conditions Analysis
3. Visioning
4. Prioritization and Implementation Planning
5. Finalization and Adoption

The planning team (see Figure 1.5) used a variety of methods to gather input from community members on their vision, goals, and priorities for the future. During spring and summer 2016, *Foster Forsyth* held five Visioning Workshops that helped determine the goals and vision for the County; five Design Workshops that addressed the character of the County; two Implementation Workshops that proposed strategies in support of the identified vision, goals, and character; and several stakeholder committee meetings to guide the process.

Additional input was collected through a web-based community survey, interviews with community leaders, and other informal activities including “Meetings In A Box,” community event project kiosks, an online mapping tool, and virtual workshops. Two open houses were held in August 2016 to facilitate community review of the draft plan and to provide an informal environment to ask questions about and provide comments on the draft plan.

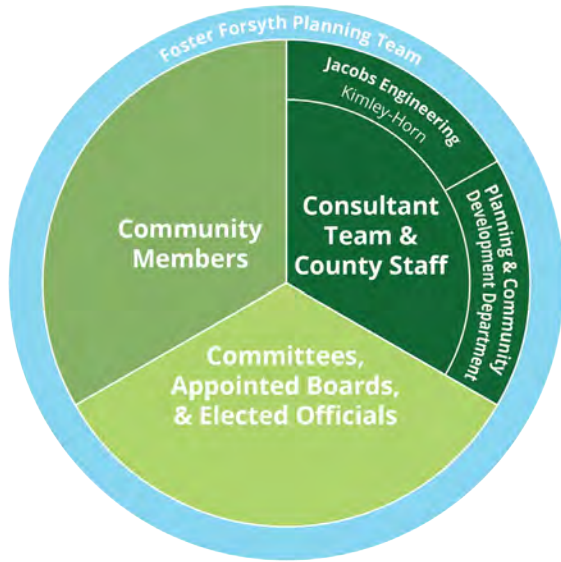
### PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The development of the *Comprehensive Plan* involved the input and direction of a variety of people. Figure 1.66 shows how different input channels impacted the development of the plan. Community input was the primary driver of the vision, goals, and priorities.



Figure 1.4: *Comprehensive Plan* process schedule

Figure 1.5: Planning Team



### 1.3 DAY-TO-DAY GUIDE

As the overarching policy document for Forsyth County's growth and development, the *Comprehensive Plan* sets the tone for a variety of initiatives and functions that the County carries out.

- Most directly, the *Plan* provides guidance for rezonings, development decisions, and adjustments to related aspects of the County's Code of Ordinances and day-to-day activities to achieve the community's vision for the future.
- Because it directs growth and development, the *Plan* should also have a direct impact on the County's other planning efforts, including master planning for water and sewer, transportation, community facilities, and annual County budgeting. This *Plan* can and will only be successful if each of these initiatives are coordinated with each other.

Figure 1.6: Plan Input Sources Matrix

PLAN INPUT SOURCES	MEETING APPROACH	NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES	VISION & GOALS	CHARACTER AREAS & COMMUNITY CHARACTER MAP	PRIORITIES	COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM	PLAN NARRATIVE	FINAL PLAN REVISIONS
COUNTY STAFF GUIDANCE	●					●	●	●
TECHNICAL ANALYSIS		●	●		●	●		
PLANNING TEAM PROFESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
INTERVIEWS		●	●	●				
STEERING COMMITTEE	●	●	●			●		
VISION COMMITTEE	●	●	●					
SURVEY		●	●	●	●	●		
VISIONING WORKSHOPS		●	●	●	●			
DESIGN WORKSHOPS		●	●	●	●			
IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOPS			●	●	●	●		
HEARINGS							●	●
DCA/ GEORGIA MOUNTAINS REGIONAL COMMISSION	●							●
GENERAL COMMENTS		●	●	●	●	●	●	
MEETING IN A BOX				●	●			

● CONTRIBUTING INPUT SOURCE    ● PRIMARY INPUT SOURCE



## 1.4 PLAN DOCUMENT & FORMAT

### DOCUMENT HISTORY

Forsyth County has a long history of comprehensive planning. The last update of the *Comprehensive Plan* was completed in 2012. The County decided to update the Comprehensive Plan prior to the State of Georgia's minimum five-year update requirements because of the recent pace of development and the need to ensure that the plan aligns with the community's vision and goals for the future.

### MEETING STATE REQUIREMENTS

The *Comprehensive Plan 2017-2037* was developed in alignment with the state's planning requirements. The State of Georgia requires that all local governments maintain and regularly update a comprehensive plan to facilitate an orchestrated and thoughtful approach to the community's future and to enable access to a variety of state funding tools. This approach facilitates planning for core elements such as land use planning, housing, economic development, natural resources, and transportation.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

The *Comprehensive Plan* document is organized into six chapters and two appendices. Highlights from each chapter are shown in Figure 1.77.

Figure 1.7: *Comprehensive Plan* Document Overview

Document Section	Highlights
<b>Chapter 1</b> Comprehensive Plan Overview	<i>Overview of the planning process, plan history, and framework of the plan</i>
<b>Chapter 2</b> Forsyth County in 2016	<i>Existing conditions highlights, overview of public input, list of needs and opportunities</i>
<b>Chapter 3</b> Vision for Fostering Our Future	<i>Vision statement, goals, overarching policies, and introduction of the Community Character Map (future land use plan)</i>
<b>Chapter 4</b> Character Areas	<i>Character area narratives and land use policies</i>
<b>Chapter 5</b> Implementing Our Vision	<i>Implementation strategy by core element of the plan</i>
<b>Chapter 6</b> Action Plan	<i>The five-year Community Work Program</i>
<b>Appendix A</b> Summary of Existing Conditions	<i>Summary report of existing conditions</i>
<b>Appendix B</b> Public Involvement Documentation	<i>Summaries of various public engagement activities carried out during Foster Forsyth (the process of updating the plan)</i>

## **2. FORSYTH COUNTY IN 2016**

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## 2.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

At the time of this plan update in 2016-2017, Forsyth County finds itself at a crossroads of suburban and rural development. Growth patterns in the Atlanta region for the past 30 to 40 years have seen outward growth into counties outside the central core of the region to accommodate the increasing population. Outer suburbs in the Atlanta region have typically become hotspots for rapid growth because of attractive qualities such as lower costs of land and housing, access to great schools, safety, a family-friendly environment, and continued access to a powerful regional economy, jobs, and resources. At the same time, outer communities like Forsyth County provide a reprieve from other challenges in more centralized communities such as congestion and aging housing stock.

Forsyth County has experienced significant and rapid population growth for over 20 years. This growth speaks to the County's attractiveness as a place to invest and live within metropolitan Atlanta. Among these traits, Forsyth County has some of the highest ranked schools and parks in the State of Georgia, unparalleled access to regional natural resources and metro Atlanta jobs, and an affordable cost of living. With this desirability and the accompanying sudden and sharp population growth, the County has experienced a series of changes:

- Transitioning from largely undeveloped land to an urbanized community, particularly south of the City of Cumming. With that change, the County has experienced change in its most basic form: increasing demand and requests to convert large estate or agricultural properties to new subdivisions.
- Increasing angst and identity questions about what Forsyth County will be like in the future due to the urbanization.
- A diversifying population with new opinions, preferences, and ideas about the community.
- Changing environmental conditions that come with increased development, including large scale grading of sites, removal of trees, increased stormwater runoff, and visual changes from a pristine natural environment to a built environment.
- Questioning how a predominantly unincorporated County can meet the needs of disparate areas.

All of these changes have led to the community grappling with how best to plan for and accommodate growth while not losing what makes Forsyth County appealing in the first place. This plan 1) reflects what community members are both most excited about and most concerned about for Forsyth County's future; 2) considers the realities of what the County can and cannot change in terms of growth; and 3) lays out a strategy for how Forsyth County can continue to be a beloved and sought-after community.

To develop a realistic and achievable plan, the County's future must be examined thoughtfully. This *Comprehensive Plan* is rooted in the following realities:

- Growth cannot be stopped, but it can be guided and controlled through the County's decisions, regulations, and commitment to meeting its vision.
- The County must remain financially solvent. This means that the County must pay for and maintain the facilities, services, and infrastructure it provides, including water and sewer infrastructure, roads, and recreational facilities.

## 2.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of key trends and findings from the existing conditions analysis. It focuses on the key items that a community should take into account as it looks forward to the next 20 years. Questions this analysis raises are:

- What trends and investments are underway that we want to advance?
- What trends are underway that we want to mitigate?
- As a County in coordination with our partners, including the Forsyth County Schools, the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, and others, what can we influence, and how?

The full existing conditions document is available in Appendix A.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS CONTENT

**Demographics** – What are the population trends in the County? How does Forsyth County’s population compare to its neighbors?

**Economic Development** – How does Forsyth County stack up in terms of employment and business? What major developments are coming online soon?

**Community Resources** – What new community resources has the County added in the last five years? And how does the future of Forsyth County influence its residents, the region, and beyond?

**Transportation** – GA 400 is the spine of Forsyth County—it’s the County’s major transportation corridor, and generator of growth. What other transportation infrastructure and services will potentially drive or limit growth?

**Existing Land Use** – Growth is a way of life in Forsyth County—where is it occurring, and how is it changing the community?

**Housing** – What kinds of housing are most common in the County? What are the emerging trends and needs?

Review of **Current Plans** – What work has already been done, and what is underway?

### PROACTIVE PLANNING

In areas that have experienced significant growth, good planning must take into account the realities of what the community can and cannot control and focus attention on those things that can be controlled. Good planning also provides a visionary yet responsible path forward. Forsyth County maintains a series of planning documents to facilitate a proactive approach to the future, many of which are currently, have recently, or will soon be undergoing an update. Each of these plans should be compatible with each other, which requires an ongoing iterative process of reviewing trends and policy changes in each document and calibrating plans each time they are updated. To achieve this, collaboration and partnership among the County’s departments is essential.

#### CURRENT COUNTY PLANS

- *Comprehensive Plan (2016 update)*
- *Water Distribution System Master Plan (2016 update)*
- *Sewer System Master Plan (2016 update)*
- *Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2017-2018 update)*
- *Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan (2015 update)*
- *Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (2016 update)*
- *McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (2010 partial update)*



## DEMOGRAPHICS

*Understanding age, race, ethnicity, and education trends in Forsyth County helps develop an understanding of the values and culture of the County's population. This is important when determining a direction for growth and development. It is also important to consider average household size, income, and number of households to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan makes proper recommendations for improving quality of life.*

### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

Forsyth County has seen significant population growth since 1990, with the 2015 population estimated at 212,438—a growth rate of 21 percent since 2010.

- When looking at overall changes in population makeup since 1990, the Asian population has grown from 1 percent to 9 percent of the total population, and the Hispanic population has grown from 6 percent to 10 percent of the total population.
- 97 percent of the population resides in the unincorporated portion of the County.
- 0 to 19-year-olds make up 31 percent of total population.
- Median family income is \$85,639.
- Minority population has grown to make up 16 percent of residents, up from 5 percent in 2000.

### KEY FINDINGS

With trends of dramatic population growth and an increase in ethnic and racial diversity, it is necessary for the County to guide growth and development strategically. A well-educated population and high median income make Forsyth County an attractive place to live. Forsyth has a low median age of 37.7 years but a relatively small population of “young professionals” compared to surrounding areas. This suggests that policies to encourage a greater “young professionals” population should be considered.

*Figure 2.3 illustrates the population density distribution throughout the County. The southern portion of the County has the highest concentration of people. The map also shows limited population immediately east of GA 400, reflecting the concentration of commercial uses in these areas.*

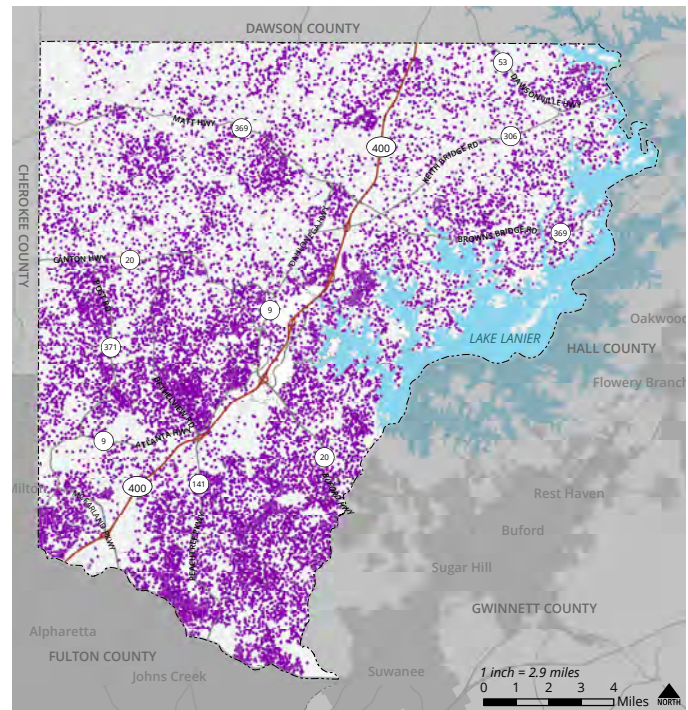
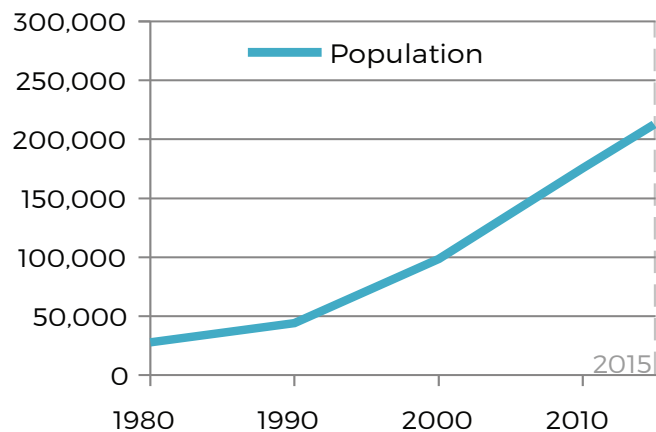


Figure 2.3: Population Dot Density



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Figure 2.4: Population Growth 1980-2015

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

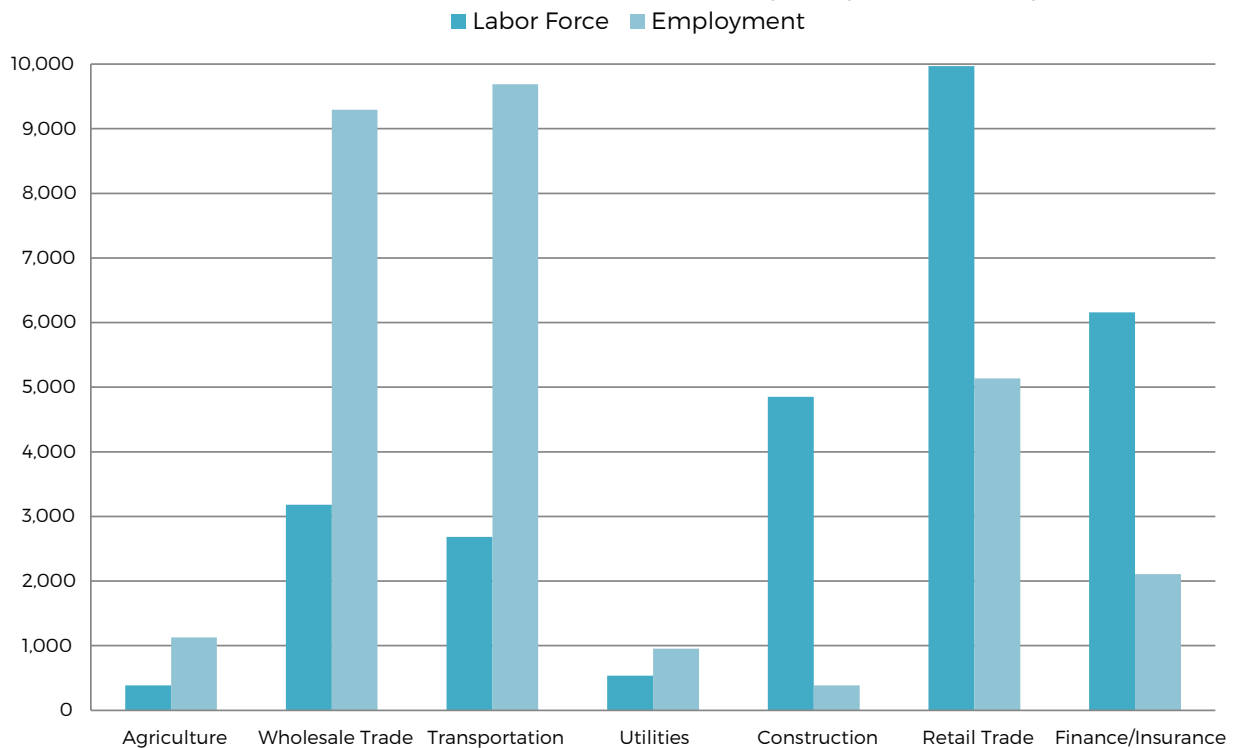
*Economic development analysis considers how well the County is positioned to maintain a healthy economy and balanced tax base moving forward. Important measures include diversity of business sectors, vibrancy of the local market, characteristics of the labor force and employment opportunities, and programs and resources to advance the County's ability to attract diverse jobs and businesses. Maintaining the quality of life that makes Forsyth so attractive is also a key to the County's economic outlook.*

### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

- Economic development efforts are largely spearheaded by the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce.
- Largest employers are Forsyth County Schools, Northside Hospital-Forsyth, and Tyson Foods.
- 69 percent of employees live in another county.
- The population is well-educated.
- 71 percent of employed residents work in surrounding counties.
- The unemployment rate is low at 3.9 percent.
- Labor force and jobs are not well aligned.

### KEY FINDINGS

Forsyth County is well positioned for economic growth. With large, greenfield sites in north Fulton County becoming increasingly scarce or expensive, the march of growth up GA 400 is expected to continue. Sites with good highway access will be sought after, drawing retail, mixed-use, and office development to south Forsyth County. Meanwhile, older existing retail centers should see redevelopment or re-tenanting opportunities to serve the educated and affluent households coming to the County. Ensuring the economic health of the entire County should be a priority. Forsyth County should build upon assets like Lanier Tech, University of North Georgia (UNG)-Cumming campus, and Northside Hospital-Forsyth, which enhance the broader community and provide skilled jobs for local workers.



Source: ESRI: US Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey

Figure 2.5: 2013 Labor Force Comparison, Forsyth County



## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

*Forsyth County's community resources contribute greatly to the community's quality of life and the County's economic prosperity. In addition to its high quality of community facilities, one of the Forsyth County's major draws is its natural environment—the County borders Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River and contains a number of important resources such as the Etowah River, Big Creek, and Sawnee Mountain.*

### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

- Over the past five years, community facilities have expanded significantly.
- Currently, the County owns 120 parcels of land totaling 3,431 acres.
- Community facilities are well-distributed.
- Recent expansion of parks and school system facilities.
- Expansions are planned for the library system, including new branches adjacent to Matt Community Park and at Denmark High School.
- Ongoing investment by the County in resources such as Sawnee Mountain Preserve, facilities, and services.
- Water resources are of regional importance.
- Historic and cultural resources lack protection; currently there are two sites on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but an additional 44 sites were potentially eligible as of 2007.
- Over time, the number of sewer customers is expected to increase steadily as communities are transitioned off of septic systems.

### KEY FINDINGS

Forsyth County has a broad range of community, natural, and historic and cultural resources. The County has made a concerted, ongoing effort to invest in its community facilities and services. These facilities will help meet existing needs for park space and services, and are largely located in the areas with the most space for growth. Future development will need to be mindful of both natural and cultural resources. Because of the County's location on Lake Lanier and in the Chattahoochee Basin, future development not only impacts the County's residents, but may have effects on the water supply downstream. To maintain Forsyth County's character, development will also need to consider the remaining agricultural lands and historic and cultural resources.

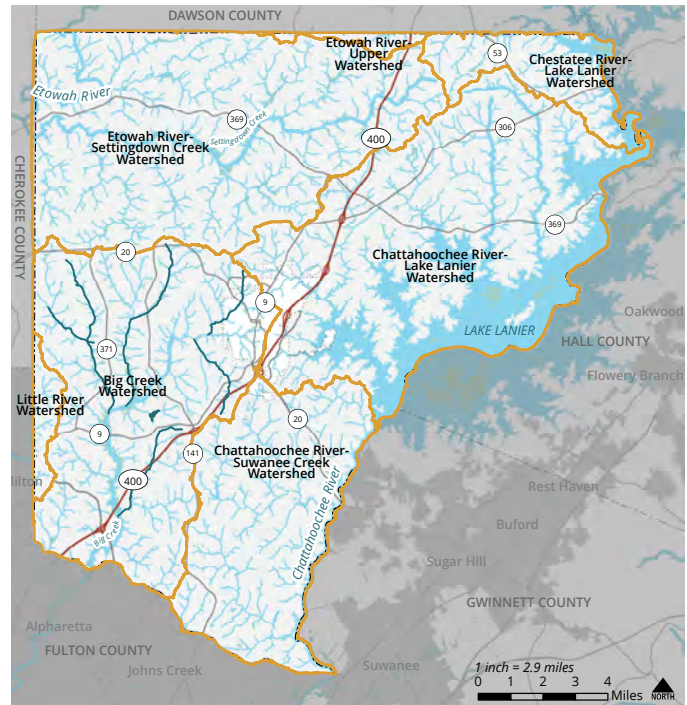


Figure 2.6: Natural Resources (Water)

- ▭ Watersheds
- Rivers and Major Streams
- All Rivers & Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Stream & Lake Buffer (150ft)
- Wetlands

*As evidenced by Figure 2.6, water is an important part of Forsyth County's story as a community but also as a primary contributor to the regional water system and recreation. The County is home to Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee River, the Etowah River, and a variety of other water resources that are important sources of drinking water, wildlife habitat, and recreation.*

## TRANSPORTATION

*The County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan and Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways (BTPW) 2025 Plan are the primary policy and planning vehicles for managing, maintaining, and improving the County's transportation network. Transportation and land use are intertwined. When planning for future growth, the availability of adequate multi-modal transportation infrastructure should be considered. Likewise, transportation infrastructure should be planned in areas projected for future growth.*

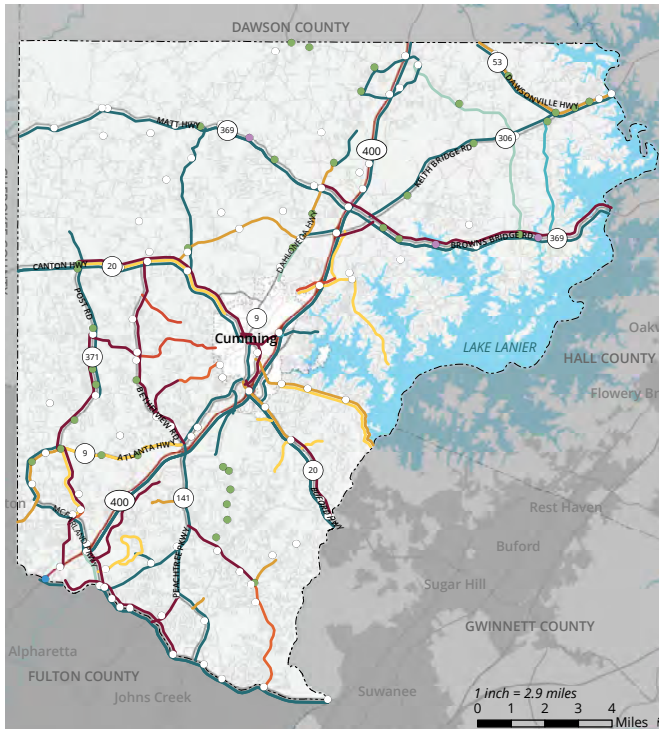
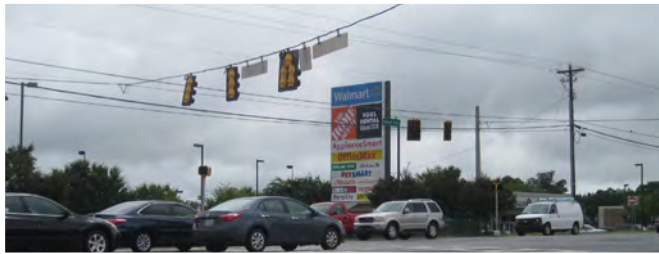
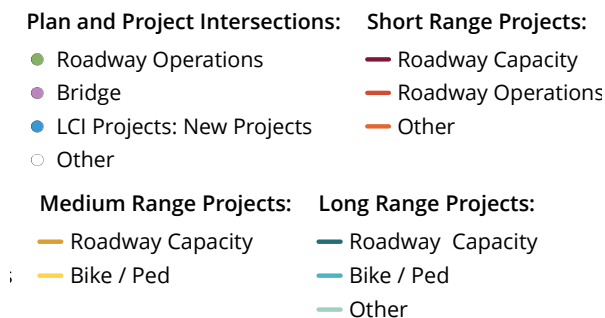


Figure 2.7: Planned Transportation Projects



### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

- Rapid population growth is leading to congested roads and capacity improvements.
- Long distances exist between destinations.
- Congestion is rising on arterials.
- The County operates a demand response transit system. Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) Xpress operates two routes with connections to Forsyth County.
- The biggest issue identified in the 2015 BTPW Plan update was finding funding for active transportation projects.
- The County demonstrates continued commitment to implementing programmed and planned projects.

### KEY FINDINGS

Forsyth County has a robust road network with 40 miles of freeways, 97 miles of major arterials, 88 miles of minor arterials, and 169 miles of collector roads. GA 400 is the most important road in the County, carrying the highest traffic volumes, providing countywide connectivity, and providing access to regional employment centers. In addition to the road network, the County is focused on increasing active transportation options that will help provide opportunities for enjoying the County via other modes of transportation. Ultimately, transportation is about the ability to reach desired goods, services, activities, and destinations. Without a highly functioning transportation system, it will be difficult to reach these desired opportunities. The County's update to its Comprehensive Transportation Plan will be an important vehicle to furthering a transportation system that serves the County's future land use plan.



## LAND USE

*Understanding the mix of uses currently within Forsyth County along with the policies and regulations that shape how land is developed or redeveloped is critical to facilitating a future that reflects the community's development, growth and quality of life goals.*

### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

- Since 2010, approximately 4,000 acres in the County have been developed.
- The largest increases have been in residential and parks and recreation land uses.
- Commercial, retail, industrial, and institutional uses are primarily focused along major arterials.
- The County regularly adjusts its Unified Development Code to improve the quality of new development.
- An estimated 9,500 permits were issued in 2013-2015 for new residential units.

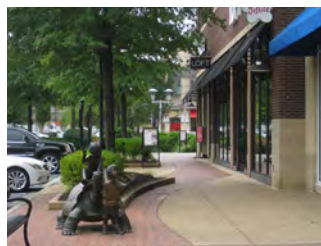
### KEY FINDINGS

A review of existing land uses, with an emphasis on recent development, illustrates that both the County's traditional development pattern and recent trends lean toward a more uniform development pattern. There is an abundance of single family housing, and commercial development is generally located along major transportation corridors.

#### Mix of Current Uses



Single-Family



Retail



Parks Facility



Industrial

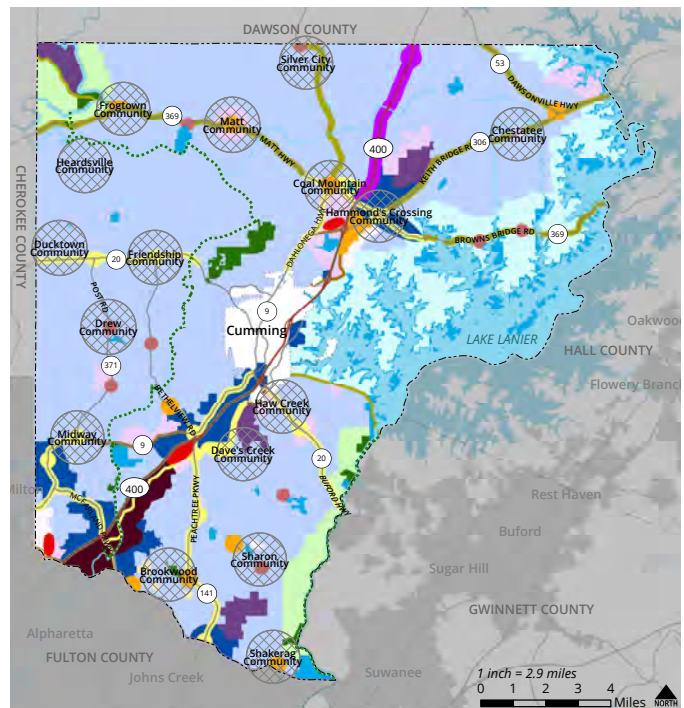


Figure 2.8: 2012 Character Areas

Source: Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan



## HOUSING

*Housing is a core building block of every community. The housing options available influence decisions made by individuals about where to spend various phases of their lives as well as the decisions of businesses and employers to invest in a given community. Housing has a fundamental impact on how we carry out our day-to-day lives, influencing travel decisions, interactions with neighbors, and proximity to services and community amenities like parks and schools.*

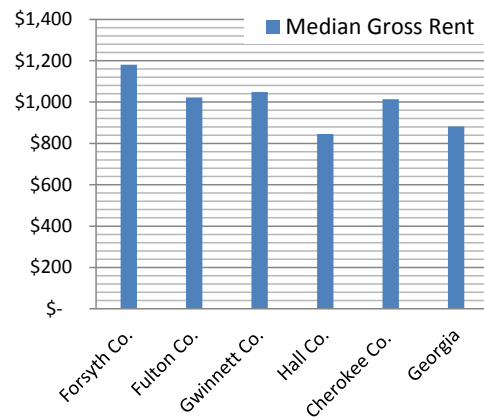
### IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS & STATISTICS

- The majority of housing in the County, 72.3 percent, is single family detached.
- The number of multi-family residential units has grown markedly, and comprised 26 percent of total new units permitted in 2014, 16 percent in 2015, and 20 percent in 2016.
- Housing stock is relatively new: approximately 45 percent of housing units in the County were built in 2000 or later.
- A high percentage, 82.4 percent, of housing units are owner occupied.
- The County's housing vacancy percentage, 6.5 percent, is one of the lowest in the Atlanta region.
- Housing values are also some of the highest in the region, with over 70 percent of units valued at \$200,000 or higher.

### KEY FINDINGS

A large percentage of Forsyth County's housing stock can be characterized as newer units (constructed since 1990) that supports a family-oriented and relatively wealthy community. Although rents and housing values of owner-occupied units are high when compared to neighboring counties, there do not appear to be unique housing affordability issues specific to Forsyth County when compared to other nearby counties. The County has seen an uptick in multi-family housing units in recent years, but the numbers are still minimal when compared to the high concentration of single-family homes.

Figure 2.9: Owner-Occupied Housing



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

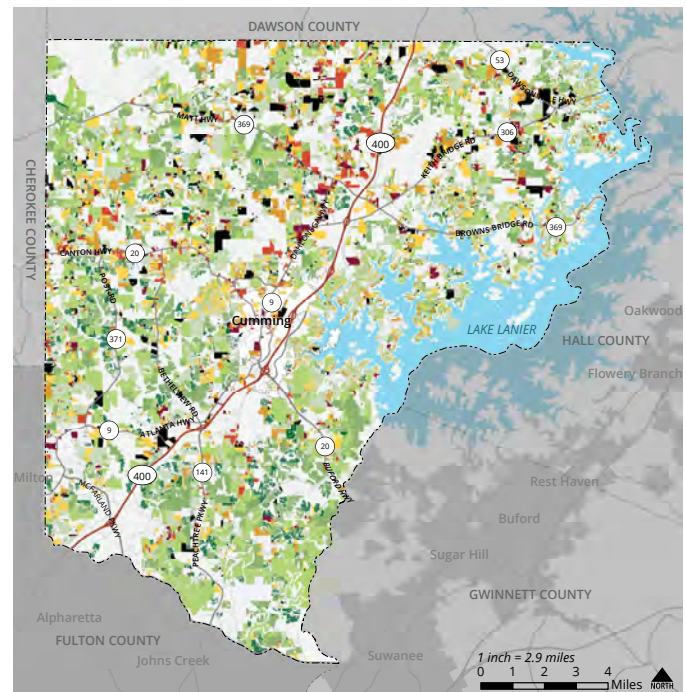
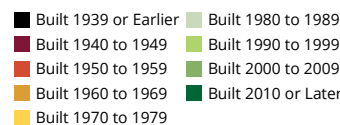


Figure 2.10: Housing Age



## 2.4 WHAT WE HEARD AND WHO WE HEARD IT FROM

### OUTREACH APPROACH

In coordination with the foundation established through the existing conditions review, the Foster Forsyth public engagement program played a central role in the *Comprehensive Plan* update. The following principles were cornerstones of the public engagement approach:

1. **Ensure Robust Communications** – including project branding (Foster Forsyth), leveraging of the County's current outreach channels, and maintaining a central web portal for information.
2. **Provide Meaningful Education** – the planning team emphasized what a *Comprehensive Plan* is and is not, what the future land use plan directly and indirectly impacts, and what factors should be considered when planning for the future, specifically the financial, environmental, and infrastructure-related barriers and opportunities.
3. **Offer a Variety of Input Mechanisms** – a variety of tools, access points and timing options are offered to engage the largest amount of residents possible.
4. **Listen Thoughtfully** – first and foremost, the plan must reflect the goals of the community and develop in an iterative, transparent process.
5. **Build the Plan Upon Public Input while Addressing Implementation Realities** – the plan must be based in what was heard, but be practical such that it is implementable and facilitates a financially healthy future.

The engagement process involved a variety of stakeholder meetings, in-person community workshops, and web-based input tools. Primary input mechanisms included a community survey, virtual workshops, mapping input tool, feedback comment forms, public hearings, event kiosks, and “meetings in a box.” The process was advertised across multiple platforms, including County email blasts, press releases, public meeting schedules, the County newsletter, the local newspaper, and the project website. Through this process, the planning team listened to a variety of concerns, hopes and dreams, and identified key themes.

### WHAT THE PLANNING TEAM HEARD

Sentiments repeatedly expressed during the outreach process included the following:

- Desire to maintain the natural character of Forsyth County.
- Need for more jobs that align with resident skillsets.
- Recognition that growth is inevitable, but that the County can take a more strategic approach by insisting on quality design and less intrusive impacts to the natural environment.
- Although some areas of the County are appropriate for preservation, other areas are appropriate for development.
- Identification of a broader array of housing types to better meet the needs of everyone, including high-paid executives, retirees, young professionals, and empty-nesters.
- Schools and parks make the County great and should be top priorities.
- Congestion is a problem that needs to be addressed through a variety of mechanisms.
- Desire for more ways to get around within the County to improve internal connectivity.



Participants discuss preferred future land uses and character areas at a Design Workshop

## WHO WE HEARD FROM

Figure 2.11: Community Input Mechanisms

Input Mechanism	Participants	Summary of Role
<b>Vision Committee</b>	9 members	Met five times during the planning process (three times formally, and two times informally)
<b>Steering Committee</b>	9 members	Met six times throughout the planning process; played a lead role in project guidance
<b>Stakeholder Interviews</b>	15 interviewees	Carried out with a cross section of stakeholders, including residents, area business owners, local developers, and key partner organizations such as the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, UNG, Northside Hospital-Forsyth, and Forsyth County Schools
<b>Visioning Workshops</b>	173 total participants	Five in-person meetings and a virtual workshop (available online for one week)
<b>Design Workshops</b>	127 total participants	Five in-person meetings and a virtual workshop (available online for one week)
<b>Implementation Workshops</b>	250 total participants	Two in-person meetings and a virtual workshop (available online for one week)
<b>Open Houses</b>	106 total participants	Two in-person meetings
<b>Community Survey</b>	4,806 total participants	Available online for one month
<b>Meeting in a Box</b>	80 total participants	An opportunity over three weeks in June 2016 for groups to carry out a mini-workshop
<b>Community Event Kiosks</b>	100+ participants	Held four times in different community locations during weekends and evenings
<b>Online Mapping Tool</b>	109 participants	Available from mid-April to late June 2016



## COMMUNITY INPUT HIGHLIGHTS

This sections provides a high-level review of key input junctures. These items guided the team from visioning, to land use planning, to prioritization of policy and actions by planning element, and to drafting the complete update of the *Comprehensive Plan*. A full documentation of public input by outreach tool is provided in Appendix B.

## VISION & STEERING COMMITTEES GUIDANCE

### *Vision Committee*

Core values of Forsyth County must resonate in the vision. These values include community, opportunity, recreation, and education. The strategy for development and growth must take a balanced approach that incorporates green space, the needs of all community members, and the assets that make Forsyth County unique.

### *Steering Committee*

Forsyth County contains a series of unique areas or sub communities. Through the *Comprehensive Plan* process, these areas were coalesced into 11 character areas—each of which deserves a tailored approach. In the future, higher intensity uses are only appropriate in certain, well-defined areas. These areas will become the County's town centers and community nodes. Intensities of housing and development should vary from character area to character area.

Both committees emphasized the need for quality development and site-sensitive design that minimizes tree reduction and grading while increasing meaningful open space. Coordination of land use with transportation, parks, and schools is imperative.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW THEMES

Interviewees provided input on a variety of items, including their opinions regarding the County's greatest needs and opportunities. These include updates to infrastructure (such as roads and sewer that can accommodate the continued growth), revised impact fees, natural preservation (in part to deter developers from completely removing natural greenery and older growth trees), and transportation improvements (to reduce congestion and commute times). There was also some concern from businesses and developers that the development regulations need additional flexibility; many felt that current regulations are so strictly adhered to that there are limited opportunities to address unique situations and allow for creative solutions. Those interviewed understand and value the opportunity for long-term strategic planning. Strategic planning suggestions from these stakeholders include investment and growth opportunities to promote a sense of identity for Forsyth County neighborhoods; to invite sustainable growth; to leverage attractive amenities such as Lake Lanier and recreational facilities; to preserve natural space; and to provide mixed-use social centers.

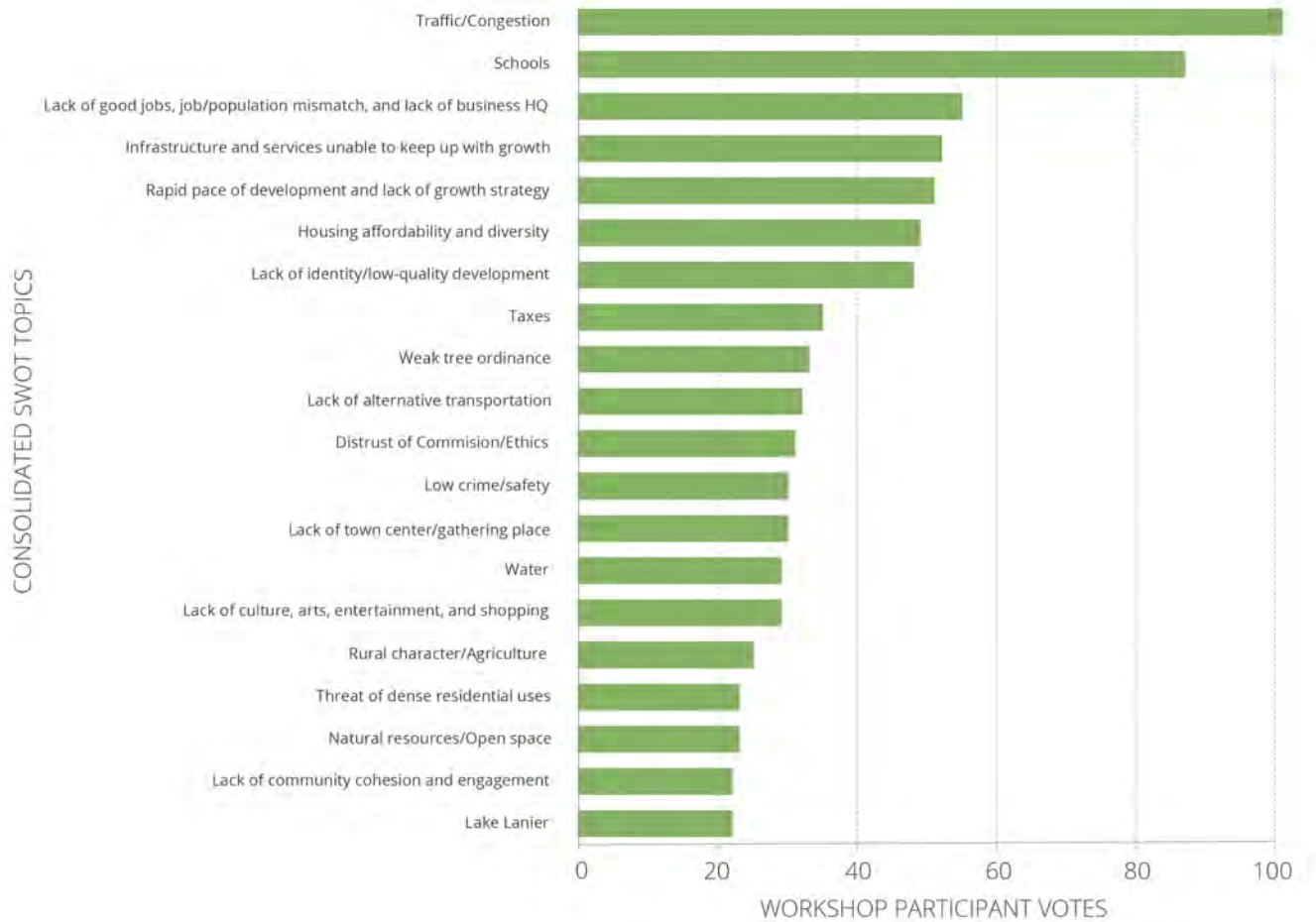
## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT)

A primary outcome of the Visioning Workshops was general identification of needs and opportunities for the future as well as an initial prioritization of those key areas that were most important to the County's future success. Figure 2.12 illustrates the high-level outcomes from this input activity, which helped shape prioritization areas for the Community Work Program.

## VISION AND GOALS

All of the public workshops had opportunities for input on the *Comprehensive Plan's* vision and goals. Among many topics, the definitions of two key phrases were discussed at length: what "quality of life" and "community of choice" mean in Forsyth County.

Figure 2.12: Priority Topics for Forsyth’s Future, Identified Through SWOT Process



**Key Themes Repeated for “Quality of Life”**

- Safe, less crime (15 mentions)
- Natural, green, open space (12)
- Less traffic, no commute (12)
- Balanced/appropriate development (11)
- Quality schools (10)
- Recreational spaces/parks (9)
- Quality housing (7)
- Good community of people (6)
- Needs met (6)
- “Live, work, play” (5)
- Clean air/environment (5)
- Cultural opportunities (5)
- Affordability (4)
- Trustworthy decision making (3)
- Rural (3)
- Stress free (2)

**Key Themes Repeated for “Community of Choice”**

- Preferred place of living (25 mentions)
- Community visioning input and representation (8)
- Attractive amenities (7)
- Quality and diversity of housing stock (6)
- Larger lots, low density/allowing for more open, natural green space (6)
- Quality schools (5)
- Affordable housing (2)
- Ease of travel/little commute (2)

**COMMUNITY SURVEY OUTCOMES**

Extensive participation on the community survey supplemented input gathered at public meetings and other input forums. Although demographic



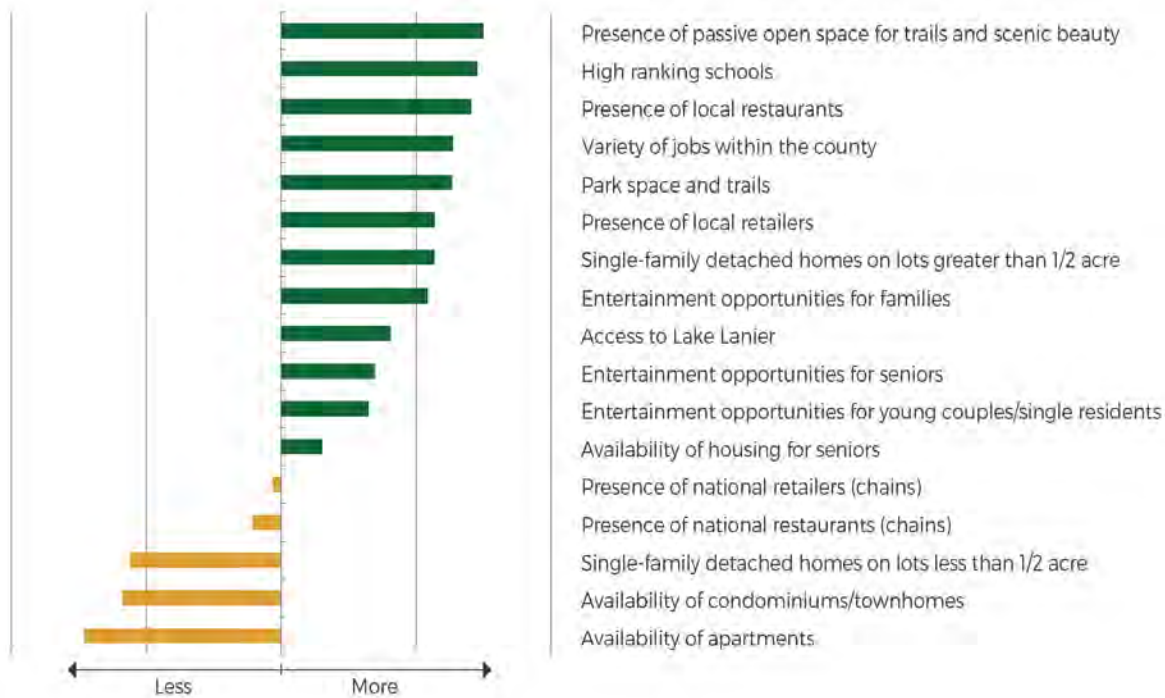
questions indicated that the results were not fully representative of the community, there was a wealth of valuable input collected. The questions focused on priorities and appropriate policies and initiatives for the future, with a focus on land use, housing, transportation and economic development. Figure 2.13 shows what respondents believe are most important to the County's future success. Full survey results are available in Appendix B.

### CHARACTER AREA DEVELOPMENT

Through initial work of the Steering Committee, activities at the Design and Implementation Workshops, and additional input collected through

other outreach mechanisms, the 11 character areas that define the future land use plan for Forsyth County were developed. These conversations and activities ranged from general discussions about character and what areas felt like similar places; visual preference surveys prioritizing different images appropriate to the County; reviewing low to high intensity preferences using a sliding scale; and survey questions asking about appropriate development in different areas of the County. Through a very iterative public process, character areas and associated policy was formed and finalized. See Section 3.5 for additional explanation of the character areas. Figures 2.14 through 2.17 are heat maps that illustrate Design Workshop input on preferred locations for different land uses in the future.

Figure 2.13: Elements Important to Forsyth County's Future Success (More or Less Available)



Source: Foster Forsyth Community Survey Question 5

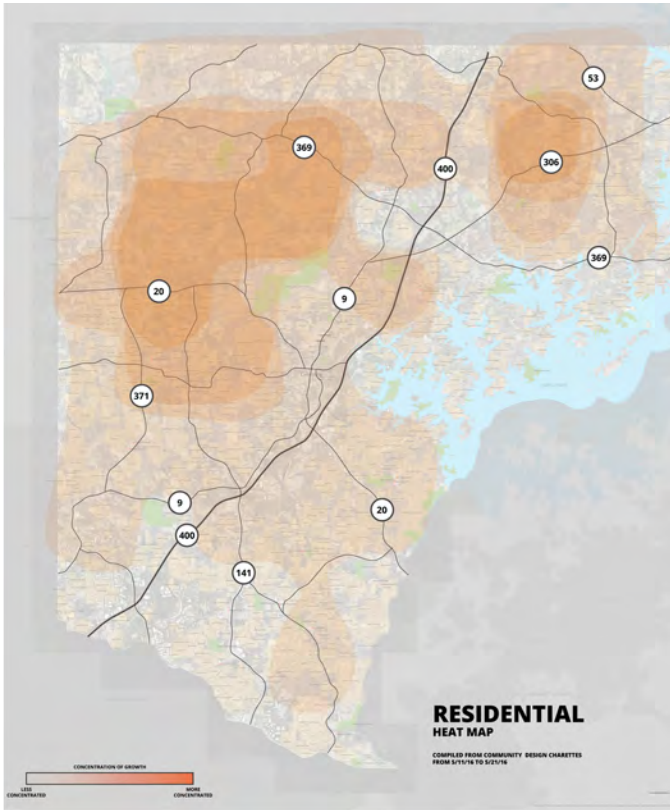


Figure 2.14: Single-Family Residential Heat Map

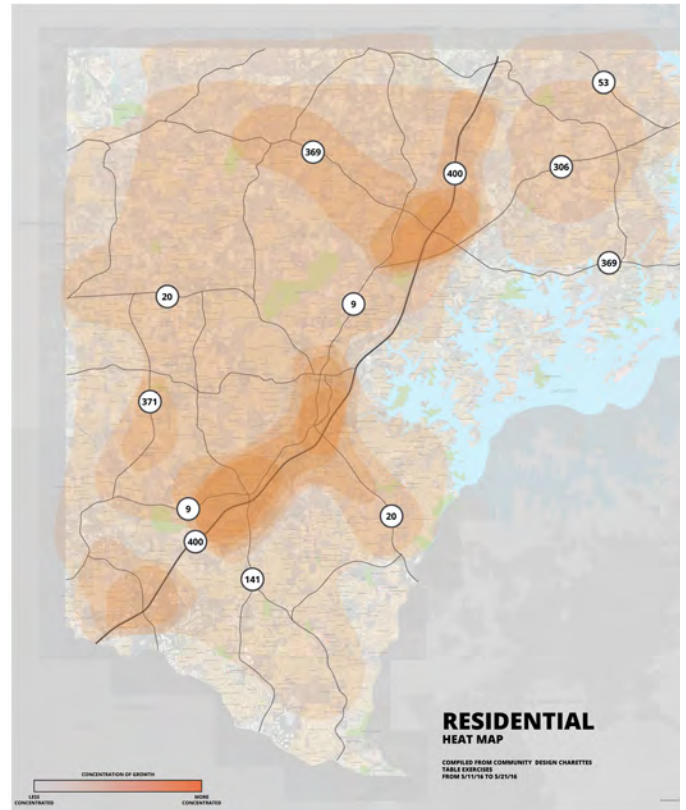


Figure 2.15: Medium & High Density Residential Heat Map

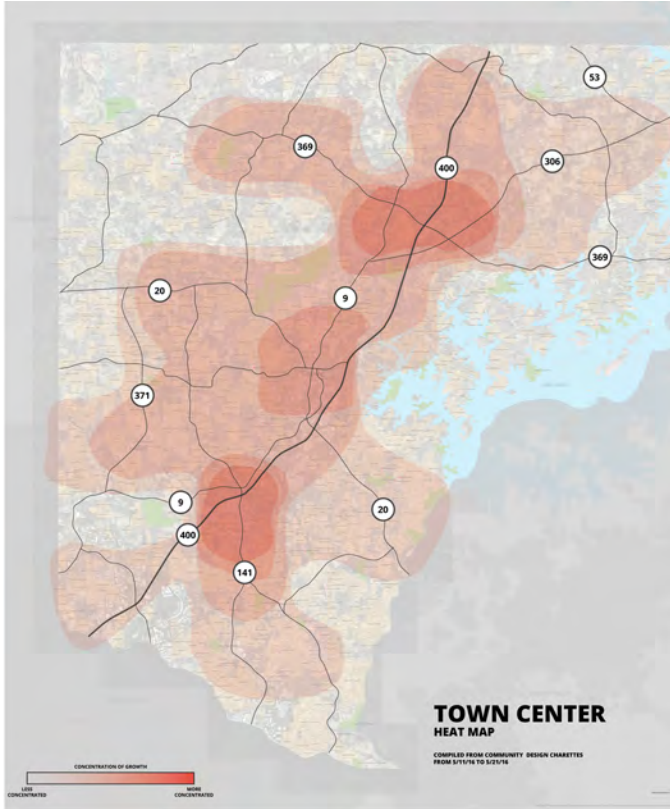


Figure 2.16: Town Center Heat Map

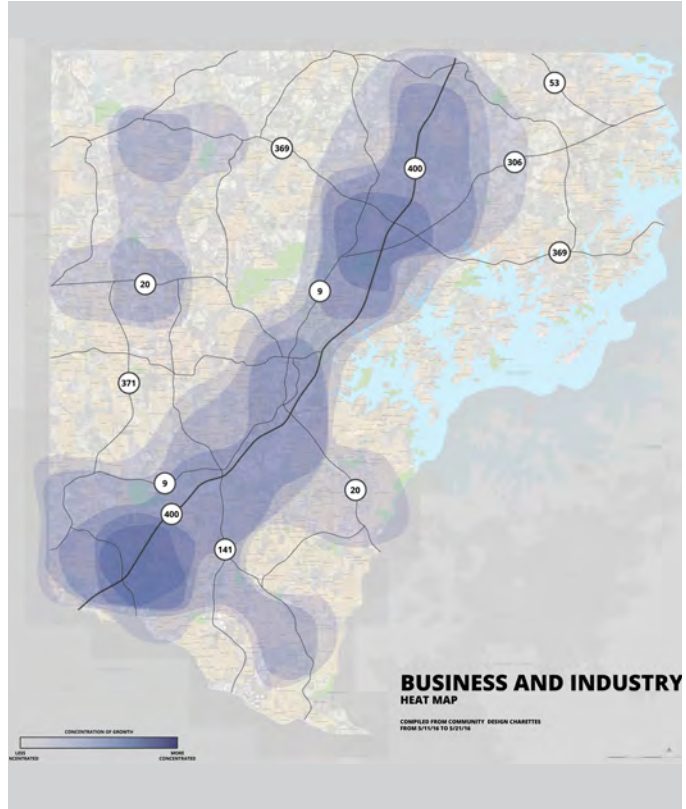


Figure 2.17: Business & Industry Heat Map



## 2.5 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the planning process, community stakeholders identified a range of issues currently facing the County and opportunities for improvement moving forward. The issues and opportunities discussed here represent salient themes consistently mentioned across input platforms, including the Visioning Committee, Steering Committee, stakeholder interviews, Visioning Workshop SWOT analysis activity, meeting input boards, online survey responses, online mapping activity comments, and event kiosks. (For complete documentation of comments received, see Appendix B: Public Involvement Documentation.) Comments generally centered on the topics of transportation, land development, housing, commercial development, culture and recreation, government, environment, and schools. This list also includes issues and opportunities identified by the planning team as part of the existing conditions technical analysis. These items were generally consistent with input received throughout the public involvement process.



Participants discuss desired future land use in Forsyth County at a Design Workshop

### TRANSPORTATION

Increased levels of congestion are a principal, unanimous concern for County residents. There is less consensus surrounding the right approach for improving the efficiency of the transportation network, with some residents in favor of expanding road capacity and others more interested in providing alternative transportation choices, such as walking, biking, or using transit. Identified needs include:

- Need to reduce congestion.
- Lack of transportation connectivity, especially traveling east-west.
- Over-reliance on GA 400.
- Need to expand active transportation choices by adding sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
- Need future developments with better connected street networks.
- Need to increase road capacity and efficiency.
- Need opportunities for shorter commutes.
- Lack of existing transit and need to expand regional transit connections.
- Opportunity for another regional airport.



## LAND DEVELOPMENT

Residents often express frustration with the current rapid pace of development flowing into the County. Recognizing the market pressures for growth and the rights of private property owners, residents acknowledge that future growth will occur; however, they desire high-quality development that is coupled with supportive infrastructure in a pattern that allows for the preservation of some rural land. Identified issues include:

- Desire to slow the pace of development.
- Concerns about growth outpacing infrastructure .
- Need to prepare for growth in northern portion of the County.
- Insufficient impact fees.
- Existing impact fees favor large developers and hinder small developers.
- New development lacks quality and character.
- Lack of walkable town centers.
- Lack of architectural guidelines.
- Need to improve facades of older buildings.
- Need to continue to build upon character unique to different areas of the County.
- Need for beautification in key locations.

## HOUSING

The most appropriate type of housing for Forsyth's future is a point of contention. The current model, which is dominated by large-lot, single-family homes, limits the County's competitive position within the region, as it does not provide a full range of housing for current and future needs. Some residents acknowledge the need for broader housing typologies and price points to match a diverse range of incomes and lifestyle preferences, while others would prefer to allow only large-lot, single-family homes. Participants identified issues such as:

- Lack of housing stock for employees earning less than \$50,000 discourages corporations from locating in the County.
- Lack of variation in housing stock for different lifestyles (e.g. low-maintenance).
- Lack of senior housing.
- Desire to preserve rural estate housing choices.
- Disagreement over the desirability of smaller lot single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments.
- Desire to enhance the quality of medium-density housing.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is a strong desire to attract more professional employers to the County that will align with its highly educated workforce. Residents also would like expanded local dining and shopping options within the County. Key issues and opportunities for commercial development include:

- Need more professional employment opportunities.
- Need more corporate headquarters.
- Insufficient suitable space for office and light industrial.
- Opportunity for tech cluster in South Forsyth County.
- Opportunity for medical cluster surrounding Northside Hospital-Forsyth.
- Need fiber network to attract tech businesses.
- Desire for more local restaurants and shops. Want more convenient quality retail.
- Cannot operate restaurants or hotels on the lake due to lack of sewer service.
- Opportunity for full-service hotels.

## GOVERNMENT

Recognizing the County government as a primary implementer of the community vision, some participants were apprehensive about its ability to effectively move the *Comprehensive Plan* forward. They noted a need to maintain a sustainable and balanced budget; a need to improve the efficiency of approval processes; and a desire for increased transparency and accountability from elected officials. Concerns included:

- Imbalanced tax digest due to over-reliance on residential taxes.
- Need more water and sewer customers to maintain a balanced budget.
- Need to maintain AAA bond rating.
- Permitting and approval process in Forsyth County is more difficult than in neighboring counties.
- Distrust of County Commissioners and staff.
- Need to abide by *Comprehensive Plan* in rezoning decisions.
- Perception that homeowners' associations (HOAs) and developers have disproportionate influence on the Commission.
- Need advocates for residents—not just businesses—in economic development decisions.

## ENVIRONMENT

Preserving a high standard for the County's natural resources was a critical concern for many participants. As development persists, residents want to ensure some natural and rural land is conserved, and that new development embraces the local topography and ecology. Environmental concerns include:

- Need to preserve natural spaces.
- Potential loss of rural and agricultural land and heritage.
- Prevalence of clearcutting damages local ecology and character.
- Need for a stronger tree ordinance.
- Need to protect the regional water supply.

## CULTURE AND RECREATION

Residents want nearby places to gather as a community and engage with arts and culture, rather than commuting to nearby cities to do so. They love their natural resources and desire additional greenspaces and opportunities for outdoor recreation and a healthy lifestyle. The principal culture and recreation issues and opportunities they identified are:

- Few cultural arts facilities.
- No central gathering places.
- Lack of entertainment destinations.
- Desire for additional greenspace and outdoor recreation.
- Need to maximize Lake Lanier as a County asset.
- Desire for boating destinations along Lake Lanier.

## SCHOOLS

Residents value their excellent school system as a foundational amenity for families and want to ensure it is maintained as the County grows. Highlighted issues include:

- Schools are becoming overcrowded.
- Need to maintain high quality of schools.
- Need to recruit quality teachers.
- Need to locate new schools near new residential areas.

## OTHER

Participants noted additional issues and opportunities facing the County that did not fall into one of the categories above. These comments include:

- Tensions between natives and newcomers.
- Limited appeal for young professionals.
- Need to accommodate an increasingly diverse population.
- No regularly identifiable County brand to people or organizations outside the county.
- City of Cumming fairgrounds are underutilized.
- Perceptions of increased crime.



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## **3. VISION FOR FOSTERING OUR FUTURE**

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### 3.1 OVERVIEW

The community goals frame community members' vision for Forsyth County's future growth and development. Key components of this include the Vision Statement, Overarching Goals, and the Community Character Area Map. These visionary aspects of the *Comprehensive Plan* represent a long-term view of Forsyth County's future.

- The Vision Statement and Overarching Goals are new aspects of the County's *Comprehensive Plan*. They reflect a high-level, County-wide vision for the future that focuses on maintaining and enhancing the County's unique character and quality of life for the next 20 years.
- The Community Character Map identifies 11 unique areas of the County, known as character areas. These areas acknowledge the diversity of communities within the County and their differences in character, location, and history. Associated narratives identify appropriate future development types and development characteristics for each area.

As a part of the visioning process, initial projections for future growth were communicated to the community. These preliminary projections—which showed the population nearly doubling in the next 20 years—were based on recent growth trends, and represent the “business as usual” future if there are no policy changes in the County. The *Comprehensive Plan* visioning process sought to answer two questions about this growth:

1. What is most important to us as community members now and in the future?
2. If we know our population will grow significantly, what is most important to guiding our future growth and investments?

While input varied, the planning team consistently heard from multiple members of the community that the County should achieve the following:

- Demand high quality design and character in new developments.
- Place emphasis on site-sensitive design that is respectful and seeks to preserve natural characteristics.
- Facilitate a better balance of jobs and housing to further a more balanced tax base.
- Create more accommodation for varying needs of our multi-generational community in our transportation network and housing.
- Facilitate nodes of commercial and social activity in the community.
- Protect and enhance our natural environment, schools, and community.



## 3.2 VISION STATEMENT

*Forsyth County will promote responsible use of our natural assets and green space while advancing a balanced growth management strategy that strengthens and sustains quality of life for everyone.*



From top to bottom: aspects of Forsyth's high quality of life; Sawnee Mountain Preserve; groundbreaking at new Forsyth County Fire Station; and Forsyth County schools

### FORMATION OF VISION STATEMENT & GOALS

The Vision Statement and Overarching Goals were developed over the course of the visioning and prioritization phases of the planning process. They are based upon a series of input channels, including in-person and virtual community workshops, stakeholder interviews, the community survey, and direction provided by citizen Vision and Steering Committees. By integrating input gathered from community members including residents, businesses, community groups, and other leaders, the Foster Forsyth Vision Statement is a true reflection of the public process.



### 3.3 OVERARCHING GOALS

#### A) INVEST IN OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

Continue to invest in quality schools, parks, and access to amenities, as well as protect natural and cultural resources.

#### B) IMPROVE MOBILITY

Make getting around Forsyth County easier by improving existing roadways and connectivity, adding opportunities for walking and bicycling, and advancing opportunities for transit and new transportation technologies to serve the long-term transportation needs of residents and businesses.

#### C) ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

As new growth and development occur, maintain character, particularly in the most rural sections of the County, while establishing a high standard for quality design in private developments, streetscapes, and other initiatives.

#### D) EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT FURTHERS OUR VISION FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ensure water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure plans and programmed investments further our community's future development vision and keeps pace with community needs.

#### E) FACILITATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Attract job opportunities that create a better match between the County's workforce and nearby employment opportunities. By attracting more employers to the County, the tax base will become better balanced and more sustainable.

#### F) MAINTAIN & EXPAND GREENSPACE

Protect our cornerstone greenspaces—Sawnee Mountain Preserve, public areas surrounding Lake Lanier including the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, parks, and rivers and streams—while furthering site-sensitive design that respects the environment and incorporates meaningful open space.



Figure 3.1: Overarching Goals

## 3.4 COMMUNITY CHARACTER MAP

### MAP OVERVIEW

The Community Character Map complements and expands upon the Forsyth community's Vision Statement and Overarching Goals for the future by creating a location-based vision for Forsyth County. The Community Character Map provides a vision for future growth and development within these distinct areas of Forsyth County through the plan horizon year of 2037.

The map defines a series of subareas—known as character areas—that respect and reflect each area's unique role in the County based on its character, location, and history. The Community Character Map will serve as the County's guide for future rezoning and development decisions. The map and corresponding narrative will be used by County staff and elected and appointed boards to make recommendations and future land use decisions, including additions and updates to the County's zoning code, place-specific design standard considerations, and future zoning and development approvals.

Through the public engagement process, 11 unique character areas (in no particular order) were identified:

1. McFarland
2. South Georgia 400
3. Big Creek
4. Haw Creek & Daves Creek
5. Lanier
6. Vickery Creek
7. Campground
8. North GA 400
9. Chestatee/Jot Em Down
10. Etowah
11. Sawnee Mountain

*Figure 3.2 illustrates the location of each character area.*

### HOW THE MAP WAS CREATED

The character areas were defined from a place-based approach to planning and future development. Throughout Foster Forsyth's visioning process, community members expressed their desire to enhance the sense of place within the County. Specifically, the community wants to create a stronger identity that recognizes the attributes of its communities. The Foster Forsyth Steering Committee created a first draft of character area boundaries, which were then presented to participants at public Design Workshops for input and revisions. From this input, the Community Character Map was refined into the 11 character areas.

This place-based, character area-specific approach builds upon—yet differs from—the Future Development Map in the County's *2012 Comprehensive Plan*. The *2012 Comprehensive Plan* Future Development Map generally defined character areas based on their proposed land use classifications and focused on establishing and enhancing development along major transportation corridors. As a product of this approach, the vision for much of the County's land outside of major corridors is defined by its proposed housing type, predominantly suburban living.

To define appropriate growth and development policies for each character area—as well as disperse development in a manner consistent with Countywide and area-specific policies—the proposed Community Character Map identifies 11 character areas within unincorporated Forsyth County that have different attributes and development expectations for the future. Not only is each character area defined based on its current state and envisioned future, this approach will promote a series of community nodes that build on the identity of each area. These nodes are envisioned to function as centers of activity for surrounding neighborhoods and will allow for more intensity of development in appropriate locations. They will primarily be mixed use and will vary in look, feel, and scale depending on their location within the County.

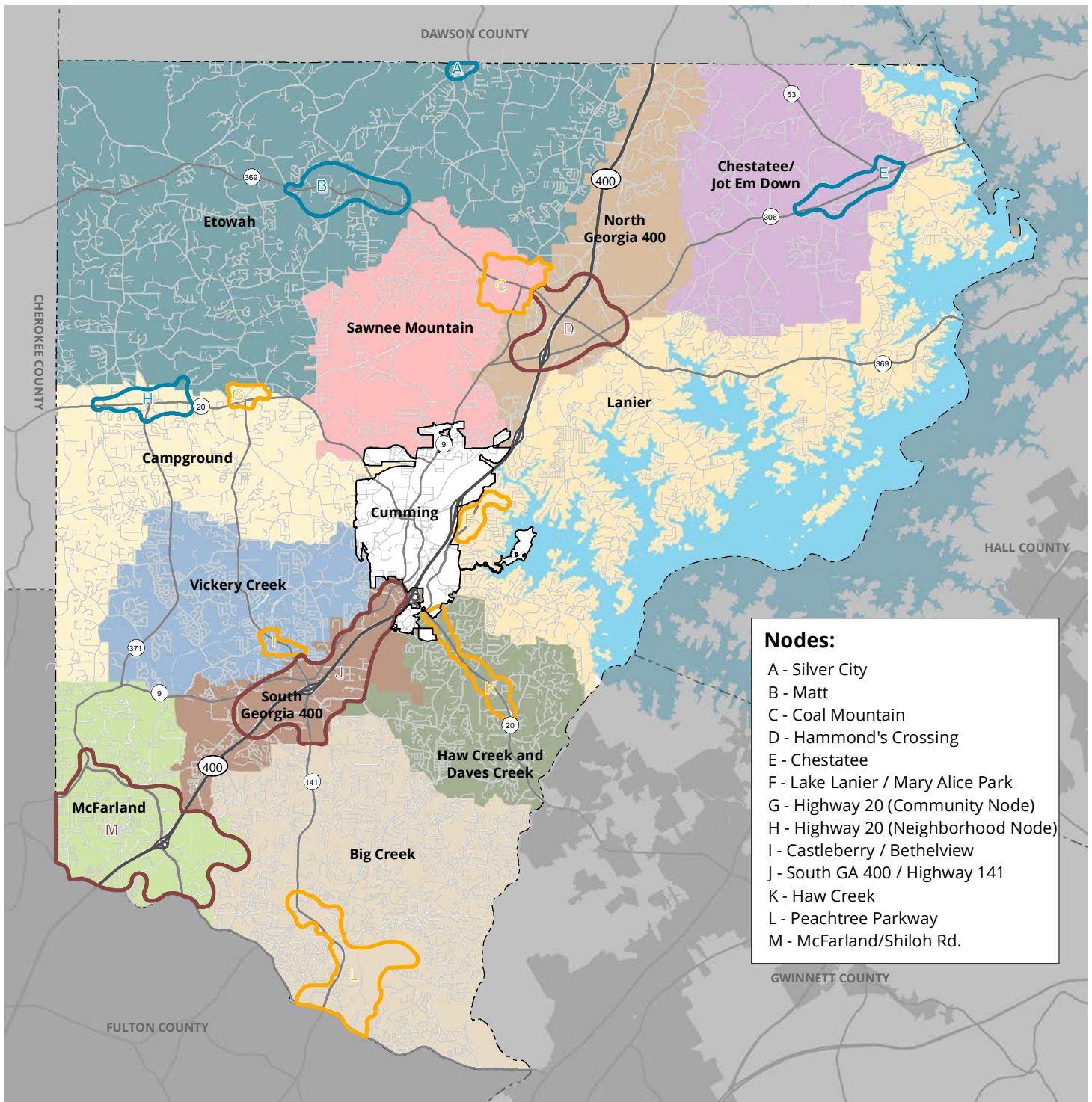


Figure 3.2: Community Character Map

**Character Areas:**

- North Georgia 400
- South Georgia 400
- Chestatee/Jot Em Down
- Campground
- City of Cumming
- Haw Creek and Daves Creek
- Lanier
- McFarland
- Etowah
- Sawnee Mountain
- Big Creek
- Vickery Creek

**Nodes:**

- Regional Node
- Community Node
- Neighborhood Node



## DEVELOPMENT NODES

Through the Foster Forsyth engagement process, development nodes were identified within each character area. Development nodes are areas where employment, commercial, and higher intensity uses should be concentrated to create regional, community, and neighborhood activity centers.

Nodes were identified by community members at Foster Forsyth design workshops and then detailed and adjusted based on feedback from the Steering Committee and comparison with the current Forsyth County Comprehensive Plan. The nodes were then adjusted to include existing industrial, commercial, and available vacant land based on the existing land use map. Lower intensity residential neighborhoods were specifically excluded from the development nodes. Based on this methodology and the need to maintain flexibility for future subdivisions and assemblages, the nodes took on more organic shapes and forms.

Throughout the Foster Forsyth process, there were discussions of “town center” areas. These discussions generally focused on areas that foster a mix of uses, particularly office and higher end commercial uses, a high level of walkability, and often a central open space. As the process evolved, the team and community defined three scales of “town centers.” “Regional centers” are larger in scale and are intended to reach a regional market area within and outside the County, while “community centers” are intended to be smaller scale commercial centers with complementary office and residential uses for a more local audience. “Neighborhood nodes” are intended to be neighborhood scale shopping centers that may be adjacent to other uses and foster a greater level of local connectivity.

Each node falls into one of three categories reflecting the appropriate types of uses, density, and intensity for that node.

## REGIONAL NODES

- Serve the region and County as a whole
- Located along major arterial roadways and corridors
- Higher concentrations of employment and commercial uses
- Allow for larger developments and larger facilities
- High density residential should be considered as part of mixed-use developments

## COMMUNITY NODES

- Serve larger areas or more populated areas of the County
- Located along major arterial streets and corridors
- Higher concentrations of commercial and office development
- Higher density residential should be located within these nodes or in adjacent areas subject to Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners review

## NEIGHBORHOOD NODES

- Serve the collection of local neighborhoods and communities around them
- Located along arterial streets and corridors
- Commercial development should be predominant and clustered around prominent intersections
- Smaller scale and intensity with a “small town core” feel

### 3.5 CONNECTING THE VISION WITH MARKET REALITIES

The residential real estate market in Forsyth County is very healthy. Since emerging from the Great Recession in 2009, property prices have risen steadily while days-on-market have decreased. Residential home builders—from small, local builders to large national companies—have been very active in the County delivering predominantly detached single-family homes. Development has mainly occurred in stand-alone subdivisions and on scattered lots that were developed prior to the housing market downturn.<sup>1</sup>

The initial population projections developed during the Existing Conditions phase of the *Comprehensive Plan* update process have embedded assumptions about market demand for new housing. Namely, past levels of new construction (as measured by the issuance of building permits) are projected forward over the 20-year planning horizon. These projections are the basis for considering a plausible amount of growth in different types of development that could be anticipated during the 20-year planning horizon, and then used to help further discussion with community members about the appropriate location for different types and scales of land uses in the future.

A detailed market study would be required in order to develop more specific forecasts for residential and commercial demand; however, in general, development in the County will continue to be driven by regional employment growth. Companies that relocate to or expand within the Atlanta area create jobs and demand for office or industrial real estate. Their employees require housing, goods, and services, and those households in turn generate demand for retail real estate. Therefore, the pace and volume of population growth directly influences (and is influenced by) the opportunity to develop new office, industrial, and retail space in the County. If population growth lags behind projections, development will take longer or take on a lower intensity format. If population growth exceeds projections, development will happen faster and possibly at a higher intensity.

<sup>1</sup> Zillow Market Trends

Over the last five years, the Atlanta region has absorbed an average of 2.8 million square feet of office space per year. Approximately 12 percent of that absorption (320,000 square feet per year) has occurred in the north Fulton County submarket, which includes most of Forsyth County. Currently Forsyth County captures only a modest share of north Fulton County office absorption. If Forsyth County were to capture 25 percent of north Fulton County demand, over 20 years this would equate to roughly 1.6 million square feet or about 12 five-story buildings. Based on current market trends, this is an aggressive outlook but could represent the “upper limit” of potential outcomes.

Retail demand is tied directly to population growth and household spending; however, the amount of retail supported per capita in the United States is declining, and retail formats are constantly evolving to meet the changing preferences of the market. Nationwide there is approximately 23 square feet of retail space per capita. Based on the “business as usual” growth rate of about 9,300 people per year, the County would require roughly 215,000 square feet of new retail space per year, or 4.3 million square feet over 20 years. The Taubman and Halcyon mixed use projects in south Forsyth County could account for half of that space. However, given market trends, a more realistic vision would be for substantially less retail square footage per person, delivered in grocery-anchored neighborhood centers and in existing nodes redeveloped at a higher density.

Considering the nature of economic cycles and the housing market, some years will see more growth than others and predicting those fluctuations is challenging; however, it is assumed that for the foreseeable future demand for housing in Forsyth County will remain strong given its outstanding schools, quality of life, and location in the Atlanta metropolitan area. From this perspective, the preliminary projections reflect a continuation of current trends both regionally and in Forsyth County. Therefore, barring another market downturn, land use policy will be the primary regulator of population growth going forward.



Raising the standard for quality development in Forsyth County—through lower density or more effectively through stronger development regulations irrespective of density—should not result in lower demand, but may result in higher values. This could lead to fewer new homes built over the next 20 years than would have been constructed under current policies, but higher quality developments. The character areas identified in Section 3.4 reflect the public’s vision of the future, which is more aligned with this approach and, therefore, will likely lead to slower population growth than is reflected in the preliminary population forecast provided in the *Existing Conditions Report* and available in Appendix A.

Adjusted population projections that align with the land use vision are provided in Section 3.6. This slower residential growth would result in less commercial office and retail space being developed over the planning period and would also impact the format in which that space is delivered. For example, slower population growth would likely delay the creation of new town centers or result in town centers with fewer retail offerings.

### 3.6 POPULATION PROJECTIONS ALIGNED WITH LAND USE VISION

Once the land use vision for Forsyth County was defined, it was possible to better project the future population of Forsyth County. Based on the future land uses envisioned in the Foster Forsyth process, the County could support an additional 145,645 residents in unincorporated areas. When coupled with population projections from the City of Cumming and added to the current population, the Comprehensive Plan envisions a total population of approximately **361,182 residents**. It is estimated that this population will be reached in approximately 2037. This pace of growth was determined by slowing down the current rate of County permit approvals (3,172 new units approved per year) by 25 percent. The assumption of a slowdown reflects Foster Forsyth’s recommendations to apply a more rigorous approval process for permitting that requires developers to meet a higher standard of design and connectivity.

Ultimately, projections are just the informed calculation of one growth scenario. The ultimate growth that Forsyth County experiences over the next several years will be the result of a variety of factors, including how closely the County’s future land use plan (the Community Character Map) is followed by County leadership, changes in market interests, the overall health of the metro Atlanta economy, the activities of surrounding jurisdictions, and other unforeseen factors.

## 4. CHARACTER AREAS

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

### CHARACTER AREAS

#### OVERVIEW

The Community Character Map, introduced in Section 3.5 as a part of the overall vision and goals for the County, depicts a location specific plan for future growth and development in Forsyth County. Each of the 11 character areas across Forsyth County identifies unique geographical areas within the County and distinctive role within the County both today and in the future. The character areas recognize that different levels of development will occur in each area of the County over the next five to twenty years and seek to clarify the style, type, and density for each area of the County. Encouraging appropriate future development in the right areas is crucial to meeting the community's goals and establishing a greater sense of place and character within the County. Each of the 11 character areas will experience some degree of future development. The goal of the character area narratives in this chapter is to identify and encourage future growth that is fitting within each area and enhance the character and economic sustainability of each Forsyth County community.

#### CHARACTER AREA NARRATIVES

Within each 11 character area narratives, the following elements are included to facilitate appropriate development, redevelopment or conservation. A focus is placed on appropriate uses, character, and scale of future development.

**1. A map and general description of the character area.** The map shows the location of any development nodes within the character area. (See Section 3.5 for a description of the development nodes.) The description provides an overview of the character area today and its general character and attributes, including important community characteristics and/or actions to be taken in each area. These actions can include, but are not limited to, preservation of character area strengths and unique features, enhancement of areas where improvement is needed, and removal of obstacles that prevent the area from achieving its desired vision.

**2. Goals, strategies, and approaches to guide future development and help enhance each area's character and sense of place with the greater County.** Character area goals are paired with a narrative that describes the desired attributes and strategies for each area, under the subtitle of "future character."

**3. List of appropriate zoning classifications.** While most of the listed zoning classifications would be acceptable in a particular character area. In addition several zoning classifications listed are noted as only appropriate within the character area's development nodes. This approach focuses future higher intensity development within community activity centers and encourages preservation of greater amounts of open space and residential character outside of the development nodes.

**4. Performance standards.** Unique performance standards are provided for each character area and development nodes within each character area. The performance standards are accompanied with intensity scales that visually depict the appropriate character and development thresholds within each character area. These scales were defined by the community and revised by the Board of Commissioners in early 2017.

*Character area narratives begin on page 63.*

### COUNTY-WIDE STANDARDS

*Foster Forsyth* identified a need for performance standards that apply on a County-wide scale. Prior to each of the character area narratives, a series of County-wide performance standards are outlined as follows:

- 1) General Standards
- 2) Non-residential Standards
- 3) Residential Standards

These standards apply to all character areas, collectively. In contrast, performance standards provided within each of the character areas, are unique to that area and apply above and beyond the County-wide standards.

*County-wide standards are provided in Section 4.2, on following pages.*



## 4.2 COUNTY-WIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES

### GENERAL

- Create and uphold quality build and site design standards to bolster community identity and pride.
- Promote streetscape amenities for pedestrian use and safety as well as aesthetic appeal.
- Advance pedestrian use and safety through an extensive sidewalk network within and between planned developments.
- Where feasible, maintain scenic quality through site development guidelines including tree canopy protection and lot specific grading techniques to keep existing, mature vegetation and natural topography.
- Support alternatives to mass grading in an effort to preserve native soils and vegetation, steep slopes and to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Continue to follow the county's recreation master plan to accommodate future demand for services and facilities across the county and reflect these periodic updates in the *Comprehensive Plan*.
- Promote multi-use trail networks between park facilities and recreational uses while coordinating network connections to adjacent jurisdictions.
- Explore green building and landscape design and construction practices, utilizing these methods as much as possible to provide for environmentally sustainable facilities.
- Provide for contiguous open space preservation to maximize both recreational and environmental benefits of conserved natural resources.
- New, large developments must have multiple access points onto the road network to provide adequate external connections to the larger neighborhood community.
- Utilize transportation improvements such as traffic calming and increased street interconnections within and between neighborhoods to improve safety and walk-ability
- Develop and implement standards to ensure that outdoor recreation will not adversely impact neighborhoods in terms of light and noise.
- Promote paddle trails for canoes or kayaks, also called blueways, for recreational purposes that will connect to an inter-jurisdictional trail system along Forsyth County's waterways.
- Develop the appropriate site design elements, such as pedestrian street lighting and pedestrian-scaled signage, to advance a sense of neighborhood identity.
- Large surface parking lots are encouraged to utilize green infrastructure techniques to mitigate stormwater effects, such as (but not limited to) pervious pavers, bioswales, and visually pleasing stormwater detention areas.

### NON-RESIDENTIAL

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of development nodes, commercial uses should be limited to "commercial corridors" as designated by the Board of Commissioners. Commercial uses, along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections and/or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Additional standards or requirements may be applied through overlays adopted by the County.
- Commercial uses, when present, shall be located at major intersections and along arterial roadways where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher, more intense development.
- Provide inter-parcel vehicular connections between adjacent land uses and potential developments to protect future roadway capacity so that congestion does not overwhelm the arterial road network.
- Plan and design transportation improvements that correlate traffic capacity with anticipated development intensity.
- Promote alternative modes of transportation through the development of a pedestrian and multi-use trail network to enhance traveler safety and convenience between land uses.
- Focus on adequate traffic flow through transportation planning measures to protect corridor viability.
- Encourage the use of on-site stormwater mitigation for parking areas such as pervious pavements, bioswales and bio-retention areas.
- Facilitate shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.

## NON-RESIDENTIAL (CONTINUED)

- Require an adequate number of bicycle parking spaces within each development.
- Ensure that appropriate buffers are developed between incompatible uses.
- Consider the size, scale and impact of public and semi-public uses as well as commercial services to ensure appropriateness and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods. These uses shall be connected to residential areas through a pedestrian network of sidewalks or multi-use trails.
- Encourage adaptive re-use of existing buildings with historical or contributing character.
- Require the shielding of outdoor storage and display of goods or equipment from public view to maintain aesthetic appeal.
- Ensure the proper shielding of structures or equipment incidental to the primary use of a building or site to preserve visual attractiveness.
- Require that loading areas are located to the rear and sides of buildings and screened from view.
- Ensure that all sides of a parking garage that are visible from public view are architecturally consistent with the buildings it serves.
- Ensure that the screening of structures or equipment, incidental to the primary use of a building or site, are properly screened to preserve visual attractiveness.
- Properly regulate exterior lighting and signage to minimize adverse impacts on adjacent properties and roadways.
- Fencing, if present, shall be screened from view or constructed from a material other than chain link or fencing with sharp projections.
- Require establishments that contain a drive through operation of any type implement adequate queuing space that are adequately screened from adjacent properties.
- Require that off-street parking is partially screened from view through the use of landscape techniques.
- Encourage buildings set in a campus setting to have an internal pedestrian network between buildings as an integrated component of a business, industrial or academic park master plan.

## REGIONAL, COMMUNITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD NODES

- Require shared driveways and inter-parcel connections.
- Transitions in development intensity should be designed as development moves from high intensity non-residential and mixed-use developments to residential areas. Where a gradual transition is unlikely to be achieved, buffering between development types through code requirements will be essential.
- Where feasible new streets and internal streets should follow a gridded pattern of small blocks for a more condensed form of development.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Encourage the clustering of office and retail uses. Also, first floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.
- New Non-Residential development should use high quality building materials such as glass, brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Encourage development types that incorporate a mixture of uses and create walkable developments.
- Physically link new office developments within nodes via pedestrian passageways and sidewalks to proposed and existing commercial developments.



## RESIDENTIAL

- Homes at the entrance to subdivision developments must address and front both the internal subdivision street and the external roadway or provide an additional landscape buffer.
- Residential units must front either a street or qualifying open space.
- Homes that have a rear yard facing external roadway systems must be screened with an adequate landscape buffer and/or berm.
- Encourage new residential development to blend with existing housing through appropriate open space and buffering requirements.
- Support conservation subdivision developments to maximize open space and retain aesthetic quality of the natural environment.
- New residential development must respect the scale and character of adjacent residential neighborhoods, if present, through attention to views, building scale and orientation, proximity to adjacent uses, location of driveways, noise, lighting and landscaping.
- Accommodate a variety of housing styles, sizes, densities and price points to suit diverse housing needs.
- Advocate community and development supported agriculture through the creation of community gardens and farm-based amenities.
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes.
- Housing developments with more than 25 units should have at least two points of vehicular entry and egress.
- Where feasible, maintain scenic quality through site development guidelines including tree canopy protection and lot specific grading techniques to preserve existing, mature vegetation and natural topography.

## REGIONAL, COMMUNITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD NODES

- *Residential developments in nodes must front all adjacent street frontages.*
- *Access to residential garages and parking pads are encouraged from a rear loaded alley.*
- *Higher intensity detached residential developments are encouraged to utilize shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.*
- *Accommodate a mix of housing types and densities to allow a variety of options for residents.*
- *New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.*
- *New residential developments within nodes should be physically linked via pedestrian passageways and sidewalks to proposed and existing commercial developments.*

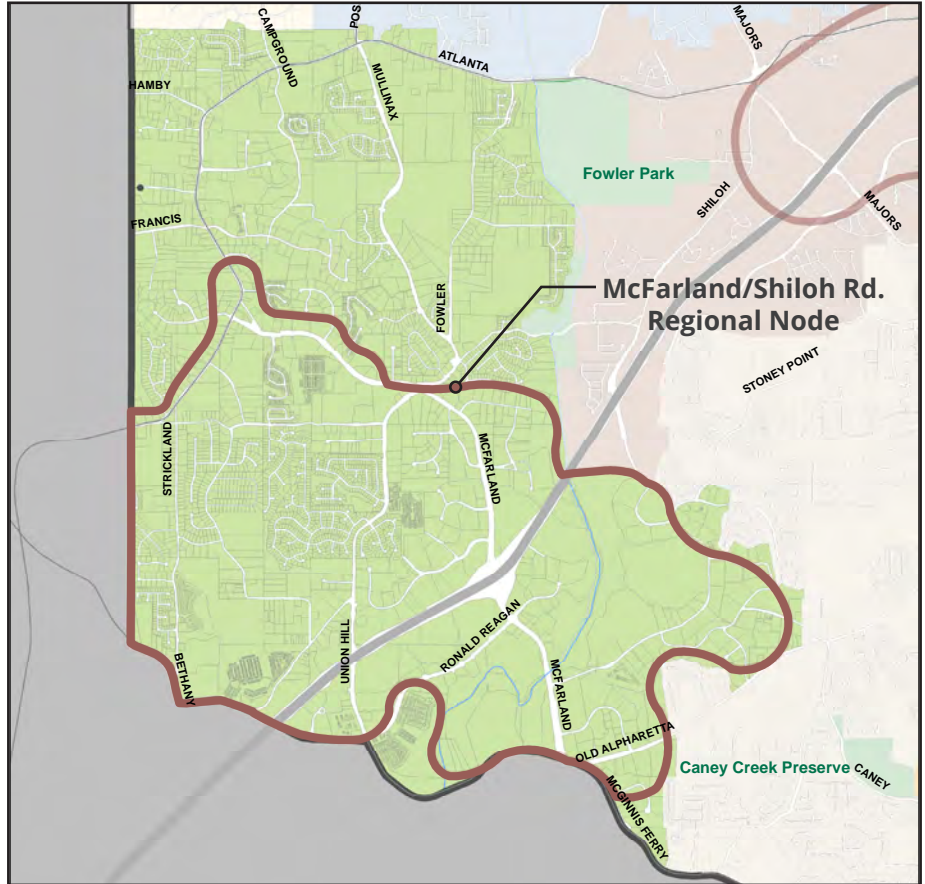
### 4.3 CHARACTER AREA NARRATIVES

# 01

## MCFARLAND

#### LOCATION:

The McFarland character area is located in the southwestern-most corner of Forsyth County. This character area stretches from the County line northward to include Atlanta Highway and a portion of Fowler Park. It follows McFarland Parkway eastward and includes the large industrial parcels along Shiloh Road.

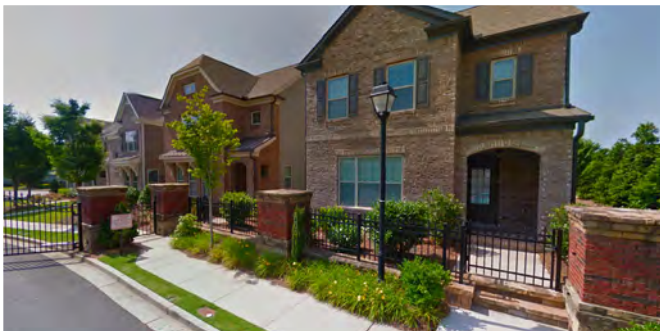


#### CHARACTER TODAY:

The McFarland character area includes a mix of land uses. While the character area is predominately defined by single family detached land uses, the McFarland/Shiloh Regional node is largely industrial. These industrial land uses are paired with commercial development along the major corridors. Large areas of detached single-family residences of various ages lie just beyond.

#### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Leverage GA 400 for business and industry growth, creating a high-quality employment center.
- Balance commercial and business/industry node with appropriate mixed-use development and locally serving commercial establishments.
- Respect and enhance residential areas beyond the node, transition density and development west of Atlanta Highway.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The McFarland Node is appropriate for office and employment centers with higher intensity development along GA 400 and adjacent to major transportation corridors. With these employment centers comes the need for more housing integrated with and connected to job centers to alleviate some of the traffic burden that this character area faces. Residential development should be higher intensity near jobs and industry centers and transition to lower intensity neighborhoods to the north and west outside of the node and within the character area. As new development occurs, every effort should be made to enhance connectivity and integrate connections to local sidewalks and regional trail systems.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		McFarland	
		Ch. Area	Reg. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3	✓	✓
	RES4	✓	
	RES6		
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV	✓	
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP	✓	✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	✓
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		
	MU-R		✓

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors.

Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Corridors that are currently designated as commercial corridors include Highway 9, McFarland Parkway, Union Hill Road, Shiloh Road (partial), McGinnis Ferry Road, Mullinax Road (partial), Post Road, and Ronald Reagan Boulevard.

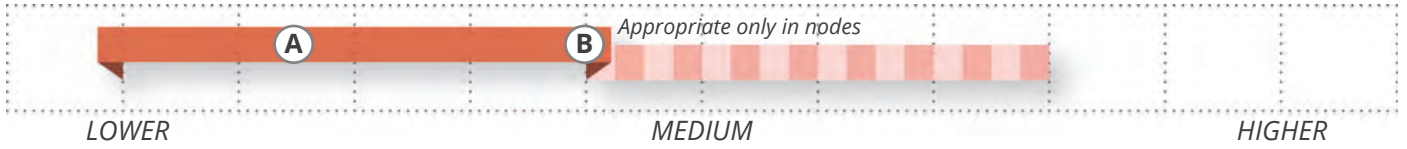
- Shared driveways and inter-parcel connections are required.
- Transitions in development intensity should be designed as development moves from high intensity non-residential and mixed-use developments to residential areas. Where a gradual transition is unlikely to be achieved, buffering between development types through code requirements will be essential.
- Where feasible new streets and internal streets should follow a gridded pattern of small blocks for a more condensed form of development.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.
- Clustering of office and retail uses is encouraged. First floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.
- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.

### McFarland/Shiloh Rd. Regional Node

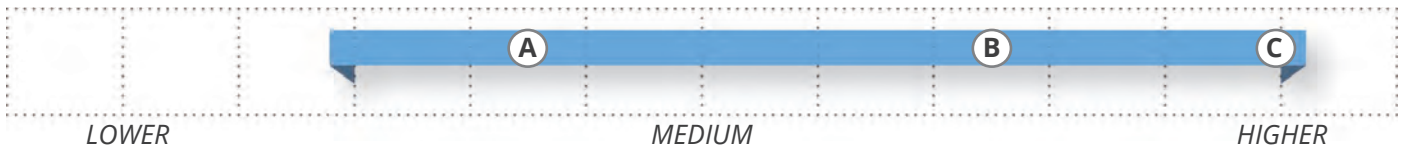
- Architectural character should be of a contemporary aesthetic that is congruent with current high tech development styles.
- Permit up to 6 stories for office structures and 5 stories in mixed-use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting of existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support lodging services and meeting facilities to provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy local amenities.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county's tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

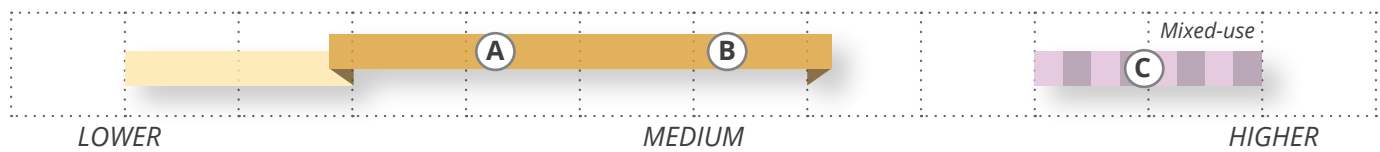
- Residential developments must front all adjacent street frontages and all residential units must front either a street or qualifying open space.
- Access to residential garages and parking pads are encouraged from a rear loaded alley.
- Higher intensity residential developments are encouraged to utilize shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.
- Accommodate a mix of housing types and densities to allow a variety of options for residents.

### McFarland/Shiloh Rd. Regional Node

- Residential units (attached and detached) must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted as part of mixed-used developments with active commercial uses on the ground floor.
- Single-family developments (attached and detached) should work to preserve primary street frontages and corners for a commercial or office component.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential



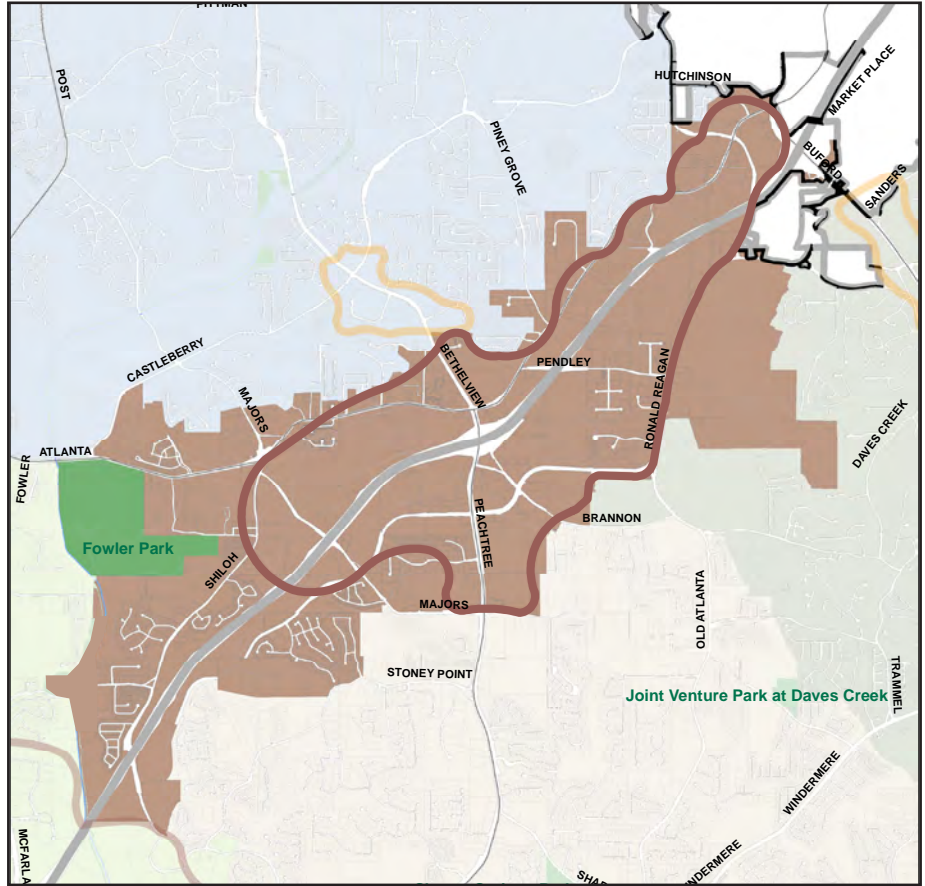


# 02

## SOUTH GA 400

### LOCATION:

The South GA 400 character area runs along both sides of GA 400 from north of McFarland Parkway to the limits of the City of Cumming.



### CHARACTER TODAY:

The South GA 400 character area is mostly comprised of a mixture of industrial and commercial uses as well as some undeveloped land scattered along the corridor. The northern end of this character area includes the Vulcan Quarry. The Collection at Forsyth is located at Highway 141 (Peachtree Parkway) and GA 400, near the center of the character area.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Leverage GA 400 for business and industry growth.
- Create a mixed-use node with employment opportunities at the crossroads of GA 400 and Highway 141.
- Supplement commercial and business/industry nodes with appropriate, residential development that is well integrated with commercial and business/industry uses from a design and transportation perspective.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The South GA 400 character area is envisioned as an area for larger scale, higher intensity business and office uses. This character area also is appropriate for expanded town center developments with a regional draw. New residential units should be integrated within town center developments, but generally play a secondary role.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		South Georgia 400	
		Ch. Area	Reg. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3	✓	
	RES4	✓	
	RES6	✓	
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV	✓	
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB		
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP	✓	✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS	✓	✓
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2		
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		
	MU-R		✓

## NON-RESIDENTIAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES:

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Corridors that

are currently designated as commercial corridors include Highway 9, Union Hill Road, Shiloh Road (partial), Bethelview Road, Ronald Reagan Boulevard, and Peachtree Parkway.

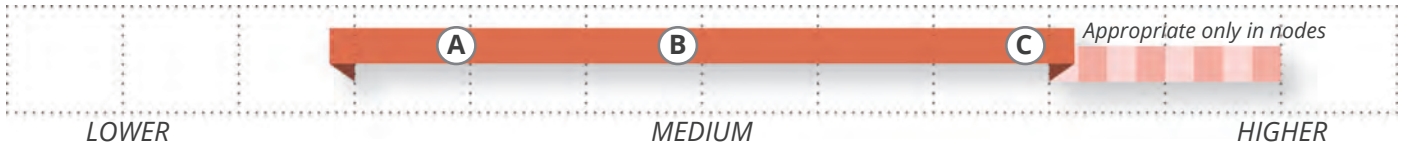
- Shared driveways and inter-parcel connections are required.
- Transitions in development intensity should be designed as development moves from high intensity non-residential and mixed-use developments to residential areas. Where a gradual transition is unlikely to be achieved, buffering between development types through code requirements will be essential.
- Where feasible new streets and internal streets should follow a gridded pattern of small blocks for a more condensed form of development.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.
- Clustering of office and retail uses is encouraged. First floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.
- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities (benches, planters, streetlights, etc) for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.

### South Georgia 400/Highway 141 Regional Node

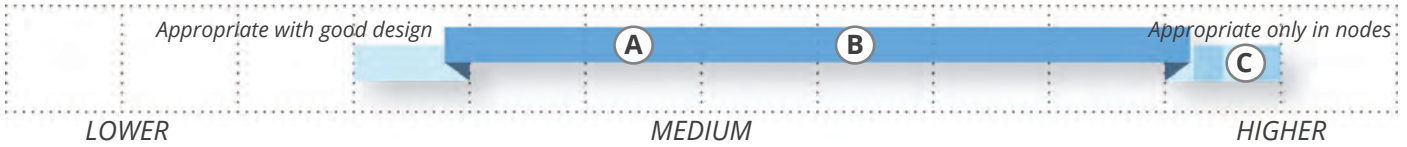
- Architectural character should use traditional building materials in a contemporary style and aesthetic that is compatible with developments currently in the character area.
- Permit up to 4 stories for Office and Mixed-use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support lodging services and meeting facilities to provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy local amenities.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county's tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

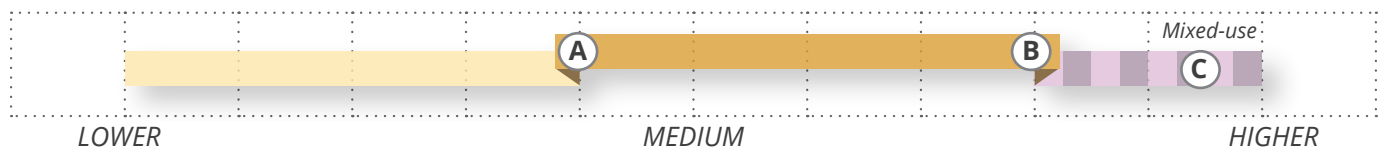
- Residential developments must front all adjacent street frontages and all residential units must front either a street or qualifying open space.
- Access to residential garages and parking pads are encouraged to be from a rear loaded alley.
- Higher intensity detached residential developments are encouraged to utilize shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.
- Accommodate a mix of housing types and densities to allow a variety of options for residents.

### South Georgia 400/Highway 141 Regional Node

- Residential units must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience.
- All ground floor residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New mixed-use development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical buildings. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted as part of mixed-used developments with active commercial uses at street level.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential

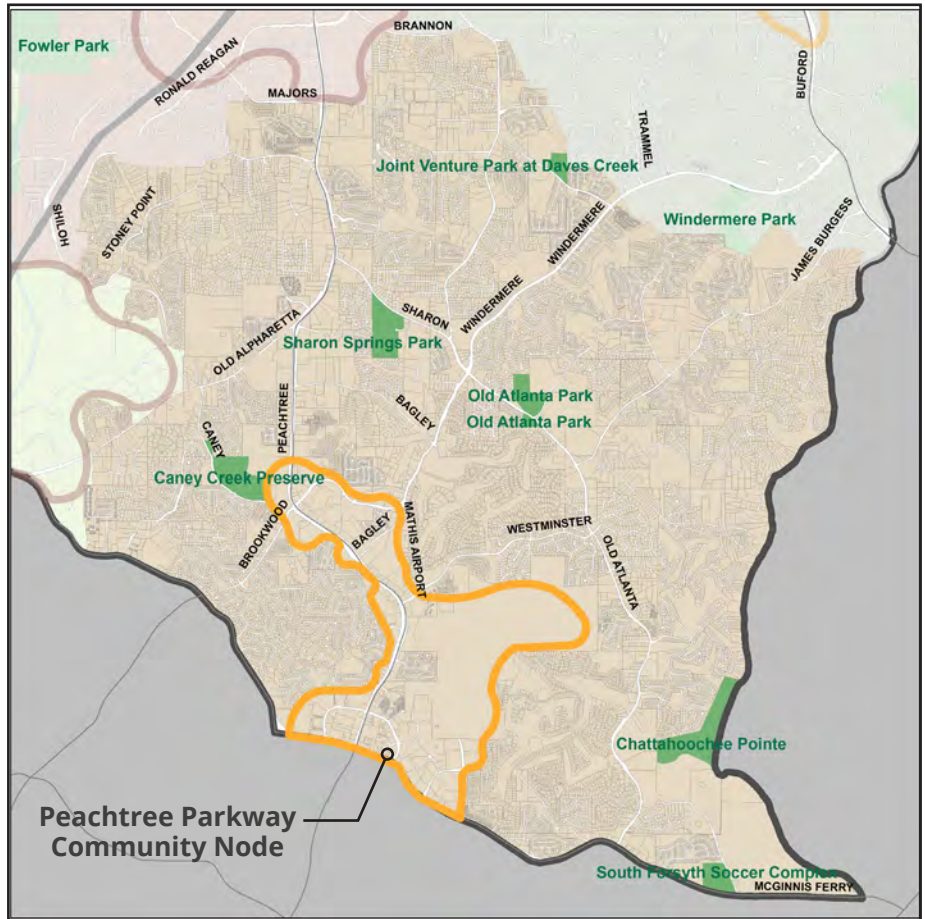


# 03

## BIG CREEK

### LOCATION:

The Big Creek character area covers the southeastern-most corner of Forsyth County, extending northward to Old Atlanta Highway and Joint Venture Park.



### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Big Creek character area is largely comprised of detached single-family neighborhoods. A mixture of commercial uses and intensities can be found along Highway 141.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Infill areas with lower- to medium-intensity residential.
- Create a community town center node along Peachtree Parkway.
- Provide medium-intensity residential development near the community node and major roads, transitioning to lower density single-family uses off of arterial roadways.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Big Creek character area’s future development should be designed in a manner that maintains the suburban character; however, a priority should be placed on establishing a mixed-use, community node near or along Highway 141. Although detached single-family housing is preferred, attached residential products are appropriate in close proximity to commercial and town center nodes. Large lot, single family product should incorporate a higher level of design. Infill residential should be provided at a similar scale and density of the surrounding context. Efforts should be made to enhance connectivity and walkability as part of both private- and public-sector improvements.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Big Creek	
		Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3	✓	
	RES4		
	RES6		
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV	✓	✓
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	
	HC		
Office	BP		✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	
	MINE	✓	
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		✓
	MU-R		

*M2 and MINE are identified in areas where those uses currently exist. Designation of those classifications within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to those categories.*

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

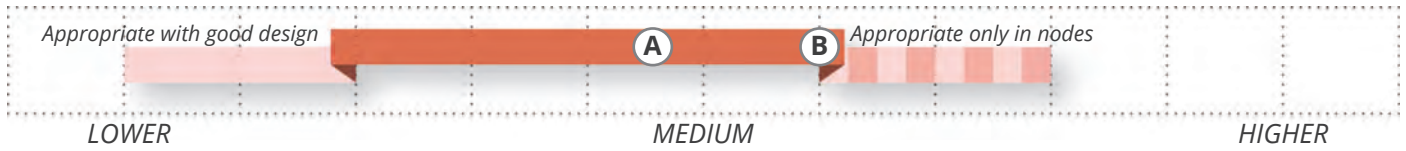
- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Corridors that are currently designated as commercial corridors include, Shiloh Road (partial), McGinnis Ferry Road, and Peachtree Parkway.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.
- Clustering of office and retail uses is encouraged. First floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.

### Peachtree Parkway Community Node

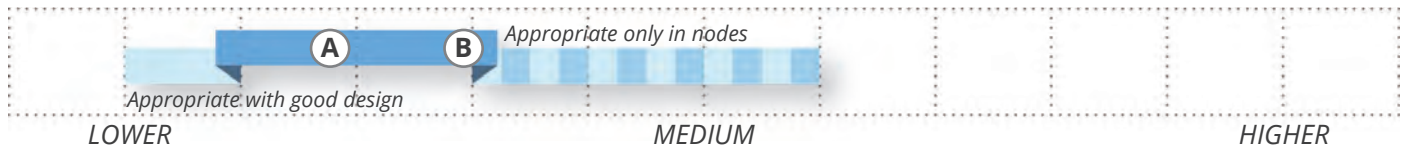
- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.
- Limit parking between buildings and public roadways.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Architectural character should be traditional in design and in material usage. Style and aesthetic should be compatible with developments currently in the character area.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted in mixed-use developments.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New residential development should provide pedestrian access via sidewalks, trails and walkways to nearby commercial uses.
- RES3 shall only be permitted after the Land Development Ordinance, Tree Ordinance, and Design Standards have been updated.

### Peachtree Parkway Community Node

- Residential units must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New mixed-use development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted as part of mixed-used developments with active commercial uses on the ground floor.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential





# 04

## HAW CREEK & DAVES CREEK

### LOCATION:

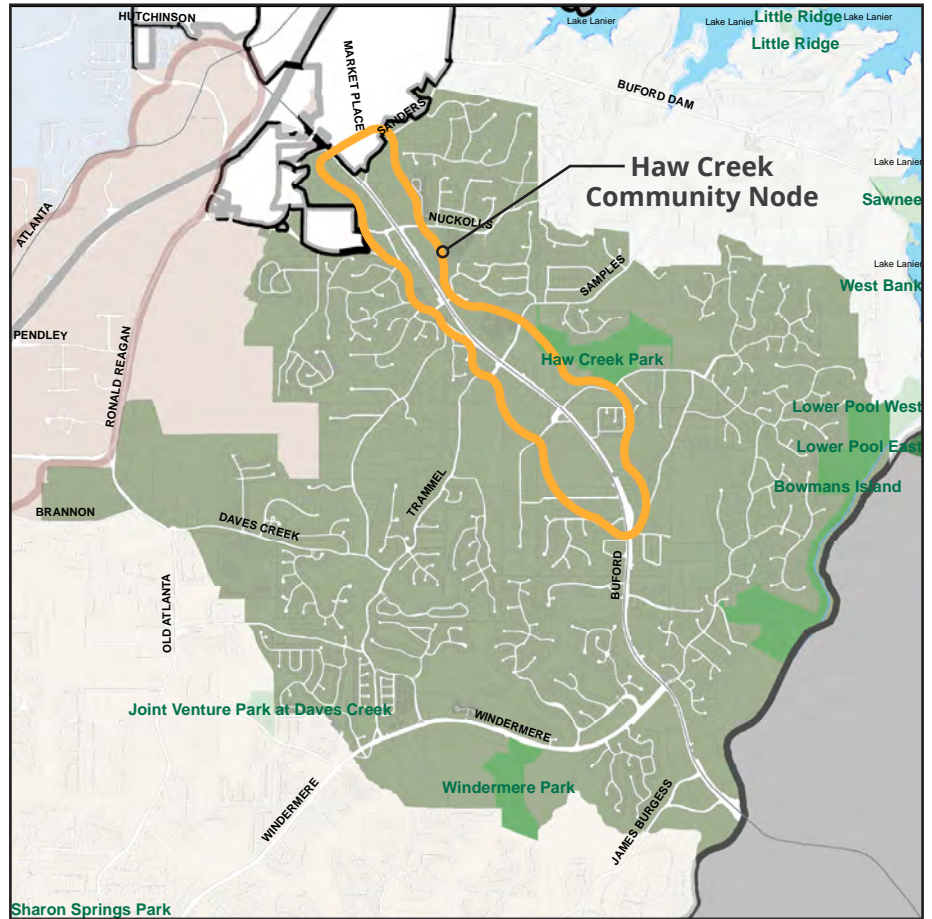
The Haw Creek & Daves Creek character area starts at the eastern border of Forsyth County and extends to the City of Cumming between State Route 20 (SR 20/ Buford Highway) and Buford Dam Road.

### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Haw Creek & Daves Creek character area is almost exclusively detached, single-family housing with some small-scale, low-intensity commercial development near SR 20.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Create a business and industry node on SR 20.
- Provide medium-intensity residential development near the community node and major roads, transitioning to lower density single-family uses off of arterial roadways.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Haw Creek & Daves Creek character area’s future development should establish a clear transition from the suburban character of Big Creek and the more sparse development patterns along Lake Lanier. New development should create a stronger sense of character along SR 20. Off of this major corridor, single-family development should generally be on medium and larger lot sizes; ample open space should be preserved or created where possible.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Haw Creek/Daves Creek	
		Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3	✓	
	RES4		
	RES6		
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV	✓	✓
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	✓
	HC		
Office	BP	✓	✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		✓
	MU-R		

*M2 is identified in areas where that use currently exists. Designation of that classification within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to that category.*

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

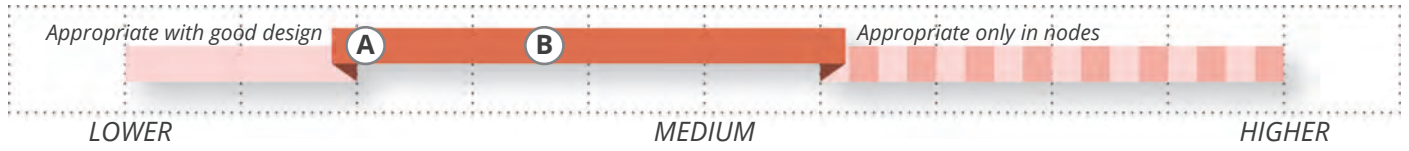
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.
- Clustering of office and retail uses is encouraged. First floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.
- Lodging services and meeting facilities should only be permitted within the Haw Creek Community Node.
- Other regulations and performance standards from the Buford Highway Overlay apply within the boundaries of the overlay district.

### Haw Creek Community Node

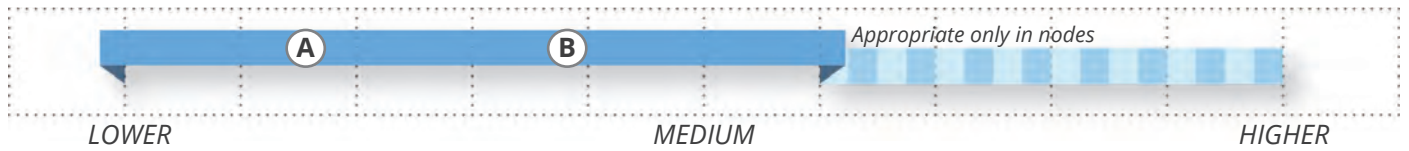
- Permit up to 4 Stories for Non-Residential and Mixed-Use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support lodging services and meeting facilities to provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy local amenities.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county’s tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.
- Limit parking between buildings and public roadways described in the Buford Highway Overlay, and preserve buffers and screening to protect nearby residential neighborhoods.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Residential developments must front all adjacent street frontages and all residential units must front either a street or qualifying open space.
- Access to residential garages and parking pads are encouraged be from a rear loaded alley.
- Higher intensity detached residential developments are encouraged to utilize shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.
- Accommodate a mix of housing types to allow a variety of options for residents.
- Garage access and driveways shall allow space to prevent a parked car from blocking the sidewalk.
- Parking pads shall not be visible from adjacent streets.

### Haw Creek Community Node

- Architectural character should be transitional in design utilizing traditional building materials and contemporary design aesthetics. Style and aesthetic should be compatible with developments currently in the character area.
- Residential units must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New mixed-use development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted as part of mixed-used developments with active commercial uses on the ground floor.
- New mixed-use developments should provide pedestrian access via sidewalks, trails and walkways to nearby commercial uses.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential



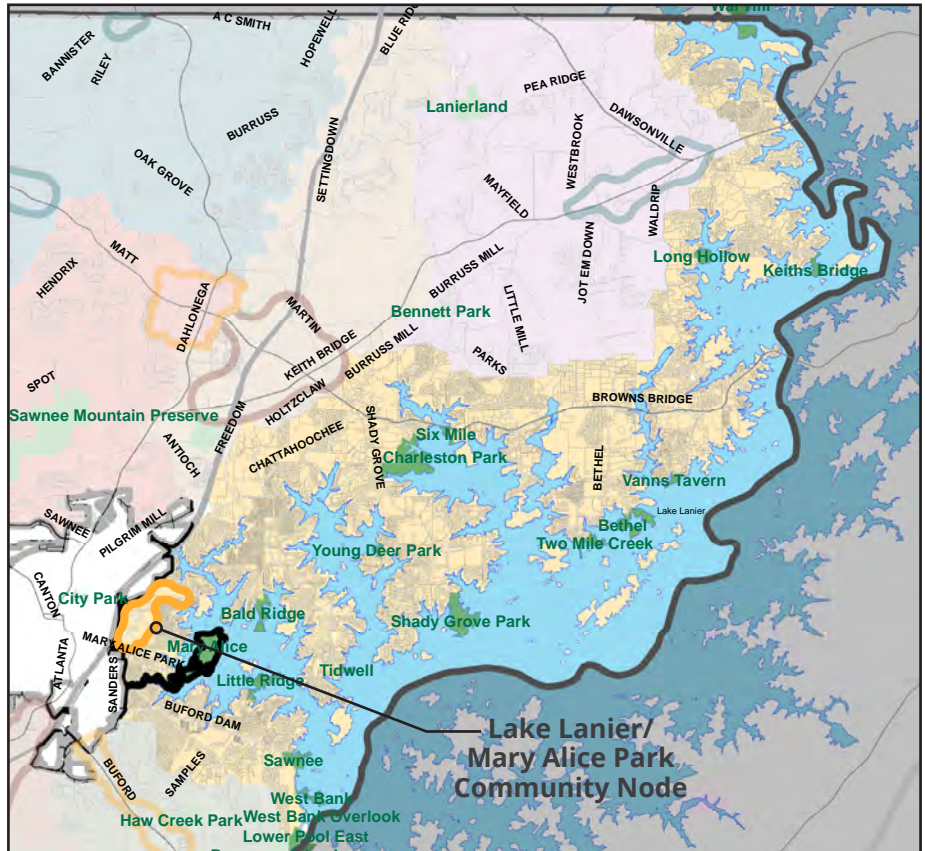
# 05 LANIER

## LOCATION:

The Lanier character area consists of property in proximity to Lake Lanier.

## CHARACTER TODAY:

The Lanier character area is comprised almost exclusively of detached, single-family housing and conservation land protected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Housing here is predominantly in older, established communities along Lake Lanier.



## CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Infill areas and leverage redevelopment opportunities along and near the lake with lower- to medium-intensity residential.
- Create a town center/hospitality destination within the Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node to take better advantage of the lake’s assets.
- Require context-sensitive design that minimizes negative impacts on the lake.
- Increase public access to the lake in the design of new nonresidential and institutional uses.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Lanier character area's existing residential uses vary greatly in age, size, and character. The southern areas along Lake Lanier provide an opportunity for residential infill on medium- to large-sized lots. Although areas in northern Forsyth County near the lake may be redeveloped over the coming decade, there is a need to create a strategy to maintain affordability in areas north of the City of Cumming. Commercial development should be limited except for locally serving retail and restaurants on major corridors near GA 400 and a potential hospitality attraction in the Lake Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Lanier	
		Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3		
	RES4		✓
	RES6		✓
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV		✓
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP		✓
	O&I		✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2		
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		✓
	MU-R		

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

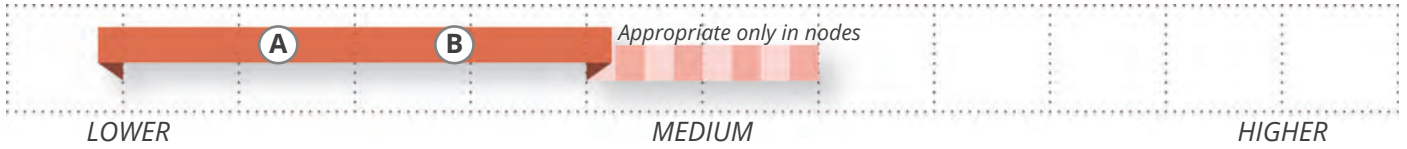
- Non-Residential development outside of the Lake Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node should be lower in scale and intensity and reflect the architectural quality of the lake community.

### Lake Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node

- Permit up to 4 Stories for Non-Residential and Mixed-use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support lodging services and meeting facilities to provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy local amenities.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county's tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.
- Limited parking between buildings and public roadways.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Retain low intensity residential community character.
- Promote larger lots along the lake.

### Lake Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node

- Architectural character should be traditional southern with traditional and contemporary materials. Style and aesthetic should be compatible with higher-end developments currently found in the Lanier character area.
- Permit up to 3 stories for residential development.
- Residential units (attached and detached) must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units should primarily be provided in mixed-used developments with an active differing use on the ground floor.
- Single-family developments (attached and detached) should work to preserve primary street frontages and corners for a commercial or office component.
- New residential development should provide pedestrian access via sidewalks, trails and walkways to nearby commercial uses.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential



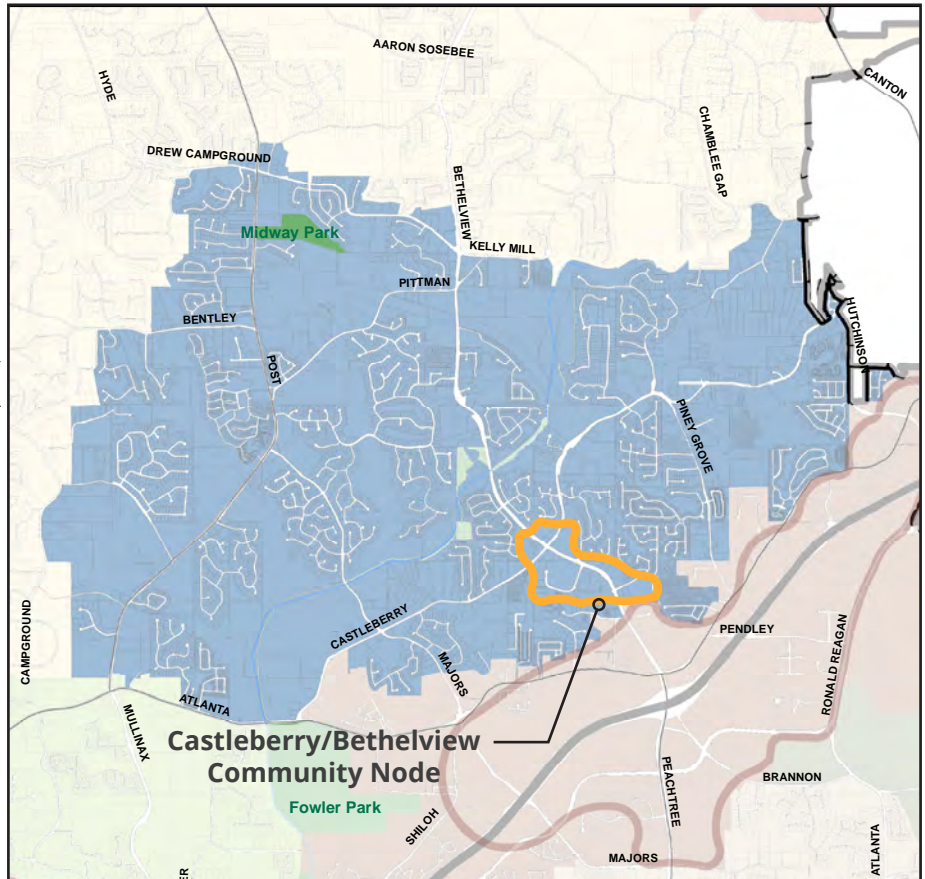


# 06

## VICKERY CREEK

### LOCATION:

The Vickery Creek character area is located west of the City of Cumming. This character area encompasses properties fronting Kelly Mill Road on the northern border to the west beyond Post Road. The character area includes Vickery Village and Midway Park.



### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Vickery Creek character area is mostly comprised of detached, predominantly newer single-family homes with some large agricultural tracts. Many subdivisions in this area have a distinct character reminiscent of equestrian communities. There is also a mixed-use commercial node located at Vickery.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Build upon the village-style character existing within Vickery Creek.
- Provide medium-intensity residential development along major roads, transitioning to lower density single-family uses off of arterial roadways.
- Encourage more commercial services near the intersection of Bethelview and Castleberry.
- Preserve and enhance the area’s architectural, village-style character.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Vickery Creek character area has a distinct feel and appeal that should be preserved and further enhanced through high-quality design; additional design guidelines and standards may be necessary for this character area. Also, commercial development in this area should be located within the node at Castleberry and Bethelview Roads or along major corridors throughout the character area. Future residential development is likely to occur on the northern end of the character area and should embrace many of the same design styles and principles used in the area's higher quality developments around the Polo Fields and Vickery.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Vickery Creek	
		Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	✓
	RES3	✓	✓
	RES4		✓
	RES6		✓
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV		✓
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB		
	HC		✓
Office	BP		✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS	✓	
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2		
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		✓
	MU-R		

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

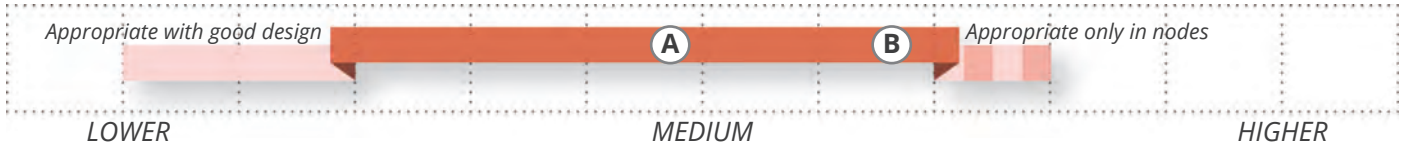
- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Corridors that are currently designated as commercial corridors include Highway 9, Bethelview Road, and Post Road.
- New developments should have a heightened sense of design and material usage.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.

### Castleberry/Bethelview Community Node

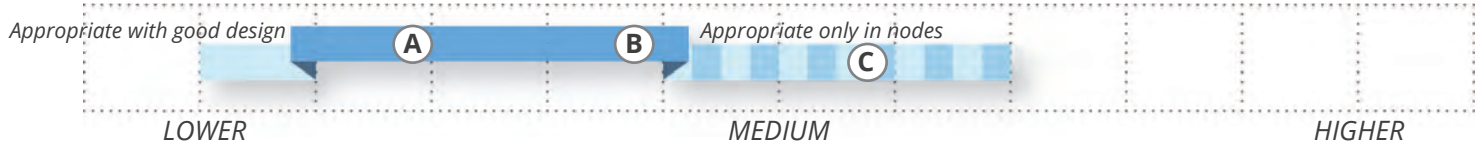
- Permit up to 4 stories for Non-Residential and mixed-use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county's tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space.
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

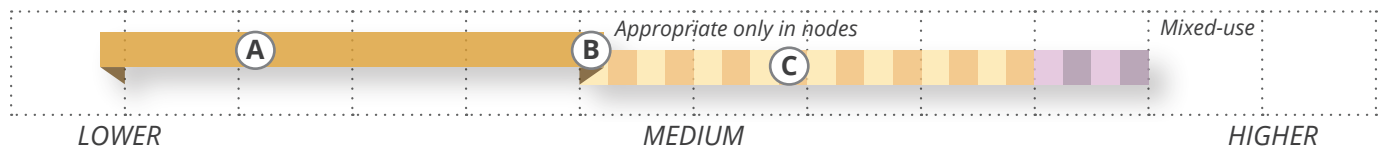
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Retain low intensity residential community character.

### Castleberry/Bethelview Community Node

- Permit up to 3 stories for residential development.
- Residential units (attached and detached) must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units should primarily be provided in mixed-used developments with an active differing use on the ground floor.
- Single-family developments (attached and detached) should work to preserve primary street frontages and corners for a commercial or office component.
- New residential development should provide pedestrian access via sidewalks, trails and walkways to nearby commercial uses.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential



# 07

## CAMPGROUND

### LOCATION:

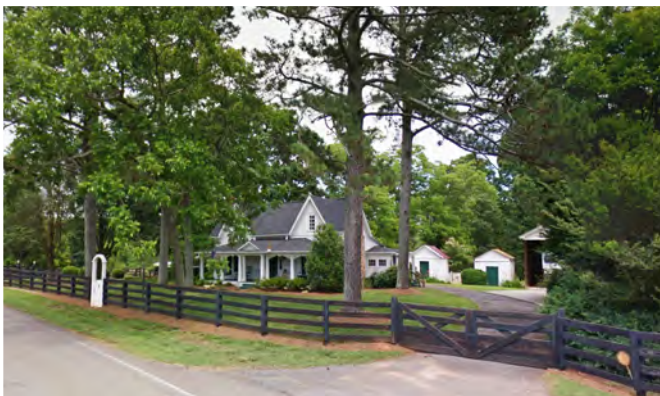
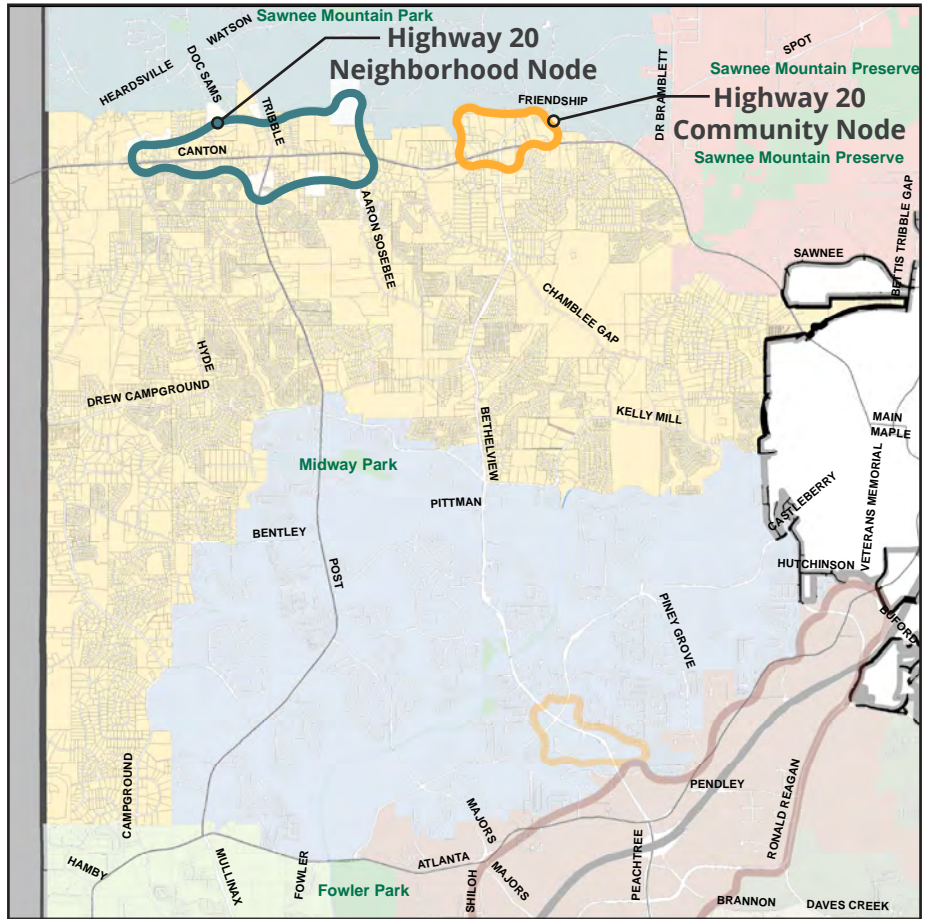
The Campground character area borders the western edge of the County and spans eastward beyond Campground Road and north to SR 20.

### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Campground character area is a mixture of detached, single-family homes and agricultural land. Some commercial uses exist along SR 20.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Preserve the rural character of the area.
- Create a business and industry corridor along SR 20.
- Establish a low-intensity mixed-use node on SR 20.
- Encourage lower to medium-intensity residential development.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

Residential development within Campground should be distinct from smaller lot residential communities in adjacent character areas to the south. Although future residential developments may use medium-sized lots, it should be complementary in scale and style to the area's more rural character—to achieve this goal, strategies to preserve open space should be put into place. Slightly higher intensity development and building scales may be appropriate along SR 20. The Campground character area's future development should create commercial and business nodes along SR 20, forming a center for this community. Commercial uses outside of the nodes along Highway 20 should be limited and restricted to designated corridors. Linear, strip-mall-style development along SR 20 should generally be discouraged, but may be permitted with elevated design and placement criteria.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING

		Ch. Area	Campground	
			Nb. Node	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	✓	
	RES2	✓	✓	✓
	RES3			✓
	RES4			
	RES6			
	MHP			
Commercial	NS		✓	✓
	UV			
	CBD	✓	✓	✓
	HB	✓	✓	✓
	HC	✓	✓	✓
Office	BP			
	O&I		✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓	✓
	OCMS			
Industrial	M1	✓	✓	✓
	M2			
	MINE			
Agricultural	A1	✓	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD			✓
	MU-C			✓
	MU-R			

## CLASSIFICATIONS: NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Corridors that are currently designated as commercial corridors include Bethelview Road and Post Road.
- Non-Residential development outside of the Drew and Highway 20 Community Nodes should be lower in scale and intensity and reflect the architectural quality of the Campground area.

### Highway 20 Neighborhood and Community Nodes

- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Retain low intensity residential community character.
- Support existing and proposed agricultural activities such as equestrian-related commercial usage, farm wineries and landscape nurseries. This includes appropriate accessory uses such as barns, corrals, grazing areas, stables, wine tasting halls, landscape production facilities and similar structures.
- Encourage farms and equestrian-oriented estates to preserve historic sense of place.

### Highway 20 Neighborhood and Community Nodes

- Architectural character should mimic rural Americana in feel and design with some small hints of modern design.
- Multi-family residential units are only permitted in mixed-use developments.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential



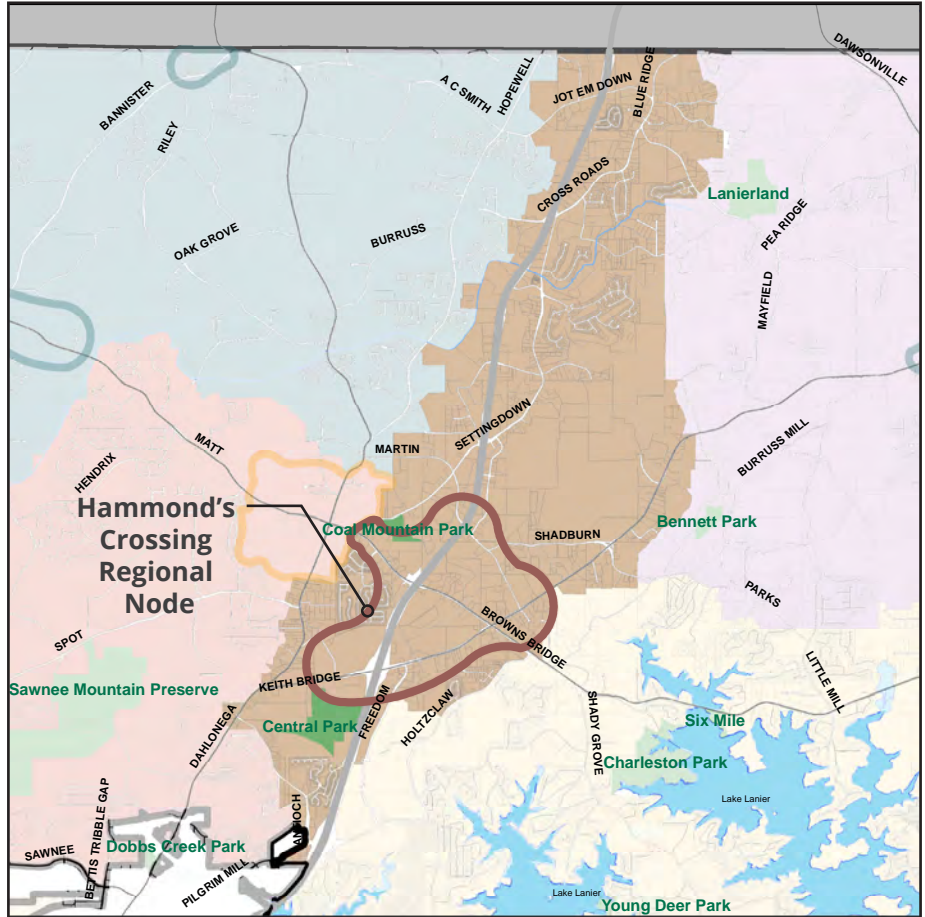


# 08

## NORTH GA 400

### LOCATION:

The North GA 400 character area runs along both sides of GA 400, from the northern edge of the City of Cumming to the northern border of Forsyth County.

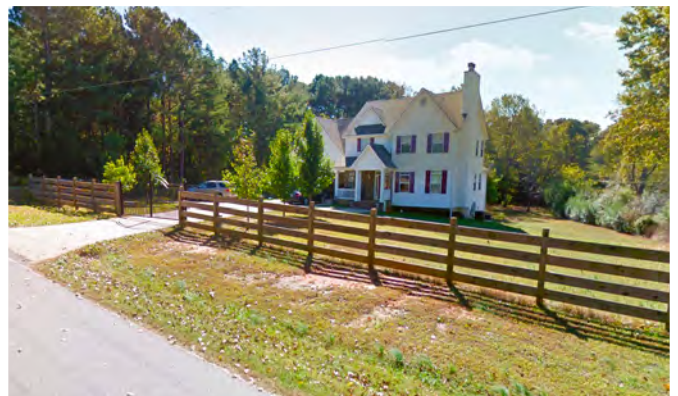


### CHARACTER TODAY:

The North GA 400 character area is mostly comprised of undeveloped and agricultural land, with some large-lot, detached, single-family properties off the main corridors.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Create a mixed-use node with a focus on employment at the crossroads of GA 400 and Highways 369 and 309.
- Leverage GA 400 for business and industry growth.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The North GA 400 character area was identified as an area for medium-scale, medium-intensity business and office uses. This character area also is appropriate for expanded and new town center development with a larger activity center. New business and industry should be clustered at the crossroads of GA 400 and Highways 369 and 306. Higher intensity residential development should be connected to and integrated with the envisioned commercial and employment node. Residential intensities should then decrease as the distance from the commercial and employment node increases.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		North Georgia 400	
		Ch. Area	Reg. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3	✓	✓
	RES4		✓
	RES6		✓
	MHP		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓
	UV	✓	✓
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB		
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP	✓	✓
	O&I	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	✓
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		
	MU-R		✓

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

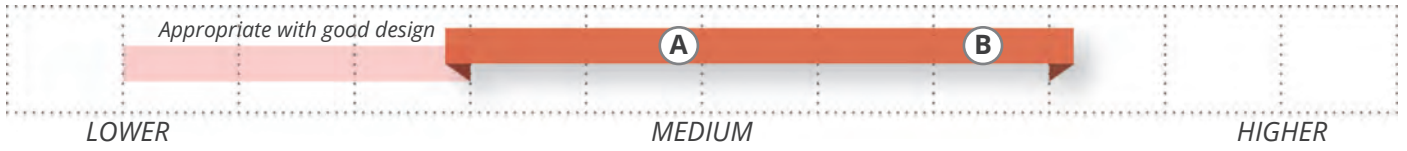
- Shared driveways and inter-parcel connections are required.
- Transitions in development intensity should be designed as development moves from high intensity non-residential and mixed-use developments to residential areas. Where a gradual transition is unlikely to be achieved, buffering between development types through code requirements will be essential.
- Where feasible, new streets and internal streets should follow a gridded pattern of small blocks for a more condensed form of development.
- Amenities such as (but not limited to) seating, public art, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development.
- Buildings should share similar design characteristics to provide repeating patterns, materials and colors to emphasize design integrity.
- Clustering of office and retail uses is encouraged. Also, first floor retail and restaurant uses are desirable for both office and residential developments to promote a mix of uses.
- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Deck parking is to be encouraged over large, surface parking lots.
- Until the Subarea Study and Plan is complete, commercial development should be guided by standards in the Castleberry-Bethelview Crossroads Overlay.

### Hammond's Crossing Regional Node

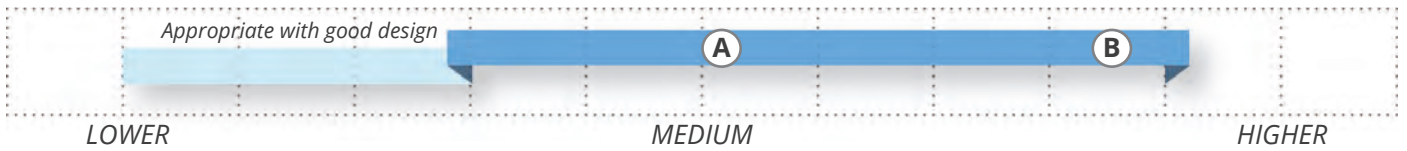
- Permit up to 6 Stories for Non-Residential and Mixed-use structures.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.
- Support lodging services and meeting facilities to provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy local amenities.
- Support economic development activities, particularly office development, in an effort to increase and diversify the county's tax base.
- Encourage civic and cultural uses as well as entertainment establishments that will promote community interaction and public open space.
- Limited parking between buildings and public roadways.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

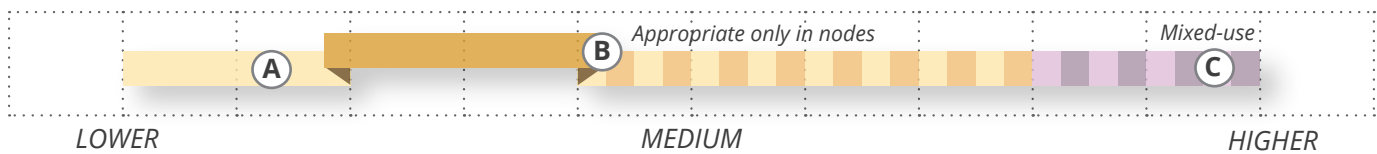
- Residential developments must front all adjacent street frontages and all residential units must front either a street or qualifying open space.
- Access to residential garages and parking pads are encouraged to be from a rear loaded alley.
- Higher intensity detached residential developments are encouraged to utilize shared parking arrangements, where feasible, to reduce impervious surfaces.
- Accommodate a mix of housing types to allow a variety of options for residents.
- Design guidelines should be similar to the Shiloh Road Overlay.

### Hammond's Crossing Regional Node

- Architectural character should use traditional building materials in a contemporary style and aesthetic that is compatible with developments currently in the character area.
- Permit up to 4 stories for residential development.
- Residential units (attached and detached) must address all streets by providing a building frontage towards the street, with shallower setbacks and streetscape amenities for the promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Ground floor residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access to the primary street.
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Multi-family residential units should primarily be provided in mixed-used developments with an active differing use on the ground floor.
- Single-family developments (attached and detached) should work to preserve primary street frontages and corners for a commercial or office component.
- New residential development should provide pedestrian access via sidewalks, trails and walkways to nearby commercial uses.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential

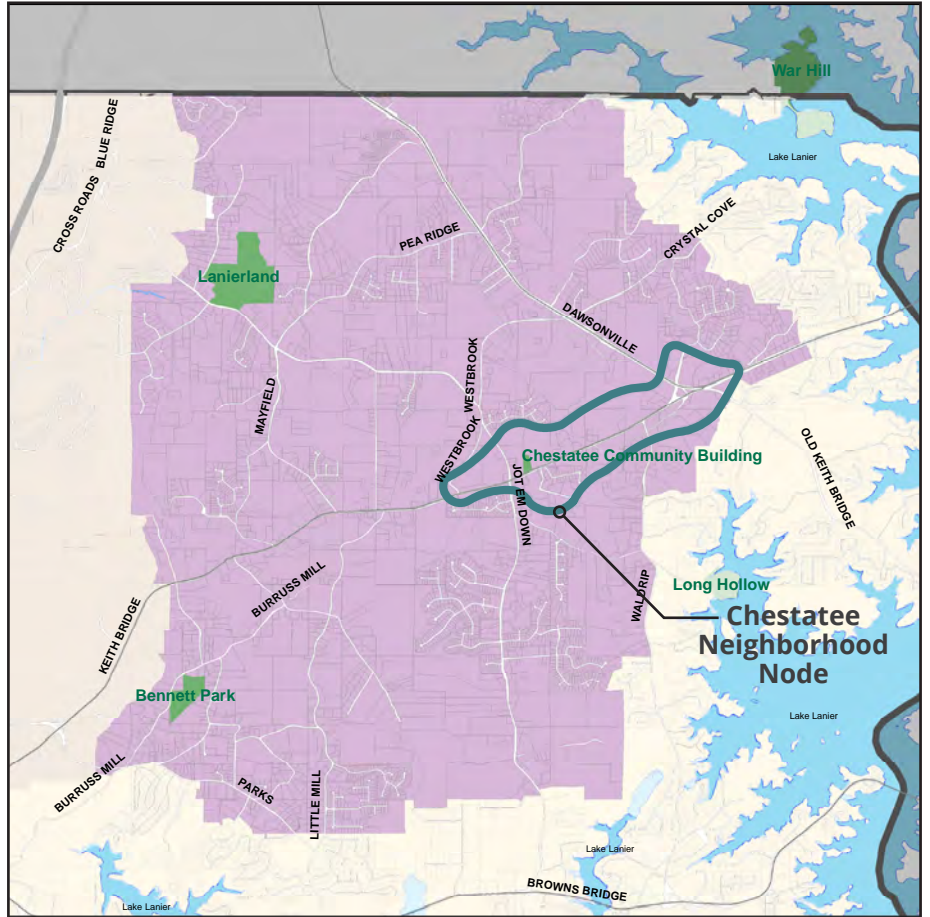


# 09

## CHESTATEE/ JOT EM DOWN

### LOCATION:

The Chestatee/Jot Em Down character area is in the northeastern portion of Forsyth County. This character area encompasses the properties between GA 400 and properties adjacent to the lake.



### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Chestatee/Jot Em Down character area is largely undeveloped with large tracts of agricultural land and dispersed detached, single-family residences.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Preserve the rural character of the area.
- Encourage low- to medium-intensity residential development near the intersection of Highway 306 and Jot Em Down Road.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Chestatee/Jot Em Down character area’s future development should be mostly low-intensity residential with limited commercial and business development along Highway 306. This development should be sensitive to the lack of sewer infrastructure in the northeastern portion of the County and strategies to preserve and protect open space should be put into place to maintain the rural character.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Chestatee/J.E.D	
		Ch. Area	Nb. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	✓
	RES3		✓
	RES4		
	RES6		
	MHP	✓	
Commercial	NS		
	UV		
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	✓
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP		
	O&I		✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		
Industrial	M1		✓
	M2		
	MINE		
Agricultural	A1	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		
	MU-R		

*MHP is identified in areas where that use currently exists. Designation of that classification within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to that category.*

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

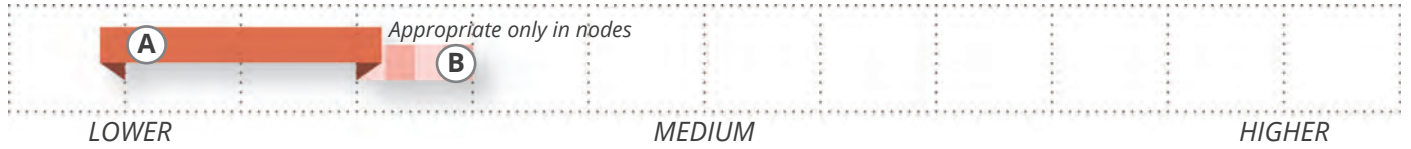
- Non-Residential development outside of the Chestatee Neighborhood Node should be lower in scale and intensity.
- Design guidelines for redevelopment should be considered for the Greenleaf/Crystal Cove/Julian Road area.
- CBD, Office, and Industrial development should be concentrated in the Neighborhood Node, and only permitted outside the node on State Routes 306 or 53, with a concentration in the neighborhood node.

### Chestatee Neighborhood Node

- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

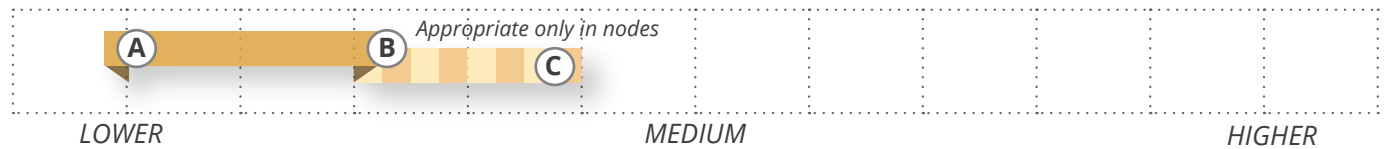
- Retain low intensity residential community character.
- Support existing and proposed agricultural activities such as equestrian-related commercial usage, farm wineries and landscape nurseries. This includes appropriate accessory uses such as barns, corrals, grazing areas, stables, wine tasting halls, landscape production facilities and similar structures.
- Encourage farms and equestrian-oriented estates to preserve historic sense of place.

### Chestatee Neighborhood Node

- Multi-family residential units are only permitted in mixed-use developments.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential





# 10

## ETOWAH

### LOCATION:

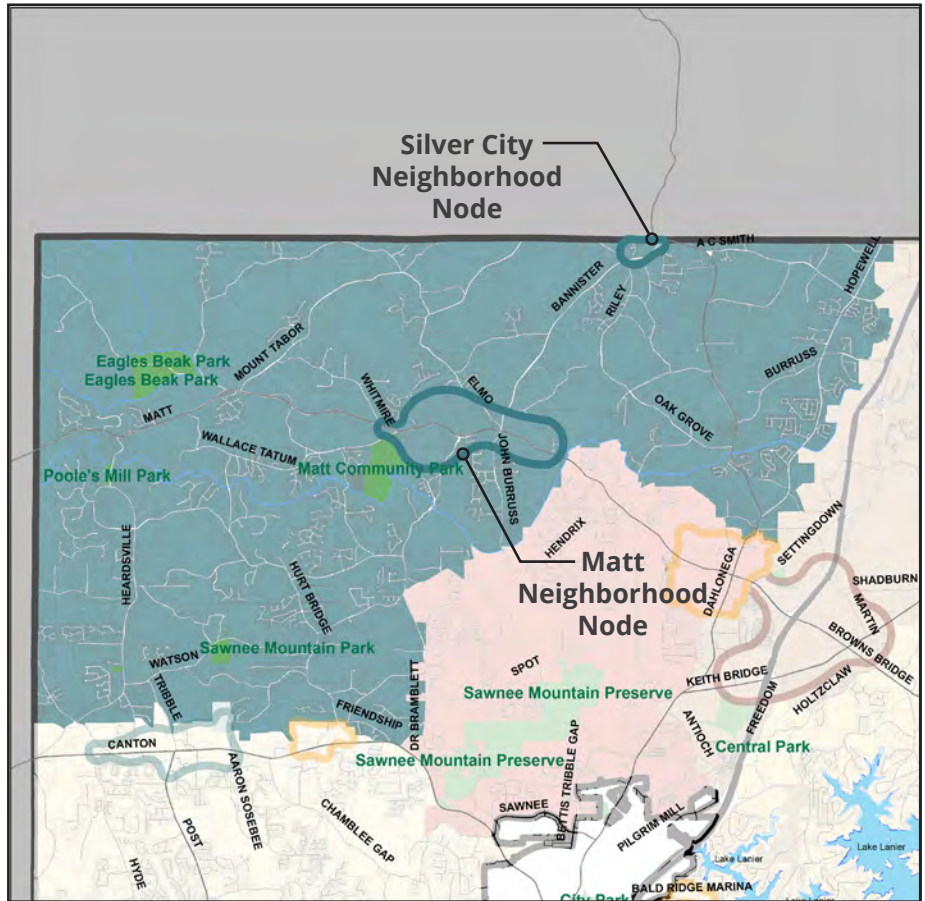
The Etowah character area covers the majority of the northwestern corner of Forsyth County.

### CHARACTER TODAY:

This character area is largely undeveloped or agricultural land with some existing single-family subdivisions. Residential development in this character area today is predominantly detached, single-family, non-subdivision homes on larger lots.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Preserve the rural character of the area.
- Create a business and industry node on Highway 369.
- Encourage low- to medium-intensity residential development.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Etowah character area’s rural qualities should be preserved in the future. While residential growth will occur in this area, steps should be taken to maintain the area’s character and significant open space. A town center and future industry is encouraged near the crossroads of Highway 369 and Bannister Road and Mt. Tabor Road. Medium-lot residential is more appropriate along major transportation corridors, but should be designed with large setbacks and must align with the area’s character. Residential development away from major corridors should be on larger-sized lots and more sparse in order to maintain the area’s character.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Etowah	
		Ch. Area	Nb. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	✓
	RES3		✓
	RES4		
	RES6		
	MHP	✓	
Commercial	NS		✓
	UV		
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	✓
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP		
	O&I		✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	
	MINE	✓	
Agricultural	A1	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		
	MU-R		

*MHP, M2, and MINE are identified in areas where those uses currently exist. Designation of those classifications within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to those categories. In the Etowah character area M1 is also identified as a current use within the character area, but not recommended for additional rezonings.*

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes or within the Coal Mountain Overlay. Outside of these areas, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses.
- Non-Residential development outside of the Matt and Silver City Community Nodes should be lower in scale and intensity.

### Matt and Silver City Neighborhood Nodes

- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

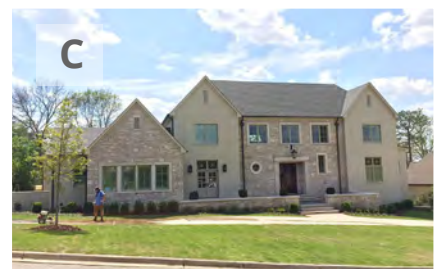
- Retain low intensity residential community character.
- Support existing and proposed agricultural activities such as equestrian-related commercial usage, farm wineries and landscape nurseries. This includes appropriate accessory uses such as barns, corrals, grazing areas, stables, wine tasting halls, landscape production facilities and similar structures.
- Encourage farms and equestrian-oriented estates to preserve historic sense of place.

### Matt and Silver City Neighborhood Nodes

- Multi-family residential units are only permitted in mixed-use developments.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential

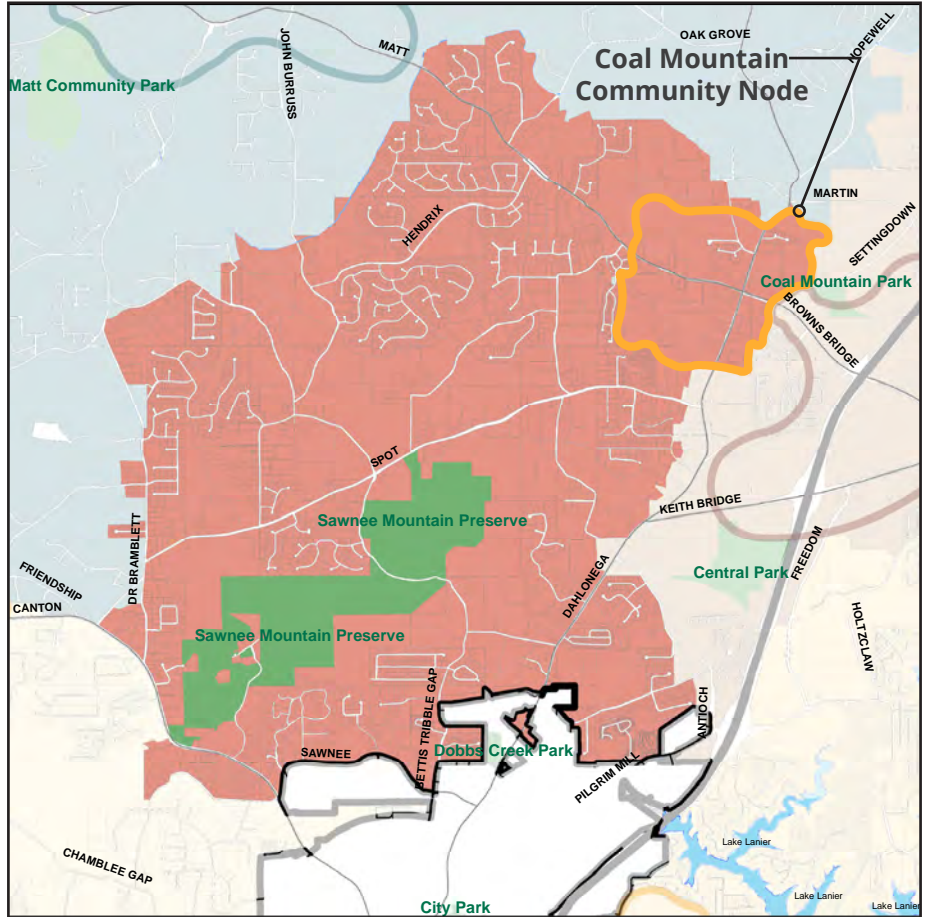


# 11

## SAWNEE MOUNTAIN

### LOCATION:

The Sawnee Mountain character area includes Sawnee Mountain and the area westward to Dr. Bramblett Road and eastward to Dahlonega Highway.



### CHARACTER TODAY:

The Sawnee Mountain character area is mostly park and agricultural land. The developed land in this character area includes mostly detached, single-family properties on large-sized lots.

### CHARACTER AREA GOALS:

- Preserve the natural features around Sawnee Mountain.
- Create a community node along Highway 369.
- Encourage low-intensity residential development outside of the node north of Sawnee Mountain.



## FUTURE CHARACTER:

The Sawnee Mountain character area is an important natural and cultural node for Forsyth County. The area should be preserved while encouraging commercial development in a village-scale town center. Residential developments without a commercial component should be less intense and use high-quality design and preservation strategies.

## APPROPRIATE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

		Sawnee Mountain	
		Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓	
	RES2	✓	
	RES3		✓
	RES4		
	RES6		
	MHP		
Commercial	NS		
	UV		
	CBD	✓	✓
	HB	✓	
	HC	✓	✓
Office	BP		
	O&I		✓
	OR	✓	✓
	OCMS		
Industrial	M1	✓	✓
	M2	✓	
	MINE	✓	
Agricultural	A1	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓
	MU-C		✓
	MU-R		

*M2 and MINE are identified in areas where those uses currently exist. Designation of those classifications within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to those categories.*

## NON-RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

- Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes or within the Coal Mountain Overlay. Outside of these areas, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses.
- Non-Residential development outside of the Coal Mountain Community Node should be lower in scale and intensity and reflect the architectural quality of the Sawnee Mountain area.

### Coal Mountain Community Node

- Architectural design should mimic contemporary mountain village character with the usage of high quality building materials.
- Buildings should be oriented close to the roadway with streetscape amenities for promotion of a high quality, live-play-work experience that has a defined sense of place.
- Encourage retrofitting existing commercial and retail strip development where appropriate in areas that are likely to undergo renovation or potential demolition in the long-range planning period.

# NON-RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

## Commercial and Town Center



## Office and Industry



## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES:

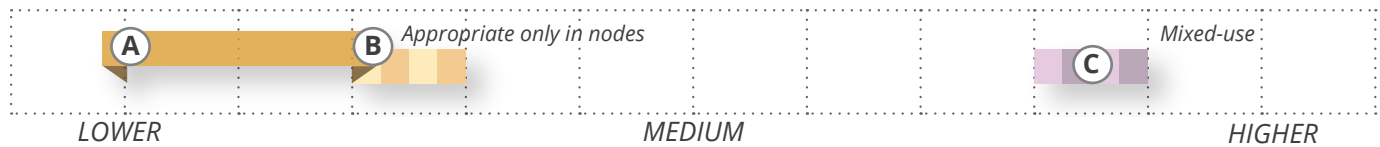
- New residential development should use a variety of techniques to avoid the monotonous appearance of identical homes. In addition, building materials shall be of high quality such as brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.
- Retain low intensity residential community character.
- Support existing and proposed agricultural activities such as equestrian-related commercial usage, farm wineries and landscape nurseries. This includes appropriate accessory uses such as barns, corrals, grazing areas, stables, wine tasting halls, landscape production facilities and similar structures.

### Coal Mountain Community Node

- Multi-family residential units are only permitted in mixed-use developments.
- All ground floor residential units and detached or attached single-family residential units must have a stoop or porch with direct sidewalk access and visible frontage to the primary street.

## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY SCALES AND VISUAL CHARACTER

### Residential





## 4.4 SUMMARY ZONING MATRIX

### OVERVIEW

A summary table of appropriate zoning districts by character area and development nodes is provided on the following pages. This is the same content provided for within each character area narrative. The summary table is intended to ease day-to-day use of the *Comprehensive Plan* in rezoning decisions.

### ZONING MATRIX METHODOLOGY

During the Design Workshops community members provided feedback on multiple exercises regarding the development intensity they felt was appropriate for each of the 11 character areas. That data was directly utilized to create an initial pass at character area intensities. These intensities were cross referenced with existing zoning classifications and with the communities vision to develop the zoning matrix. Development nodes were seen as the center for each character area. Zoning Classifications were crafted for these nodes to help foster appropriate future development within them. Recommendations for additional residential and mixed-use zoning classifications were presented to the Foster Forsyth Steering Committee. Industrial zoning (M1, M2, MINE), Agricultural zoning (A1, Ag RES) and Manufactured Home Park Zoning (MHP) were reviewed and placed in districts where they are permitted today.

### RECOMMENDED MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Two Mixed-Use categories (MU-R: Mixed-Use Regional node and MU-C: Mixed-Use Community node) are recommended as a part of the *Foster Forsyth Comprehensive Plan Update*. These mixed-use categories are intended to encourage both vertical mixed-use and horizontal mixed-use developments within Regional and Community nodes. The details, requirements, and allowable densities will be determined by the County as the MU districts are further defined and developed. Generally Regional nodes should accommodate the most intense uses and Community nodes should be more modest in scale.

### MASTER PLANNED DISTRICT (MPD)

Foster Forsyth generally aligns the MPD land use category to development nodes in most character areas. The Planning Team recommends MPD be modified to a residential-only category that includes a mix of lot sizes and product types.

### COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Future commercial development should primarily be located within identified development nodes. Outside of these nodes, commercial uses should be limited to designated commercial corridors. Commercial uses along commercial corridors should be located at or adjacent to major intersections or adjacent to other commercial uses and where infrastructure is in place to accommodate higher intensity uses. Additional standards or requirements may be applied through overlays. Corridors that are currently designated as commercial corridors include Highway 9, McFarland Parkway, Union Hill Road, Shiloh Road (partial), McGinnis Ferry Road, Mullinax Road (partial), Bethelview Road, Post Road, Ronald Reagan Boulevard, and Peachtree Parkway.

### MHP, M2, MINE

In the zoning classification tables within each character area MHP, M2, and MINE are identified in areas where those uses currently exist. Designation of those classifications within the table is not a recommendation for additional rezonings to those categories.

### RES3 AND RES4

The Planning Team recommends enhancing the architectural design and site design standards for both RES3 and RES4 zoning classifications. Tree preservation strategies and limits to mass grading should also be reinforced as part of the increased design standards. The County should update the RES3 and RES4 classifications or incorporate these standards prior to new development approvals.



Figure 4.1: Summary Zoning Matrix

		McFarland		South Georgia 400		Big Creek		Haw Creek/Dave's Creek	
		Ch. Area	Reg. Node	Ch. Area	Reg. Node	Ch. Area	Co. Node	Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓		✓		✓		✓	
	RES2	✓		✓		✓		✓	
	RES3	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
	RES4	✓		✓					
	RES6			✓					
	MHP								
Commercial	NS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	UV	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	CBD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	HB	✓				✓		✓	✓
	HC	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Office	BP	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	O&I	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓	✓	✓				
Industrial	M1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	M2	✓	✓			✓		✓	
	MINE					✓			
Agricultural	A1	✓		✓		✓		✓	
	AgRES	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓		✓		✓		✓
	MU-C						✓		✓
	MU-R		✓		✓				

ZONING CATEGORIES				
Residential	Res1, Single Family	Office	BP, Business Park	
	Res2, Single Family		O&I, Office and Institutional District	
	Res3, Single Family		OR, Office Residential District	
	Res4, Single Family		OCMS, Office Commercial Multiple Story District	
	Res6, Multi-Family		M1, Restricted Industrial District	
	MHP, Manufactured Home Park		M2, Heavy Industrial District	
Commercial	NS, Neighborhood Shopping District	Industrial	MINE, Mining Operations District	
	UV, Urban Village District		Agricultural	A1, Agricultural District
	CBD, Commercial Business District		AgRES, Agricultural Residential District	
	HB, Highway Business District	Mixed-use	MPD, Master Planned District	
	HC, Heavy Commercial District		MU-C Mixed-use Commercial Node	
			MU-R Mixed-use Regional Node	

NODE CATEGORIES

- Regional Node
- Community Node
- Neighborhood Node

		Lanier		Vickery Creek		Campground		
		Ch. Area	Co. Node	Ch. Area	Co. Node	Ch. Area	Nb. Node	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓		✓		✓	✓	
	RES2	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	RES3			✓	✓			✓
	RES4		✓		✓			
	RES6		✓		✓			
	MHP							
Commercial	NS	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	UV		✓		✓			
	CBD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	HB	✓				✓	✓	✓
	HC	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Office	BP		✓		✓			
	O&I		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	OR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓	✓				
Industrial	M1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	M2							
	MINE							
Agricultural	A1	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓		✓			✓
	MU-C		✓		✓			✓
	MU-R							

ZONING CATEGORIES				
Residential	Res1, Single Family	Office	BP, Business Park	
	Res2, Single Family		O&I, Office and Institutional District	
	Res3, Single Family		OR, Office Residential District	
	Res4, Single Family		OCMS, Office Commercial Multiple Story District	
	Res6, Multi-Family		M1, Restricted Industrial District	
	MHP, Manufactured Home Park		M2, Heavy Industrial District	
Commercial	NS, Neighborhood Shopping District	Industrial	MINE, Mining Operations District	
	UV, Urban Village District		Agricultural	A1, Agricultural District
	CBD, Commercial Business District		AgRES, Agricultural Residential District	
	HB, Highway Business District	Mixed-use	MPD, Master Planned District	
	HC, Heavy Commercial District		MU-C Mixed-use Commercial Node	
			MU-R Mixed-use Regional Node	

**NODE CATEGORIES**

**Regional Node**
 **Community Node**
 **Neighborhood Node**



		North Georgia 400		Chestatee/J.E.D		Etowah		Sawnee Mountain	
		Ch. Area	Reg. Node	Ch. Area	Nb. Node	Ch. Area	Nb. Node	Ch. Area	Co. Node
Residential	RES1	✓		✓		✓		✓	
	RES2	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	RES3	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
	RES4		✓						
	RES6		✓						
	MHP			✓			✓		
Commercial	NS	✓	✓				✓		
	UV	✓	✓						
	CBD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	HB			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Office	BP	✓	✓						
	O&I	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
	OR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	OCMS		✓						
Industrial	M1	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	M2	✓	✓			✓		✓	
	MINE					✓		✓	
Agricultural	A1	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	AgRES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mixed-use	MPD		✓		✓		✓		✓
	MU-C								✓
	MU-R		✓						

ZONING CATEGORIES				
Residential	Res1, Single Family	Office	BP, Business Park	
	Res2, Single Family		O&I, Office and Institutional District	
	Res3, Single Family		OR, Office Residential District	
	Res4, Single Family		OCMS, Office Commercial Multiple Story District	
	Res6, Multi-Family		M1, Restricted Industrial District	
	MHP, Manufactured Home Park		M2, Heavy Industrial District	
Commercial	NS, Neighborhood Shopping District	Industrial	MINE, Mining Operations District	
	UV, Urban Village District		Agricultural	A1, Agricultural District
	CBD, Commercial Business District		AgRES, Agricultural Residential District	
	HB, Highway Business District	Mixed-use	MPD, Master Planned District	
	HC, Heavy Commercial District		MU-C Mixed-use Commercial Node	
			MU-R Mixed-use Regional Node	

**NODE CATEGORIES**

**Regional Node**
 **Community Node**
 **Neighborhood Node**

## **5. IMPLEMENTING OUR VISION**

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## 5.1 OVERVIEW

Implementing the vision for Forsyth County's future growth and development will require a multi-faceted effort. This chapter identifies the strategies for advancing the community vision and goals, as articulated in Chapters 3 and 4. The implementation strategies are organized by key elements of the plan, starting with land use and housing, then addressing economic development and transportation, and ending with quality of life and water and sewer compatibility.

The strategy is discussed in separate sections by plan element. Each section begins with an introductory page, providing a high-level overview of the element's role in the County's future and identification of top priorities that should be addressed in the short term. Each of these subsections ends with an overall narrative of the strategy for moving that aspect of the *Comprehensive Plan* forward. Although some longer-term strategies are identified in the narrative, the focus of the implementation strategy is the first five years of the plan, 2017-2021.

Each of the priorities identified in this section are addressed in the 2017-2021 Community Work Program and policies identified in Chapter 6.





### CONSISTENT LAND USE IDEAS HEARD

- Foster a greater sense of place within the County.
- Preserve more tree cover and green space.
- Enhance quality of future development .
- Increase connectivity between residential and commercial areas.
- Facilitate more employment centers.
- Guide definable town/activity centers.
- Define a residential growth strategy.

## 5.2 LAND USE STRATEGY

Through the Foster Forsyth process there was a consistent set of ideas clearly articulated by the community for helping Forsyth County grow in a more desirable manner. After more dialogue with the community, these ideas were carefully crafted into a set of land use priorities that would become the driver for the County’s future land use strategy.

### PRIORITIES

#### LU1. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE SENSE OF PLACE

Forsyth County is a large area that is comprised of multiple character areas, each having unique attributes and opportunities that can enhance its unique character while furthering community goals. Each character area has a special role in maintaining and enhancing sense of place within Forsyth County. Intensive land uses are appropriate in places along major roadways that have sufficient supporting infrastructure, while less intensive land uses are appropriate in locations that have less access to major roadways and water and sewer infrastructure. The land use strategies identified key locations where some amount of denser development can be encouraged to create community activity centers. Town centers should act as hubs for their surrounding areas, often featuring a mix of commercial, office, and sometimes residential space in more clustered, walkable formats with multi-story buildings. Frequently town centers are considered the “downtown” areas of a community with a mixture of activities occurring within and around them. Town centers are generally envisioned around GA 400 and are expected to serve both local and regional needs. The scale of each town center will vary depending on its location and intended service population. Design standards are also recommended for some character areas to enhance the unique design character of some portions of the County.

#### LU2. ENACT CHANGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO STRENGTHEN SITE-SENSITIVE DESIGN

There are two key aspects to this priority: 1) preserve more open space and tree cover, and 2) discourage mass grading and clear-cutting on larger development sites. Creating a plan to preserve more open space and natural features will help to protect the character



of Forsyth County that is valued by the community. Mass grading and clear-cutting of trees significantly change the character of Forsyth County and have other impacts to the natural environment, such as stormwater runoff. By discouraging this practice on development sites of larger than 10 acres or 20 homes, new development will be more attractive and have less of an impact on the natural environment. It should be noted that, depending on the size of the lot, it may not be feasible to achieve current stormwater control regulations without allowing some grading on both small and larger sites.

### **LU3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND JOB GROWTH**

The growth of business and industry will help keep workers employed in the County and not traveling to other counties for work. Please see Economic Development Priorities for more details related to this land use goal.

### **LU4. CREATE A DETAILED STRATEGY FOR RESIDENTIAL GROWTH**

There is no “one size fits all” residential growth strategy for the County. Rather, different types of housing are appropriate in different parts of the County based on existing and envisioned densities and the presence of infrastructure that can support growth. The distinction between densities and housing types in different areas is communicated within each of the County’s character area narratives, specifically via the list of appropriate zoning districts. Please see Housing Priorities for more explanation related to this land use goal.

## **PLACE-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES**

While these priorities will help the entire County grow and prosper, certain elements are more important in distinct areas of the County. To address the differences between Forsyth County’s communities, the County was divided into 11 separate character areas (see Chapter 4 for details). These character areas are based on both existing conditions and community aspirations for the area. With the creation of these character areas, the community expressed a desire to change the popular notion of dividing the County along Highway 20 between north and south Forsyth to a more location-specific, community-based strategy. Each character area includes place-specific strategies to address the land use priorities and manage growth and development over the next 10 to 20 years.

Each character area not only has its own land use priorities, but also has an identified location for a development node. These nodes generally create a core that allows for slightly more development intensity to encourage compact, less sprawling development. To ensure that development is the appropriate scale and character for each area, each node was grouped into one of three categories that limit their scale and intensity: regional, community, and neighborhood, as introduced in Section 3.4, Community Character Map. These place-specific strategies encourage a better sense of place across the County and focus particular development types into specific nodes and locations while preserving more rural landscapes. Details are provided in Chapter 4 regarding the desired character, development intensities, and appropriate zoning classifications. Design guidelines and strategies, also provided in Chapter 4, offer additional direction regarding the appropriateness and quality of future development types.

## **COUNTY ORDINANCE CHANGES**

For these strategies to be effective, the County must first address some major elements of its Unified Development Code and Tree Ordinance. Modifications to the County ordinances can go a long way toward shaping the look and feel of future development in Forsyth County and mitigating some of the character issues that community members associate with smaller lot residential development.

1. The first recommendation is to re-craft the Tree Ordinance to preserve tree coverage. The community explicitly stated the importance of fostering the preservation of large stands of established trees. These standards should address the removal of trees, placement of new trees, any options for replanting needed by new developments, and maintenance of established and new trees.
2. Within the Unified Development Code, it is recommended that the County reduce mass grading of residential developments larger than 10 acres or 20 homes. Although significant grading is sometimes necessary on properties to accommodate stormwater best practices, the community feels that the large degree of mass grading that has occurred with recent development has negatively impacted the character of Forsyth County.



3. Several zoning districts should also be updated with design standards to foster higher quality development. The predominant existing character of Forsyth County includes lower density developments at two units per acre or less. Single-family housing developments that are denser than two units per acre require additional design standards to ensure a higher quality product. The most direct way to address this need is to create additional design standards for RES3 and RES4 zoning districts. This approach would ensure that higher density, single-family developments are built with a strong focus on walkability and quality design.
4. There is a need for the County to rework how its current Master Planned District (MPD) zoning classification works. By creating two new zoning classifications for traditional mixed-use developments of differing densities, the County can adapt the MPD zoning district to one that encourages a mixture of housing types without the requirement of an additional commercial component.
5. As new standards are added to the zoning review process, there is an opportunity to revisit the administration of the zoning ordinance, specifically as it relates to rezonings and conditional use permits. These processes have become cumbersome over time and are due for an update to improve ease of administration.

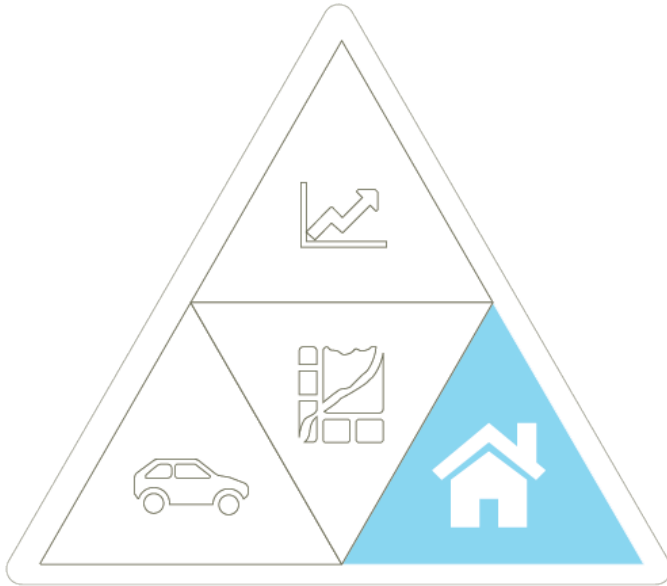
## A PIVOT TO THE FUTURE: HOW SMALL CHANGES WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

With this land use strategy, County planners, officials, and developers should utilize the land use plan and character areas to achieve the following:

- Cluster higher intensity development within a series of development nodes at a variety of scales (Regional, Community, and Neighborhood)
- Facilitate the development of nodes of commercial and employment facilities along major roadways
- Allow higher intensity residential developments within and in close proximity to Regional and Community nodes where they can be connected by pedestrian and bicycle paths and other alternate modes of transportation and along major roadways, creating a convenient live, work, and play environment
- Transition to lower intensity residential development outside of the nodes and off of major roadways
- Increase the preservation of open spaces and preservation of environmental features in lower intensity areas, such as Vickery Creek, Campground, Etowah, Sawnee Mountain, Chestatee/Jot Em Down, Lanier, and Haw Creek & Daves Creek.

While the aforementioned changes will guide Forsyth County on the right path to achieving the community's vision, additional design standards or overlays will be necessary for certain areas of the County. The County should consider developing design standards within some character areas. For example, the South Georgia 400 and North Georgia 400 character areas could benefit from additional standards to accompany increased intensity of clustered development over the next five to ten years. The Vickery Creek and Lanier character areas would also be appropriate for additional architectural standards to preserve the high quality of design and construction in the area. Specific recommendations are provided in Section 6.

The combination of these strategies is intended to provide an avenue for more controlled growth over the next 10 to 20 years, with a focus on steering the right uses and intensities to the right locations over the first 5 to 10 years of life of this plan.



## 5.3 HOUSING STRATEGY: A COMMUNITY FOR ALL AGES

Forsyth County is a housing-centric community with long-standing roots as a rural residential community. However, it has experienced a quick evolution over recent years into a choice bedroom community for metro Atlanta's workers and families. While the community's vision includes creating a more balanced mix of residential and commercial uses, housing will continue to play an integral role in shaping Forsyth County's character, people, and outcomes. The strategy for the future facilitates housing development that is compatible with the County's natural environment; is accommodating to families, workers, and retirees; and whose construction is soundly tied to infrastructure and services.

### HOUSING PRIORITIES

#### H1. UPDATE THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE

The existing Unified Development Code has enabled development to occur rapidly and in a manner that many community members do not support. There is a need to better align the Unified Development Code with the community's vision, including the establishment and enforcement of high standards for new housing developments, limitations on clear cutting trees, improvements to the sidewalk and bicycle network (addressed primarily through the County's Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways 2025 Plan), and ensuring a greater variety of housing types. There is also a need to update residential zoning districts, reduce the number of variances, and increase County staff capacity to effectively implement changes to the Code.

#### H2. FACILITATE MULTI-GENERATIONAL HOUSING

The size and price of most of the County's existing housing stock accommodates affluent family households, with considerably fewer options for younger or older households with different needs. Currently there is a lack of workforce housing options, which in turn contributes to the high percentage of workers that commute to Forsyth County from elsewhere. The *Comprehensive Plan* is an opportunity to encourage a broader range of housing options that can accommodate multiple generations, from young, single adults to retirees who wish to age in place within the County.



### H3. ENSURE THAT NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS PAY ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

The rapid pace of growth experienced by Forsyth County has generally not been matched by the infrastructure required to support this larger population. As a result, impacts of growth have largely been born by the County rather than by the developer and new residents. The current impact of residential development in Forsyth County needs to be understood in greater detail.

### HOUSING AND LAND USE

Housing is a cornerstone of the future land use plan described in Chapters 3 and 4. The Community Character Map accommodates varying housing priorities by identifying appropriate locations for different residential zoning districts, and also identifying when and where additional design criteria could facilitate housing compatibility with surrounding character. A part of this “right use in the right location” is the identification of changes needed to the residential zoning code. The land use strategy places higher density residential uses within Regional and Community development nodes and also identifies appropriate single-family zoning districts (detached dwellings) for different character areas.

### PRODUCTS IN THE PIPELINE

Forsyth County continues to experience development interest for a variety of housing products. There are several properties that are either currently or have relatively recently undergone the approval process for rezoning to Master Planned District (MPD) or RES6. Both zoning districts allow for apartments, although the MPD district includes, as a requirement for approval, inclusion of a commercial component. These districts are primarily located along major roads and largely within close proximity of GA 400. The *Comprehensive Plan's* role is to identify the right locations for these higher density residential products; appropriate areas identified by the Community Character Map are Regional and Community Nodes. The County's leadership should utilize the Community Character Map and associated policy narrative to help ensure such rezoning approvals occur in the appropriate locations in the future to ensure consistency with the community vision. Additionally, as the County moves forward in developing subarea plans (as recommended in

Chapter 6), it should include market analyses that identify current supply and projected demand for housing, and incorporate those findings in more detailed plan recommendations. This would help address the concerns of some community members about the number of multi-family units that have been approved, particularly in the southern portion of the County.

### BALANCING HOUSING WITH OTHER NEEDS

Housing is not an isolated element of Forsyth County's future. The type of housing developed in the community influences who lives in the County. Through the visioning process, the majority of community members recognized the need to accommodate housing needs across generations: housing that accommodates youth to young professionals, to young families, to retirees. Although there is a general preference for detached single-family homes over multi-family homes, some in the community recognize the need to provide for a greater variety of housing types in strategic locations. Regional and Community development nodes on the Community Character Map generally identify where higher density housing can be best accommodated in the County. Throughout the visioning process, Vickery was repeatedly identified as a prototype development that achieves higher density products within an appropriate context. While this type of development embodies the variety of housing products appropriate for Forsyth County's future, the development's high home prices do not reflect the range of price points necessary to accommodate the County's diverse housing needs.

The community also recognizes that a balanced future must include more commercial development to offset the cost of services that residential units generate. These needs include schools, parks and recreation, infrastructure, and other County-provided services. Currently 70 percent of Forsyth County's tax revenue is derived from residential properties, which is a high amount compared to surrounding communities. When a County relies too heavily on residential taxes, the risks include over-dependence on home prices, which do not always appreciate, and the need to raise property taxes to maintain quality of services, with homeowners bearing the cost.

To support both residential and commercial growth, the community feels strongly that Forsyth County must have the infrastructure and services in place. At this point in time, there is limited interest in introducing a high-density housing product. The land use recommendations include two new mixed-use districts that accommodate higher residential density. In the long term, higher density residential zoning district(s) may be appropriate for nodes, but the community is not ready for them now. This should be a long-term consideration.

### HOUSING POLICY FOR THE FUTURE

As Forsyth County continues to experience rapid population growth, a set of strategies to ensure a high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive future development pattern is essential. To better evaluate the County’s potential housing policy and product gaps, a comparative analysis of housing policies was conducted, using counties with similar contexts and experiencing similar development pressures to benchmark the range of issues and potential strategies. Counties evaluated included Loudoun County, VA; Rutherford County, TN; Osceola County, FL; and Berkeley County, SC. Counties were selected using the criteria defined in the box to the right, and their comprehensive plans and zoning codes were reviewed to determine the mechanisms they have implemented to prevent sprawl, preserve rural character, and ensure future growth occurs in appropriate locations.

### CONSISTENT GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Each of the counties evaluated uses a consistent set of housing policy strategies to limit sprawl:

- Cluster higher intensity development around cities and at designated nodes
- Establish a clear distinction between urban, suburban, and rural zones
- Offer a range of zoning categories allowing from anywhere from 1 dwelling unit (du)/20 acres to 25 du/1 acre, including:
  - At least one zoning district with a maximum density of 1 du/5 acres
  - At least one zoning district with a maximum density of 10 du/acre

### COMPARISON COUNTY SELECTION CRITERIA

- Amongst the *100 Fastest Growing U.S. Counties with 10,000 or More Population between April 1, 2010 and July 1, 2015*, according to the U.S. Census Bureau
- Populations greater than 200,000 people in 2015
- Located in the Southeast
- Historically rural counties adjacent to major cities
- Desire to preserve their rural character while accommodating growth
- Utilize comprehensive plans and zoning policies to direct future growth

- Allow higher densities and smaller lot sizes for developments using a clustered design with preserved open space
- Provide multiple future land use and zoning categories that allow single-family attached and multifamily housing

### FINDINGS

One finding is that what is typically considered to be medium density in comparison communities, is considered high density in Forsyth County. Although the community stated a desire for lively, mixed-use town center areas, there is little appetite at this point in time to make a notable shift in levels of residential density, which is likely to limit achievement of vibrant nodes of activity. A principal rule of real estate is that commercial follows achievement of a certain number of “rooftops” or housing. Without a more ambitious housing policy to support these nodes, it is likely that town center development will be slowed. Public investments in specific nodes, such as open space or public facilities, could however, help overcome these challenges. Nearby cities of Suwanee and Duluth have been successful at creating vibrant town centers by first investing in public facilities and public space, which has resulted in vibrant nodes of activity and corresponding residential and non-residential development.



## STRATEGIC STEPS FORWARD

The most important next steps for housing are adjusting the County's zoning and development regulations to ensure that housing is built in a manner that minimizes impacts on the environment and ensures high quality design. Most of these actions are addressed through the land use strategy in Section 5.1.

Although there is a contingent of community members concerned about providing housing at appropriate price points for the County's different workers—including teachers, nurses, public safety personnel, and young professionals— as well as the older, limited-income population, there is a strong belief that the County should allow the market to guide housing. As such, the market will be the primary determinant to facilitating housing at a variety of price points.

Through changes to the zoning ordinance, the County can help facilitate the construction of housing at varying price points in development nodes. These nodes will provide for a variety of housing types and are able to offer a lower price point due to more efficient use of land. The County's impact fee program should recognize the different amount of services required for developments in these areas by having an impact fee that truly reflects the lower service costs of compact development. This builds upon a strong sentiment by community members heard throughout the planning process that new housing should reflect its actual cost to city services, schools, roads, and other infrastructure. A recommendation of this plan is to assess (in 2019), the effectiveness of new impact fee structure on housing developments and efficacy at assigning accurate costs of infrastructure to different housing development types. New design and performance standards being recommended as a part of this plan, based on community vision, may, however, further increase the cost of development and have a counter effect on varying housing price points.

The County should also consider providing greater support and resources to the community's nonprofit groups that regularly address housing needs of disadvantaged groups and others in need of housing-related support services. The County currently provides limited support to these groups.

Unlike several other metropolitan Atlanta counties, Forsyth County does not have a consolidated plan, as overseen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, that provides for programs to help address the needs of disadvantaged population and address affordable housing and related community development needs. At this point in time, there is limited community support for Forsyth County taking a more proactive role in providing for affordable housing through policies, grants, or programs. As land values and development pressure grow in the future, short and long-term consequences of limited housing may include that Forsyth has difficulty attracting businesses that rely on young professionals and that the community's base workforce cannot live here, a trend that is already being experienced, as noted by some major employers interviewed at the beginning of the planning process. A big discussion point during visioning was the great quality of life and how the community should be accessible to everyone. Without some intervention from the County, this may not be achievable.

Because the availability of moderate income housing has important implications for attracting jobs and meeting the housing needs of the County's workforce and multiple generations, it is recommended that a robust housing study be undertaken in the near term to 1) develop a more comprehensive understanding of housing needs as they tie to other long-term goals, such as economic growth, quality of life, and congestion mitigation; 2) identify actions and possible solutions that can be taken to address them; and 3) build community consensus on appropriate steps forward.

The housing study should consider the appropriateness of the following potential activities, in addition to possible other solutions, to advance priorities identified in the *Comprehensive Plan* and other needs identified in the study:

- Ordinance to address sub-par housing conditions,
- Ordinance incentives to facilitate affordable housing development, and
- Identification of character areas and/or development nodes appropriate for senior and workforce housing.



## 5.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: ENSURING FUTURE SUCCESS

The goal of economic development is to grow the Forsyth County economy by attracting and retaining businesses, creating jobs that match the skillsets of residents, and ensuring that retail shopping and services match the needs of residents and workers. Economic development also relates to the attraction of visitors from outside the County who spend money in shops, restaurants, and hotels.

Ultimately, economic development helps to ensure that the County can continue to provide the high-quality infrastructure, services, and open space that makes Forsyth County such a great place to live. Successful economic development promotes the fiscal sustainability of the County by attracting outside investment that curbs the reliance on residential property taxes as the largest source of County revenue.

### PRIORITIES

#### ED1. DECREASE THE COUNTY'S DEPENDENCE ON RESIDENTIAL TAXES BY ATTRACTING MORE BUSINESSES

As a bedroom community without a significant employment base, Forsyth County relies on residential property taxes for the bulk of County revenue. Increasing employment, and therefore the amount of commercial property within the County, could help to offset the burden on homeowners while creating opportunities for residents to work closer to home. Forsyth County already has a robust and active Chamber of Commerce, but the County's economic development efforts should be more formally established and communicated to the public to ensure the proper level of attention and accountability. Fostering the County's existing and emerging business ecosystems—such as technology companies in the south part of the County and medical offices near Northside Hospital-Forsyth—can help to focus development in areas that are poised to leverage existing infrastructure and other assets.



## **ED2. INCREASE THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY.**

Forsyth County's rapid population growth has not been accompanied by commensurate growth in cultural, entertainment, and dining options that serve the local community and attract visitor spending. The hotel occupancy tax already funds tourism marketing programs administered by the Chamber of Commerce, and the County should work more directly with the Chamber to increase and enhance opportunities for visitors to enjoy Forsyth County. At the same time, the County should pursue opportunities to support and encourage more locally-owned or unique shopping and dining opportunities.

## **ED3. ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NODES OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

Most of the retail offerings in the County are clustered along GA 400. Because of high traffic volumes, most residents would prefer to avoid these areas during more congested times of the day. By allowing for the creation of small, commercial development nodes closer to neighborhoods and away from GA 400, Forsyth County residents will have more opportunities to shop for necessities and interact with friends and neighbors close to home and reduce the number of trips on the highway.



Above: Crowd gathers at the Duluth Festival Center for the Gwinnett Center International Film Festival (Source: Love at First Sight Film)

### **BENCHMARK COMMUNITY: DOWNTOWN DULUTH**

Downtown Duluth is a nearby example of this, with festivals, 5k races, food trucks and concerts promoted and often funded by the City's economic development department.

## **WHY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS**

The comprehensive planning process uncovered a number of opportunities for Forsyth County to obtain its long-term goals through a greater focus on economic development. As of 2014, 70 percent of the Forsyth County gross tax income consisted of residential property. This is well above neighboring counties and has a number of important ramifications. First, it means that the costs of providing critical services such as schools, infrastructure, and public safety services, are funded almost wholly by the County's homeowners. As those costs increase, the burden on residents will increase as well, particularly if Forsyth continues to develop almost exclusively low-density residential products. A more balanced tax system with a greater percentage of commercial and industrial property, with some higher density residential will help to decrease this reliance on homeowners. In addition, this high percentage of residential property is a sign that most residents must leave the County for work. Jobs outside the County mean more time spent in the car, more money spent on gas and car maintenance, and fewer options for those who wish to work close to home. Although Forsyth County's suburban location will likely always generate a large number of trips to job centers further south, efforts to keep more jobs in the County will have significant economic and quality of life benefits.

Residents also highlighted that there are not enough arts and entertainment opportunities in the County. Schools, churches, athletic fields, and shopping centers are the most common places to interact with friends and neighbors, but many residents lament that concerts, special events, festivals and the arts usually require a trip on GA 400 to north Fulton County or even Atlanta. Opportunities to enjoy these activities should be available in the County. Most of the existing shopping in Forsyth County is concentrated along GA 400 in the Cumming area or around The Collection. With regional, big box, and neighborhood shopping all located in the same general areas, these areas lack character, but have no shortage of congestion. Additional town centers of varying densities and dispersed throughout the County could provide opportunities to shop, recreate, and socialize closer to home. Economic development can help to advance these types of environments and support the local merchants and restaurateurs that make places special.



## PARTNERSHIPS

There is an important connection between economic development and the other *Comprehensive Plan* elements. For example, transportation facilitates movement through the County that connects businesses with their customers and employees. Housing policy impacts the type of businesses that may be attracted to Forsyth County based on affordability relative to wages. Land use regulations help to ensure that great locations are available for the types of businesses that the County wishes to attract. In addition, fiscal challenges often emerge in jurisdictions that fail to account for the cost of sprawl through low impact fees and insufficient infrastructure in place to accommodate rezonings. For these reasons, many jurisdictions in metropolitan Atlanta and elsewhere treat economic development as a key government function. For example, Cherokee County's Office of Economic Development is a separate department that reports to the County Commission. In Cobb County, Economic Development and Finance report to the County Manager, and in Gwinnett County, the Economic Development Director is part of the Planning and Development Department, reporting to the County Administrator.

Presently, economic development in Forsyth County is managed by the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is tasked with executing an economic development strategy developed in coordination with the Board of Commissioners. The Chamber receives an estimated \$566,000 annually from the County, including \$471,000 from the Hotel/Motel Occupancy Tax and \$95,000 through the Forsyth Development Authority. Forty percent of the Occupancy Tax money (about \$188,000) must be dedicated to marketing and tourism. According to the Chamber, County funds represent about 20 to 25 percent of the Chamber's annual operating budget, with the remainder coming from member businesses and other sources. The economic development responsibilities carried out by the Chamber on the County's behalf, along with the full amount of funding received, is not broadly known by the public, which causes some confusion about what economic development activities the County is actually engaged in.

## STRATEGIC STEPS FORWARD

In light of the County's anticipated population growth and the current reliance on residential property taxes, economic development must have higher stature in County government. The County should create an economic development position with direct accountability to the County Manager and, by extension, to the Board of Commissioners. This individual should lead a review and update of the Economic Development Strategy that is currently administered by the Chamber of Commerce. The purpose of this is not to supplant, but rather to enhance the important work of the Chamber by providing more transparency to the public, recognizing the importance of economic development across many County departments, and focusing specifically on the unincorporated areas of the County. All of the neighboring counties previously listed maintain thriving chambers of commerce, with whom County economic development staff collaborate and support.

As part of this effort, the County should benchmark its spending on economic development relative to peer counties and identify opportunities to add or increase incentives for businesses that advance the County's economic development priorities. It is assumed that greater investment in economic development will be required, but that investment will yield results that further the overarching goals of this plan. Critically, the County must communicate both the strategy and results of its economic development program to the public.

To attract new businesses, economic development strategies can include direct incentives, the use and promotion of state or federal grants and credits, or the creation of special areas such as Opportunity Zones, Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), or self-taxing Community Improvement Districts (CIDs). Forsyth County currently administers the 400 North Opportunity Zone, offering businesses the most generous job creation incentives permitted in Georgia. The County is also in the process of creating a CID in South Forsyth.



Economic development also includes the promotion and marketing of the County as a place to live, shop, and visit. The strategy to increase the number and quality of arts and entertainment options in the County should begin with a branding exercise and the creation of a detailed tourism plan. More than a logo, this is a process of understanding the County's assets and gaps, identifying target markets, and communicating the Forsyth County story in a compelling way. While tourism is one part of the strategy, a strong identity creates civic pride and engagement among existing residents, and can draw new people and businesses to the community as well. Organizations like the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)'s Northeast Georgia Mountains Tourism Division can be an important partner in this effort.

A great brand is important, but Forsyth County needs more great places too. The County should explore opportunities to create one or more community venues for festivals, concerts, and other events. Making better use of existing spaces, including City-owned assets like the Cumming Fairgrounds, could further this objective. However, it may be necessary to refresh ordinances to ensure that these spaces can be effectively and frequently utilized. Opportunities to develop a purpose-built performing arts facility should be explored with Lanier Tech and other potential sponsors, and special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) funds for such a purpose may be warranted.

Similarly, the County needs to support the development of additional town centers throughout Forsyth County. With density and mixed-use elements scaled to each character area, town centers will serve as social, commercial, and recreation hubs that are walkable or bike-able from neighborhoods and schools. This is addressed in more detail in Section 5.1 Land Use Strategy.

Creating great activity centers, or development nodes, requires a willingness of the community to reject strip commercial development and incentivize more compact commercial nodes. It also means being patient with the commercial market, which may take longer to develop. Although retail follows rooftops, great retail corners should be protected even when housing may represent a better short-term opportunity. The County can also support local merchants and restaurants by promoting them online and in County publications, by convening and participating ex officio in small business associations, and in some case through grant programs that could be funded through the Economic Development Director.



From left to right: 1) The Collection at Forsyth (Source: Ben Vigil Photographers); 2) Live/work units in Habersham, SC (Source: Missing Middle)



## 5.5 TRANSPORTATION: INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT GROWTH

For Forsyth County to continue to thrive, transportation infrastructure must keep pace with growth. Currently, there is an over-dependence on GA 400, SR 20, SR 9, and other arterial roadways in the County. This lack of network options has contributed significantly to the congestion experienced by residents, workers, and visitors to the County. Without proactive planning, this congestion will worsen as the County attracts new residents and businesses. The Forsyth County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is currently being updated and scheduled for completion in 2017-2018. This study will provide a detailed examination of transportation issues, opportunities, and recommendations. As such, the transportation element in the *Comprehensive Plan* identifies broad priorities and preliminary recommendations that will help the CTP align with the County's vision for the future.

### PRIORITIES

#### T1. ADDRESS CONGESTION ON GA 400

GA 400 is the most significant transportation corridor of Forsyth County, and is the primary conduit for longer trips south to North Fulton and points beyond. Long delays and heavy traffic on the roadway are common, particularly during peak morning and evening periods. This congestion is one of the primary issues that Forsyth County residents would like to see addressed.

#### T2. REDUCE CONGESTION THROUGH A SMART TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Roadway congestion is a significant issue in Forsyth County. Much of the congestion can be traced to the County's rapid growth and, along with that, increasing transportation demand outweighing current road capacity. A traditional way of addressing congestion is increasing road capacity, but a shorter-term, more cost-effective solution is developing a smarter transportation network. A smart transportation network would leverage technology and thoughtful road improvements to help traffic flow better across modes, including traffic lights that adjust based on vehicle flow and providing travelers with real-time information on traffic and routing options.



### **T3. IMPROVE INTERNAL CONNECTIVITY**

Currently Forsyth County has a limited network of arterial roadways. Major east-west arterials are limited to McGinnis Ferry Road in the south, SR 20 in central Forsyth County, and SR 369 and SR 306 in the north. Most north-south travel occurs on GA 400, with SR 9 running roughly parallel close by to the west, SR 361 in the far west, and SR 141 in the east. Because there are few arterials, most car trips are forced to travel on the same over-burdened roadways. The challenge is exacerbated by the lack of connectivity of collector and local roads that could serve as alternative routes for shorter trips.

### **T4. PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE-OCCUPANCY VEHICLES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS AND WORKERS**

The majority of Forsyth County commutes occur in single-occupancy vehicles. The CTP update is an opportunity to explore commuting alternatives such as ridesharing services, peak-period transit to common workplace destinations, and improved active transportation options for those who live and work within the County. It is also an opportunity to ensure that multi-modal connectivity is built into development nodes.

### **T5. ENSURE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS POSITIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AESTHETICS**

Roadway projects in Forsyth County have not always added benefits to the community beyond meeting transportation goals. As a result, community character has suffered along major corridors. Every transportation project is an opportunity to add street trees, improve sidewalks, and beautify the County. Maintenance of these corridors and their roadways is essential to ensuring that initial investments continue to add value over time.

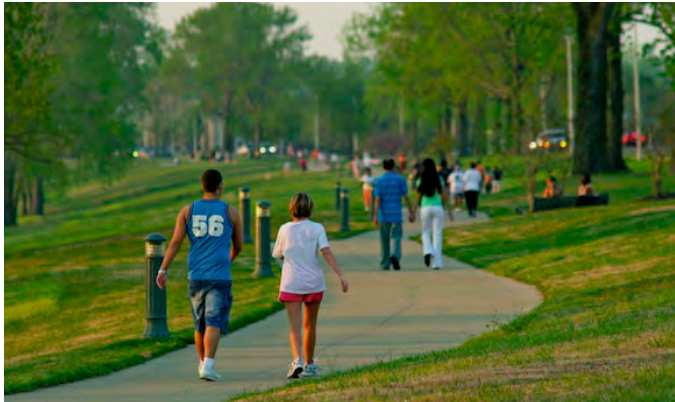
## **STRATEGIC STEPS FORWARD**

### **GA 400 CONGESTION**

There is no single answer or approach that will solve GA 400's congestion challenges. Historically, the approach to alleviating traffic on GA 400—and all roadways in the Atlanta region—has been to widen them. As evidenced by ongoing congestion problems, widening projects have largely failed to improve mobility. Multiple studies across the country have proven that adding capacity to highways does not fix congestion in the long term because these improvements only attract more trips and increase vehicle miles traveled.

To address congestion on GA 400, a multi-pronged approach is needed. Forsyth County should look beyond the corridor to the rest of its network. Strengthening other north-south connections such as SR 9 and Old Atlanta Road could reduce reliance on the highway and remove local trips from GA 400. Adding “service roads” that run immediately parallel to GA 400 could serve as collectors, permitting motorists to utilize that system of roads for shopping and services needs rather than getting back on GA 400 to get to the next exit. If the MARTA Red Line extension moves forward, in the future the County should also evaluate the feasibility and community support for expanding the line further north.

The connection between transportation and land use is also an important consideration. The current mismatch between County residents and their workplaces, and County workers and their residences, has a major impact on the vehicle miles traveled on GA 400. By encouraging the growth of more job opportunities within the County and additional housing options for workers within the County, there is the potential to significantly reduce vehicle miles traveled per day.



From top to bottom: 1) Pedestrians at Harbor Town in Memphis (Source: Harbor Town Community Association) ; 2) Golf cart paths in Peachtree City (Source: Betsy Tyler); 3) Dallas' Katy Trail connects residents to restaurants and other destinations (Source: New York Times)

### A SMART TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The benefit of pursuing a smart transportation network is that it leverages and improves upon infrastructure that is largely already in place. In Forsyth County, the highest-impact smart transportation network improvements would be the deployment of “smart intersections” that regulate traffic flows based on the actual vehicles present. These intersections could be augmented by software applications that provide real-time traffic information to travelers within the County. Ideally, this beginning of a smart transportation network would extend beyond the County’s borders for the most meaningful impact.

### ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE OCCUPANCY VEHICLES

With the potential exception of a rapid transit service along GA 400, the current and anticipated density of Forsyth County is unlikely to support an extensive system of public transit; therefore, other methods will be needed to encourage a shift away from single-occupancy vehicles. Shorter trips (less than 2 miles), particularly to and from future mixed-use nodes, could be accommodated using trails and sidewalks. An alternative for longer trips is a more robust ride sharing program, which could be incorporated into a smart transportation network. Commutes can also be reduced by attracting companies where employees work from home, and incentivizing live/work spaces in the zoning code.



## IMPROVE INTERNAL CONNECTIVITY

Because of the way many residential communities have developed in Forsyth County, opportunities to improve the local roadway network are currently limited. Moving forward, the County has an opportunity to apply a more holistic mobility standard to new residential developments. The County should consider updating its Unified Development Code and related regulations to require better connectivity, including multiple points of entrance/exit to new communities; the provision of roadway “stubs” that will connect to future development; and the construction of sidewalks and trails that connect to neighboring land uses. In some communities, the development of a system of golf cart paths may also be an appropriate alternative—something that some community members have indicated an interest in. By requiring these connections from the beginning, the County can help develop a denser network of local roads that will not only reduce reliance on collectors and arterials, but could also promote a mode shift from vehicles to walking or bicycling for shorter trips.

In areas that have already been developed, improving the local roadway network will be difficult; however, there may be some opportunities to integrate bikeways and trails to create active transportation connections between neighborhoods, particularly those communities near the Big Creek Greenway.

Changes in future land use will also be an opportunity to improve mobility within Forsyth County. As the proposed mixed-use development nodes develop (see Section 5.1, Land Use Strategy), there will be a need to ensure that these centers of activity are well served by an interconnected system of roadways, sidewalks, and trails. This multi-modal connectivity should not only exist within the node, but extend beyond and between other developing nodes of jobs, shopping, and higher residential densities. In some cases, this could mean upgrading collector roads to the functionality of an arterial, and including multi-use pathways within these corridors. Figure 5.1 illustrates this concept.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AESTHETICS

For every improvement that is part of the County's CTP, funding should be set aside to ensure that the project also provides an aesthetic benefit to Forsyth County, such as planting street trees, greening medians, or installing streetscape elements where appropriate such as pedestrian-scaled lighting. Maintenance of these corridors and their roadways is essential to ensuring that initial investments continue to add value over time.

## COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PREFERENCES

With these overarching priorities and strategies in mind, the following transportation studies and investments should be prioritized over the coming years:

- Improve mobility along the GA 400 corridor
- Strengthen the network of arterial and collector roads within the County
- Develop multi-modal corridors between nodes
- Require better local roadway networks in new developments
- Continue to expand the greenway system
- Expand the system of trails and sidewalks within and between communities both within and outside of Forsyth County
- Upgrade intersections with improved/smart traffic signals
- Beautify transportation corridors

### NODE CONNECTIVITY MAP

Figure 5.1 shows a conceptual plan for enhanced and multi-modal corridors that would link the proposed community nodes. The purpose of these enhanced corridors is two-fold: 1) to improve access to these nodes from surrounding neighborhoods, and 2) to improve internal connectivity across the County. Potential enhancements include the addition of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, multi-purpose trails, turn lanes, and intersection improvements. It is recommended that specific roadways and their improvements be identified as part of the CTP process to help facilitate compatibility between the *Comprehensive Plan* vision and transportation recommendations.

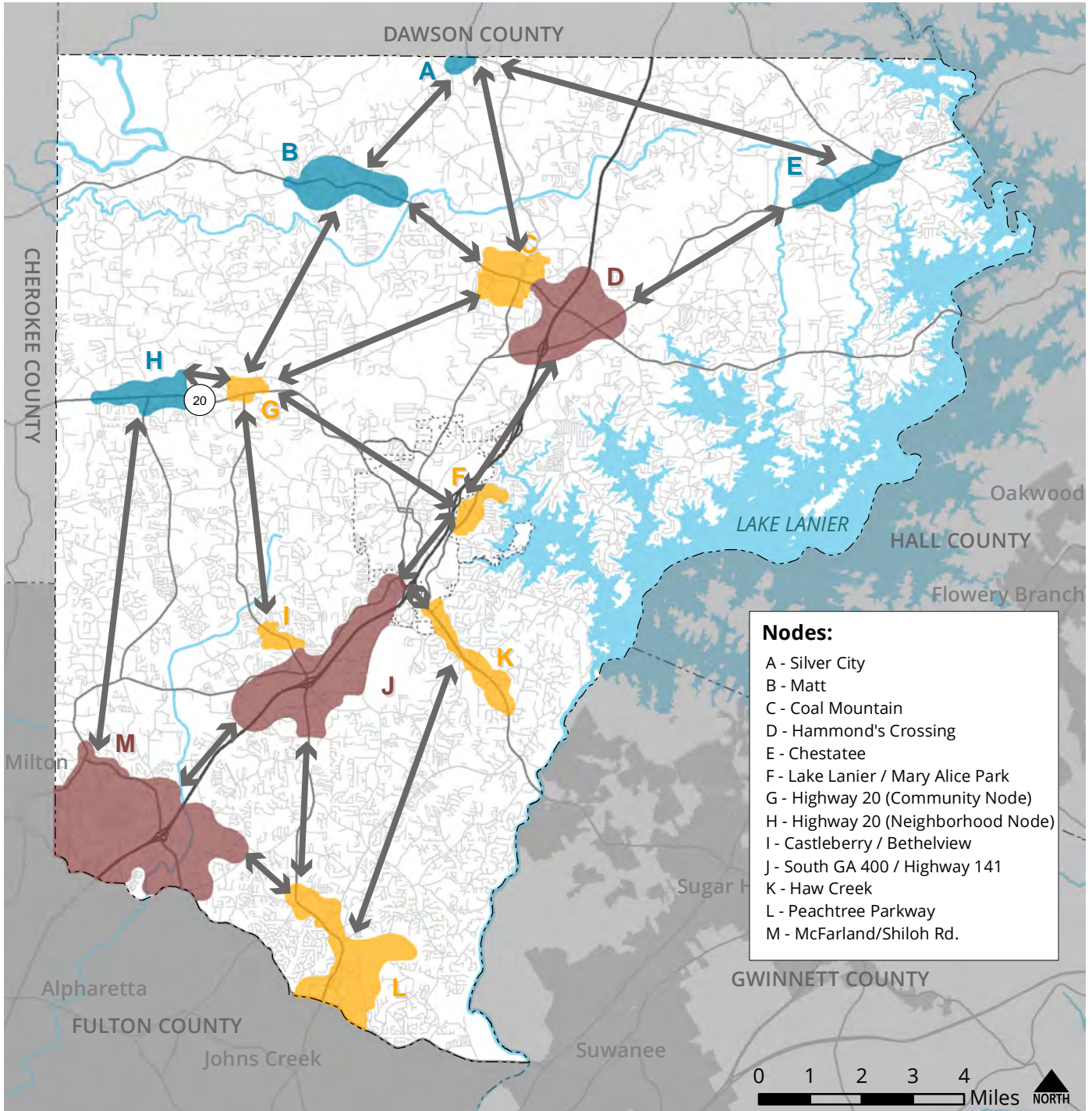
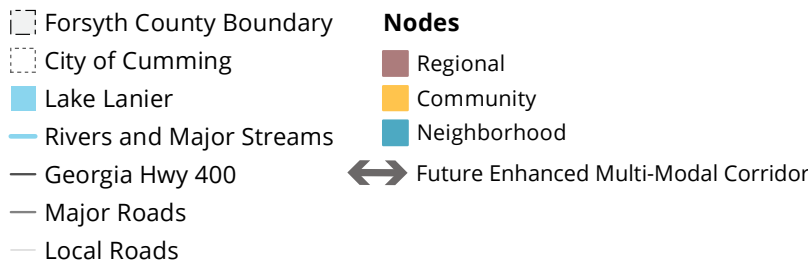
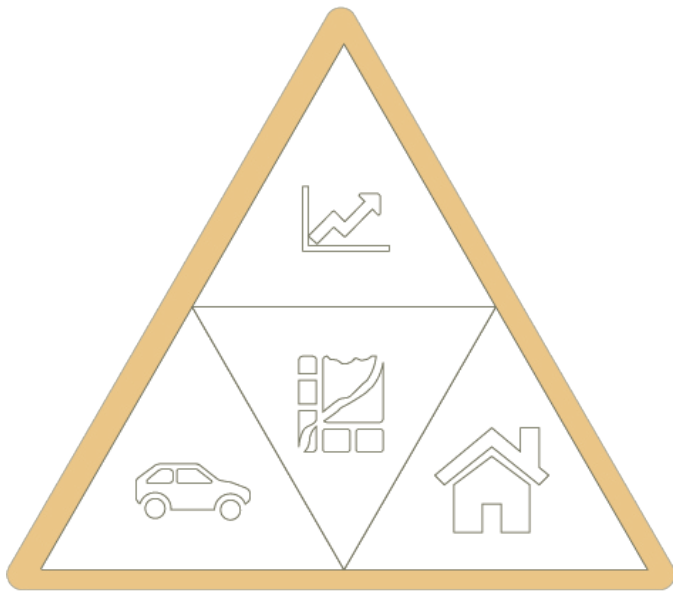


Figure 5.1: Node Connectivity Map





## 5.6 QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life is one of the defining drivers of Forsyth County's success. Protecting the aspects of the County that make it a great place is an essential element of the community's vision for future growth. Consideration of Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD) plans and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Planning Criteria have been considered in the development of these priorities and subsequent action items; please see Appendix A, section 4 for further detail.

### PRIORITIES

#### QL1. THE COUNTY'S HIGH QUALITY SCHOOL SYSTEM

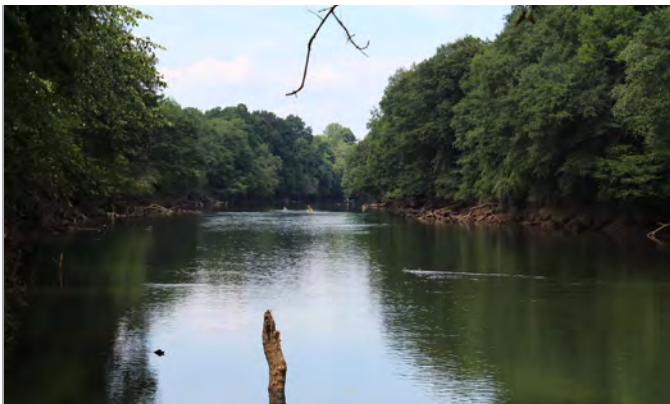
Consistently ranked in the top five in Georgia, the Forsyth County school system is a major quality of life component in the community. As the County's population of families continues to grow, greater demands are placed on the school system to keep up with increased enrollment. There is a need to ensure that this growth does not outpace the school system's ability to build new facilities and maintain high standards of education for all students.

#### QL2. ENHANCE AND EXPAND PASSIVE AND ACTIVE PARK SPACE

The County's parks and recreation system creates civic pride, attracts residents, and makes Forsyth County a desirable place to live and play. The Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, being completed in tandem with this *Comprehensive Plan* update, should be an implementation priority.

#### QL3. PROTECT AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE COUNTY'S NATURAL ASSETS

Forsyth County's quality of life is deeply rooted in its natural assets, particularly Lake Lanier, Sawnee Mountain, the Chattahoochee River, and the Etowah River. As the County continues to grow, there is a need to balance the protection of these unique places with responsible access for active and passive recreation.



Chattahoochee Pointe



## THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY

Quality of life is influenced by countless factors; however, the County can continue to play a leadership role in ensuring that the things people love about the County—the great schools, green spaces, Lake Lanier, and more—cannot only meet the demands of a growing population, but thrive.

One top priority is maintaining the high quality of the schools. With an increase in residents, Forsyth County will need to work closely with the Forsyth County Board of Education in planning where additional school facilities may be needed in the future. In addition to collaboratively planning for new facilities, the County can support existing and new schools by implementing Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Safe Routes to School programs and acting as a clearinghouse of information for community services that are available to students from a variety of backgrounds.

The County has considerable influence and ability to ensure that its parks and open space system meets the needs of its residents. With the update of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, the County will have a roadmap that will guide the ongoing maintenance, enhancement, and expansion of its parks system. The \$100-million 2008 Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond will continue to support the County's parks and green space goals. Additional resources and potential partnerships include the PATH Foundation for expanding the County's network of trails and developing "Friends" groups that will act as stewards for individual park sites, and build community pride in these facilities.

There is an opportunity for the County to build off of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan to develop a county-wide plan for green infrastructure. Whereas the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan focuses on providing recreation services, a green infrastructure plan would focus on all greenspace in the county—both public and privately owned—and the underlying ecological systems. The County's ecological health is particularly important in terms of planning for water resources. Forsyth County must continue to not only meet state water planning requirements but to play a vocal role in the region's management and stewardship of Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River. At the more local level, the County needs to work cooperatively with the City of Cumming and the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers (USACE) to ensure that all residents of Forsyth County—both in the City of Cumming and unincorporated Forsyth County—continue to have an ample supply of safe drinking water.

The County's environment and greenspace are keys to maintaining Forsyth's sense of place. Rapid residential growth in previous years has decreased the amount of greenspace in the County, and the rural heritage of the County is becoming increasingly scarce. Through its land development regulations and zoning code, the County has the ability to ensure that these core characteristics of Forsyth are protected and integrated into new growth, rather than imperiled by development; however, changing ordinances and codes to better protect these assets is a significant departure from the codes and regulations currently in place, and will require deep community support and political will to be successful.

Forsyth County also has untapped opportunities to invest in its historic and cultural resources. Like greenspace, historic resources are vulnerable to development and are currently unprotected. There is a need to update the inventory of historic resources that still exist in the County, and develop a strategy for protecting those that contribute strongly to Forsyth County's sense of place. There is also an opportunity to build on the cultural heritage of the Cherokees in the area's role in the Trail of Tears. Together, historic, cultural, and natural resources can become the backbone not only of the County's enduring sense of place, but part of a context-sensitive strategy for tourism. Partnerships with the Georgia Trust and the State of Georgia Tourism Division can help the County better protect and promote these resources.

Perhaps one of the most important roles for the County to play is that of an integrator. Although the County is physically large, its population is still small enough to have the feel of a connected city. The implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan* is an opportunity to bring disparate factions of the County together, and build trust and investment community-wide in a future where everyone benefits.



Figure 5.2: Green Infrastructure Initiatives

Name	Community Size	Location	Plan Focus	Notes
<b>Woodstock Greenprints Parks and Trails Master Plan</b>	City Pop.: 23,896 (2010 Census), 11.27 sq mi	Woodstock, GA	Land use planning; Land conservation; Comprehensive park, trail, and open space plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GIS used to prioritize criteria based on project goals</li> <li>• Priority trails created and one of 60+ miles of trail goes through downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Emerald Necklace Forest to Ocean Expanded Vision Plan for Los Angeles</b>	County Pop: 10.02M (2013 Census), 4,000 sq mi	Los Angeles, CA	Strategic conservation planning; Parks; Rivers; Lands	<p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Transportation</li> <li>• Balance of Green/Grey</li> <li>• Access to Nature/Recreation</li> <li>• Water as a multi-benefit amenity</li> <li>• Design and build resilient communities</li> <li>• Enhance regional anchors</li> <li>• Education/engagement/heritage</li> <li>• Foster green economy</li> </ul>
<b>McHenry County Green Infrastructure Plan</b>	County Pop.: 307,409 (2013 Census), 611 sq mi	McHenry, IL	Green infrastructure planning at regional, community, neighborhood, and site implementation scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a network through acquisition by public agencies, conservation easements, land use planning/zoning, conservation development, greenway connections, trails, ecological restoration, farmland protection</li> <li>• Utilized computer mapping and overlay of existing natural connections--Network and Trail Maps</li> </ul>
<b>City of Atlanta Urban Ecology RFP</b>	City Pop.: 447,481 (2013 Census), 132.4 sq mi	Atlanta, GA	Urban ecology city-wide plan; Tree ordinance; Urban design initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GIS</li> <li>• Online tools</li> <li>• Tree ordinance</li> <li>• Policy recommendations</li> <li>• Social equity</li> <li>• Community opportunities</li> <li>• Economic opportunity</li> <li>• Environmental preservation and restoration</li> </ul>

*The green infrastructure initiatives outlined in Figure 5.2 provide a benchmark for the types of strategies other communities have implemented to promote low-impact development and integrated systems thinking. Further review will inform the appropriate approach for green infrastructure planning in Forsyth County.*

## 5.7 UTILITY PLAN COORDINATION

### IMPORTANCE OF ALIGNMENT WITH UTILITY PLANS

Investments in major infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems, allow local jurisdictions to provide essential services to residents and businesses, as well as shape the capacity and direction for future growth. Once an investment has been made, it carries with it financial burdens that must be met, often requiring additional revenue from new development. This interrelationship between infrastructure investment and development means plans must be coordinated, reviewed, and reevaluated to ensure alignment and balanced decision-making.

A general review of planned water and sewer infrastructure improvements was conducted to identify potential discontinuities between the vision for future growth established by the *Comprehensive Plan* and the planned water and sewer improvements identified prior to the refinement of this vision. This review does not address technical system considerations. Potential adjustments to infrastructure plans require more detailed assessment by appropriate staff to determine which planned improvements are based on anticipated future development and how those align with the level and distribution of population growth outlined by the *Comprehensive Plan*.

### WATER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

An update to the 2008 Forsyth County Water Distribution Master Plan was completed in April 2015. The report forecasts water demand through 2050 and develops a series of phased improvements necessary to provide and distribute a sufficient supply of water for the County's growing population, based on an anticipated 2030 population of 370,479 and a 2040 population of 464,215 residents, a figure significantly higher than that determined by this *Comprehensive Plan*. The recommended solutions for

meeting projected demand include improvements to the water treatment plant, storage units, and pumping stations, as well as expanding the capacity of existing piping and adding new piping where growth is projected in undeveloped areas. Plans for expanded piping in underdeveloped areas only address connections along major roads, not piping to individual developments, and assume the burden of that cost will fall on the developer. Planned projects are broken down into phases, with an estimated cost per phase of \$19.25 million in 2015, \$24.04 million in 2020, \$46.23 million in 2030, and \$51.8 million in 2050, for a total cost of \$141.32 million and an average annual cost of just over \$4 million.

### SEWER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

Forsyth County has historically been a rural county with individual septic systems serving as the primary means of residential wastewater treatment. With the rapid pace of growth, this has shifted toward a model of wastewater treatment facilities operated on a private community scale, to an extension of County sewer service and expanded capacity in its public water treatment plants. All residential development zoned RES3 or higher must have private or public sewer service. The County completed its current *Sewer System Master Plan Update* in 2009, and a new iteration of the plan was underway as of the first draft of this *Comprehensive Plan* document was being compiled. The planned improvements extend through 2030 and are based on a projected 2030 population of 323,256. The population projections were used to calculate sewer flow estimates and, along with other factors, determine the necessary system improvements. Priority was given to extending sewer service to septic system critical areas that have been identified as high risk for septic failure, such as those in drinking supply watersheds or near Lake Lanier and other water features. Recommended improvements totaled \$81.1 million.



## ALIGNMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria were used to assess the degree of alignment of planned water and sewer infrastructure and the vision for growth in each of the 11 character areas:

### Aligned:

- Area has extensive existing or planned water and sewer throughout and is envisioned as an area of future growth; or
- Area has limited or no existing or planned water and sewer throughout and is not envisioned as an area of future growth.

### Unaligned:

- Area has extensive existing or planned water and sewer throughout and is not envisioned as an area of future growth; or
- Area has limited or no existing or planned water and sewer throughout and is envisioned as an area of future growth.

Those areas identified as unaligned require further review. A brief discussion of the vision for growth and planned improvements for each character area is outlined below, followed by a summary of the character area utility alignment in Figure 5.4.

Portions of some character areas fall within the City of Cumming's Water and Sewer Service Area, which extends beyond the city limits. (See Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5.) Service within these areas should be coordinated with City utilities to ensure alignment with future development.

## CHARACTER AREA ALIGNMENT

### MCFARLAND

The McFarland character area has existing water and sewer infrastructure throughout, and it is envisioned as an area of to receive future growth, which will maximize the utility of existing infrastructure investments. There are no planned sewer expansions within the area, and the only planned water expansion is located in the McFarland/Shiloh Road Regional Node, providing additional capacity to a location expected to receive concentrated commercial growth.

### SOUTH GEORGIA 400

Developable areas within the South Georgia 400 character area have existing water and sewer infrastructure, and it anticipates a mix of commercial, industrial, and town center development. Planned sewer expansion is minimal, and planned water lines connect to the South GA 400/Highway 141 Regional and the Daves Creek Community Node, in alignment with future development patterns. The northern portion of this area is within the City Water and Sewer Service Area.

### BIG CREEK

There is extensive existing water and sewer infrastructure throughout the Big Creek character area, which is largely built out and consists primarily of single-family neighborhoods and some commercial uses. There are limited plans for water and sewer improvements, both located along Old Atlanta Road.

### HAW CREEK & DAVES CREEK

The Haw Creek & Daves Creek area is currently comprised of single-family, detached homes and some low-intensity commercial uses. It is envisioned as a transitional area between suburban and rural character, with business, industry, and low-intensity mixed-use at the Haw Creek Community Node on SR 20. Water infrastructure exists in the majority of the character area. The area is served by County water and sewer utilities south of SR 20, where existing and planned sewer infrastructure are very limited and most of the residential users are on septic. North of SR 20, where more intense uses are located, the area is part of the City Water and Sewer Service Area.

## LANIER

The Lanier character area includes land to the west and south of Lake Lanier, which is almost exclusively detached, single-family residential and conservation land. The area is served by water throughout with planned capacity improvements along major roads. There is almost no existing or planned public sewer within the County service area for Lanier and most residential users in this area operate on septic service. The southern part of the character area-- including the Lake Lanier/Mary Alice Park Community Node, which has uses that require sewer service-- falls within the City Water and Sewer Service Area.

## VICKERY CREEK

The Vickery Creek character area includes a mix of agricultural tracts, single-family neighborhoods, and the Vickery Village mixed-use development, as well as two smaller commercial activity centers. Future growth is envisioned surrounding the existing developed areas. Non-agricultural areas are served by existing water and sewer, with the northeast portion of the area being covered by the City Water and Sewer Service Area. There are no plans for expanded sewer and very limited plans for expanded water infrastructure, in keeping with the plan to concentrate future development near existing development.

## CAMPGROUND

The Campground character area has a rural quality, consisting of agricultural land and low-density, single-family homes, and is envisioned to remain as such. There are the beginnings of a business and industry corridor along SR 20, and additional commercial development is anticipated along this corridor, near the City of Cumming at the Highway 20 Community Node. The non-agricultural parts of the character area are served by existing County or City water and sewer infrastructure, with some planned water utility expansion along Post Road and Bethelview Road. Future development is anticipated to be low-density and located adjacent to existing development, where utilities are present.

## NORTH GEORGIA 400

The North Georgia 400 character area currently includes a limited amount of low-density, single-family residential and a significant amount of undeveloped and agricultural land, but has been identified as an area likely to receive future growth, including a mixed-use employment node at the crossroads of GA 400 and Highways 369 and 306, the Hammond's Crossing Regional Node. The southern portion of the character area is served by the City Water and Sewer Service Area, and existing and planned County utilities in the area are limited to existing subdivisions and the area immediately surrounding GA 400. A number of water utility expansions are planned in this area, but existing sewer facilities and planned expansions are limited and may need to be reassessed, depending on realized commercial development in the area.

## CHESTATEE/JOT EM DOWN

The Chestatee/Jot Em Down character area is rural, primarily undeveloped or agricultural land with some low-density, single-family homes dispersed throughout. Much of the area is served by water infrastructure, but sewer infrastructure is extremely limited, located only along Jot Em Down Road. There are no plans to expand sewer infrastructure in the area, but there are significant planned water expansions along Keith Bridge Road and Jot Em Down Road. In keeping with the lack of sewer infrastructure, planned development in this area is limited to low-density residential near the intersection of Highway 306 and Jot Em Down Road, where sewer exists.

## ETOWAH

The Etowah character area is mostly rural, undeveloped or agricultural land with some low-density residential, and preservation of this character is proposed. Several expansions of both water and sewer systems are planned, the locations of which appear to support the expansion of residential. The planned infrastructure expansions here may exceed what is necessary for the rural, low-density vision of this area and do not align with the proposed Matt Community Node along Highway 20.

## SAWNEE MOUNTAIN

The Sawnee Mountain Character Area surrounds the Sawnee Mountain Preserve and consists of park land, agricultural land, and large lot single-family homes, with a future vision for only low-intensity development. The majority of the character area falls under the City Water and Sewer Service Area, and planned County utility expansions in the area are limited.



Figure 5.3: Character Area Utility Improvement Alignment Summary

Character Area	Max. Residential Density Zones	Max. Mixed-Use Density Zones	Allowable Commercial Zones	Water Plan Alignment	Sewer Plan Alignment
<b>McFarland</b>	RES4**	MU-R*	NS, UV**, CBD, HB**, HC, BP, O&I, OR, OCMS*, M1, M2,	Aligned	Aligned
<b>South Georgia 400</b>	RES6**	MU-R*	NS, UV**, CBD, HC, BP, O&I, OR, OCMS, M1	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Big Creek</b>	RES3**	MU-C*	NS, UV, CBD, HB**, BP*, O&I, OR, M1, M2**	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Haw Creek and Daves Creek</b>	RES3**	MU-C*	NS, UV, CBD, HB, BP, O&I, OR, M1, M2**, MINE**	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Lanier</b>	RES6*	MU-C*	NS, UV*, CBD, HB**, HC, BP*, O&I*, OR, OCMS*, M1	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Vickery Creek</b>	RES6*	MU-C*	NS, UV*, CBD, HC*, BP*, O&I, OR, OCMS**, M1	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Campground</b>	RES3*	MU-C*	NS*, CBD, HB, HC, O&I*, OR, M1	Aligned	Aligned
<b>North Georgia 400</b>	RES6*	MU-R*	NS, UV, CBD, HC, BP, O&I, OR, OCMS*, M1, M2	Aligned	Aligned
<b>Chestatee/Jot Em Down</b>	RES3*	MPD*	CBD, HB, HC, O&I*, OR, M1*	Aligned	Unaligned
<b>Etowah</b>	RES3*	MPD*	NS*, CBD, HB, HC, O&I*, OR, M1, M2**, MINE**	Aligned	Unaligned
<b>Sawnee Mountain</b>	RES3*	MU-C*	CBD, HB**, HC, O&I*, OR, M1, M2**, MINE**	Aligned	Aligned

\*Appropriate only in development node within respective character area.

\*\* Appropriate within the character area, but only outside development nodes

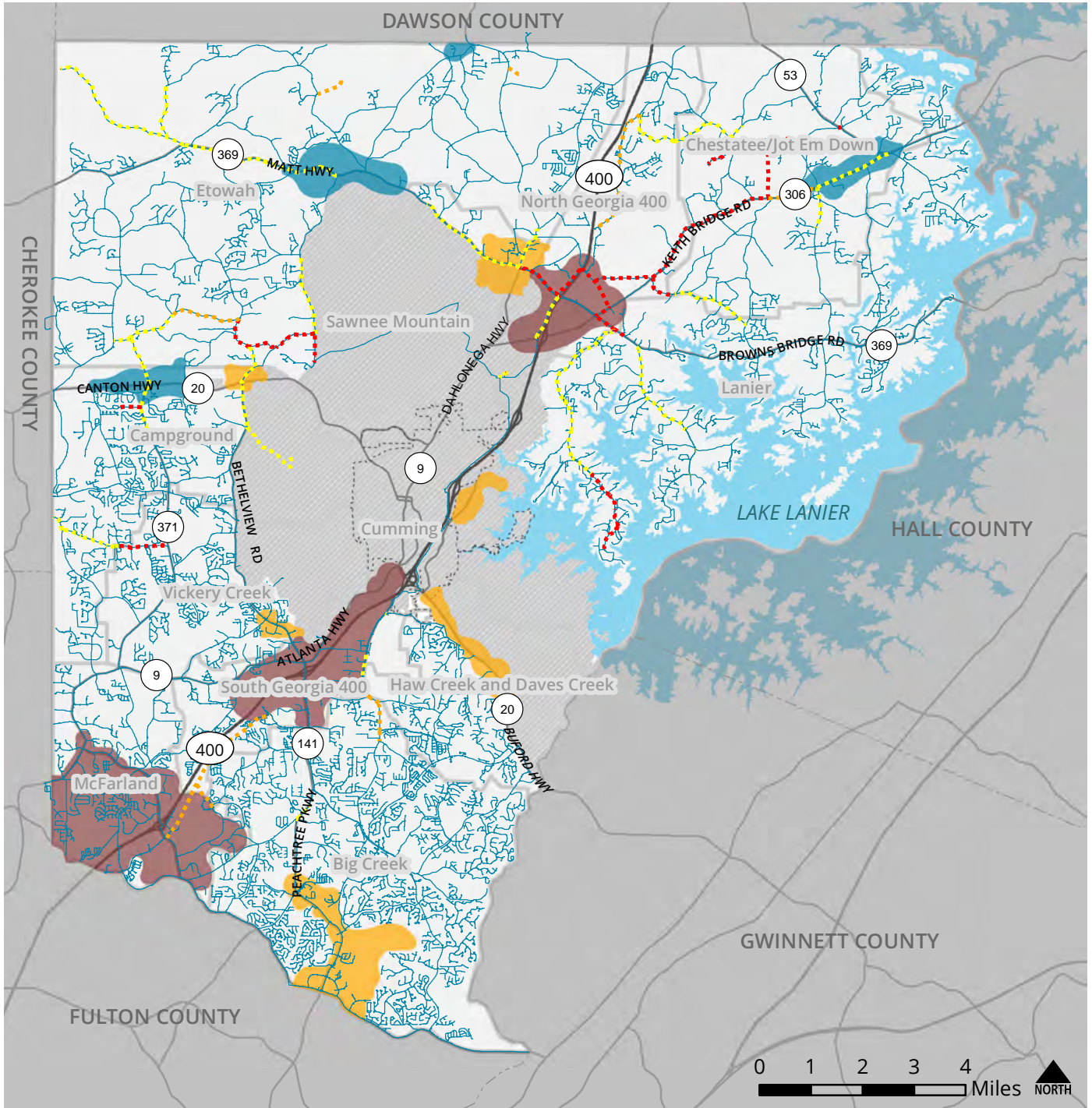


Figure 5.4: Water Utilities (Existing and Planned)

- Existing Water Main Lines
- ... CIP Phase: 2017-2021
- ... CIP Phase: 2022-2032
- ... CIP Phase: 2033-2042
- ▨ City Water/Sewer Service Area
- Character Areas
- Regional Node
- Community Node
- Neighborhood Node
- City of Cumming
- Georgia Hwy 400
- Major Roads



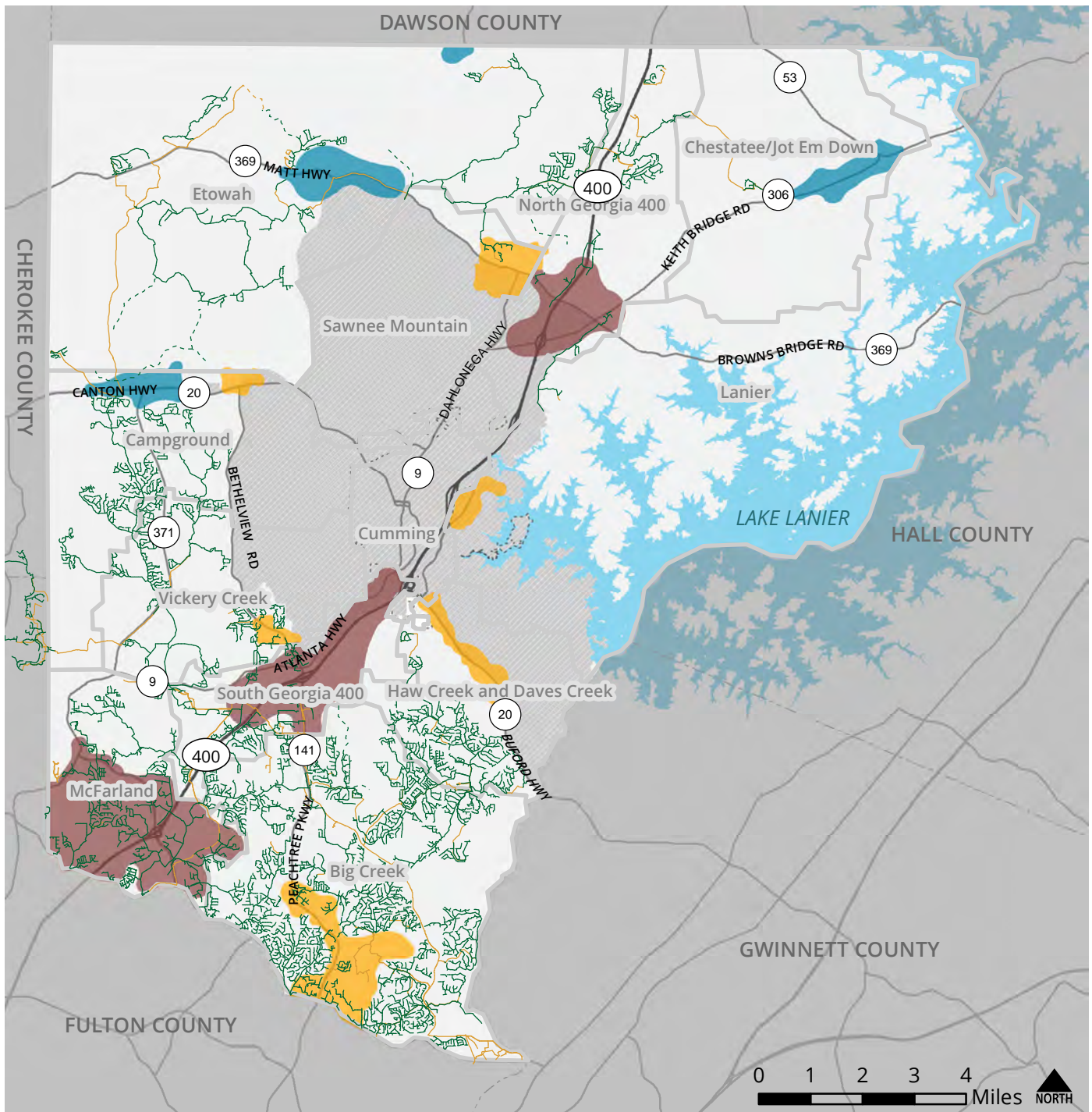


Figure 5.5: Sewer Utilities (Existing and Proposed)

- Existing Sewer Gravity Main Lines
- - - Proposed Sewer Gravity Main Lines
- Existing Sewer Pressurized Main Lines
- - - Proposed Sewer Pressurized Main Lines
- ▨ City Water/Sewer Service Area
- Character Areas
- Regional Node
- Community Node
- Neighborhood Node
- City of Cumming
- Georgia Hwy 400
- Major Roads



## 6. ACTION PLAN

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays out the action plan for achieving the community's vision and goals for the future, with a focus on the short-term, five-year Community Work Program (CWP). This action plan is organized by substantive element of the plan: land use, housing, economic development, and transportation. There is an additional quality of life element that addresses other action items that speak to broader goals that do not succinctly fit into a core element of the plan.

### OVERVIEW OF SECTION 6.2, ACTIONS AND POLICIES

Section 6.2 introduces planning specific action items and general policies by element of the *Comprehensive Plan*. Each action is linked back to one or more short term priorities, introduced in Chapter 5, *Implementing Our Vision*. Priorities are reintroduced in this section to show the direct tie-in to the action plan.

- Actions are listed first for each element. When appropriate, Section 6.3, *Actions and Policies*, also provides more details on action items and provides some limited items for long-term consideration. Actions for beyond the immediate, next five years will be best addressed in the next update of the plan. At a minimum, the County is required to update the *Comprehensive Plan* every five years under State law.
- Policies are listed second for each element. Policies seek to guide and direct implementation of the community vision as well as address community-identified issues and opportunities. Policies are those items that do not require a specific action nor finite start and finish but, rather, rely on consistent day-to-day actions. The policies identified reflect a combination of salient policies carried over from the 2012 *Comprehensive Plan* along with additional new policies identified during Foster Forsyth.

*Prior to introducing element specific actions and policies, there are some overarching next steps and policies that are introduced. These items will be necessary to ensure the plan is implemented, regularly monitored, and compatible with regional efforts.*

### OVERVIEW OF SECTION 6.3, COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM (2017-2021)

Section 6.3 provides the formal five-year Community Work Program, formerly called the Short Term Work Program, in table format as required by the Georgia DCA. The Community Work Program is organized as to facilitate community review and understanding of the program.

- All capital improvements that tie directly to impact fees are listed first. Capital improvements have been pre-approved by the Board of Commissioners outside this plan. This list addresses investment in public facilities, including parks, public safety, and water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure.
- Planning action items that do not require a capital investment are organized by plan element. These actions align with the lists introduced in Section 6.2, *Actions and Policies*. These include actions or initiatives that do not result in a physical structure or improvement, such as amendments to the Unified Development Code or completion of sub-area or sub-topic plans. Areas with gray highlighting indicate that the costs and estimated staff hours are addressed under another element.

The CWP identifies the following for each action:

- Time frame for carrying out the action, initiative, or program.
- Responsible party for achieving the action item.
- Funding course.
- Estimated staff hours.
- Estimated cost.
- Impact fee percent of eligibility.

### RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Because Forsyth County has impact fees, it is required to update its CWP on an annual basis to report on progress on projects and update status and subsequent years. The County is submitting a separate Record of Accomplishments for projects in 2016 for state and regional review in advance of this plan document.



## 6.2 ACTIONS & POLICIES

### GENERAL ACTIONS & POLICIES

To help facilitate plan implementation, a couple specific actions and some general policies are recommended to keep the plan valid and compatible with the community vision and goals, transparent among the Forsyth community, and actively followed by County leadership and staff. These actions are driven by the overall vision to advance a balanced growth management strategy.

#### ACTIONS

1. Establish a biannual meeting of department heads to review status of Community Work Program actions and opportunities and needs for collaboration.
2. Establish a simple, web-based monitoring tool of *Comprehensive Plan* Community Work Program projects to facilitate transparency with the community.

#### POLICIES

- Follow the Community Work Program as laid out in *Comprehensive Plan 2017-2037*.
- Continue to seek opportunities to share services, facilities, and information with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.
- Continue to engage the City of Cumming concerning planning and economic development initiatives as well as funding opportunities for identified projects.
- Explore cost saving possibilities with the City of Cumming and other jurisdictions, which may include consideration of consolidated services in the long-range planning period.
- Continue to work jointly with neighboring jurisdictions on developing solutions for shared regional issues such as water resources, growth management, alternative transportation, watershed protection, and the provision of services.

*Forsyth County will promote responsible use of our natural assets and green space while advancing a balanced growth management strategy that strengthens and sustains quality of life for everyone.*

Vision Statement Introduced in Chapter 3, Vision for Fostering Our Future

- Continue to pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision making with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Work together to achieve community objectives and promote community involvement in future County improvement efforts.
- Maintain regular coordination between the Planning and Community Development Department and the Water and Sewer Department regarding new development and adjustments to the Community Character Map.
- Continue to think and act regionally, especially in terms of issues such as water, land use, transportation, and housing, understanding that these reach beyond local government borders.

## LAND USE ACTIONS & POLICIES

### PRIORITIES

#### L1. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE SENSE OF PLACE

#### L2. ENACT CHANGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO STRENGTHEN SITE-SENSITIVE DESIGN

#### L3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND JOB GROWTH

#### L4. CREATE A MORE DETAILED STRATEGY FOR RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

### Ongoing Activities

1. Provide staff support to implement the goals and objectives of the *Comprehensive Plan*. (L1, L2, L3, L4)
2. Monitor progress of the McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and adapt strategies to incorporate recommendations of major plan update (see related action item 21). (L1, L3)

### Environmental Actions

3. Create an effective mass grading ordinance.\* (L1, L2)
  - Focus on developments >10 acres.
  - Limit standards for properties between 3 and 9 acres.
4. Renovate the current County wide tree ordinance. (L1, L2).
  - Focus on preserving contributing tree stands and specimen trees.
  - Limit clear cutting.
  - Address the removal of trees, placement of new trees, any options for replanting needed by new developments, and tree maintenance.
5. Create an incentives program for innovative, low impact stormwater design that minimizes stormwater infrastructure. (L2)
6. Reformulate the Conservation Subdivision Standards. (L2)

- Consider attractive incentives that encourage Conservation Subdivisions.
  - Draft standards to include conservation areas that would not otherwise be protected by existing environmental regulations and ensure these areas are easily accessible for residents.
7. Create a land trust/transfer of development rights program. (L1)

### Development Actions

8. Create new mixed-use zoning districts that ensure the combination of multiple uses, and overhaul the Master Planned District (MPD) zoning district to encourage mixed type and density residential developments. (L1, L3, L4)
  - Recraft the MPD zoning district to create a mixed-density housing district that does not require an additional commercial component.
  - Incentivize reviewing and pursuing mixed-use developments.
  - There is a need to tie mixed-use rezonings to a market requirement. Currently, MPDs are not being successful as the commercial component is often removed via variance as a result of difficulty of achieving commercial aspect.
9. Evaluate and update the rezoning and conditional use permit processes to improve ease of administration.
10. Create the Coal Mountain Overlay. (L1, L3)
11. Create additional design standards for RES2, RES3, and RES4 zoning districts to encourage quality development. (L1)
12. Identify and refine corridors for commercial development. (L3)
13. Consider establishment of a design review board and/or other necessary resources/administrative procedures to implement new design standards. (L1)
  - Identify all resources required: staff hours, stipend to Board members, etc.
  - Recommend a small design review board with professional staffing, including local architects, landscape architects, etc.
  - As new standards are crafted, identify appropriate timing of design review steps.



- Review other communities' successes and processes for implementing such tools. For example, Cherokee County had a failed experiment with multiple design review boards.
14. Evaluate and update County's six overlay districts for consistency with new character areas. (L1)
  15. Evaluate UDC Chapter 3 for necessary improvements to code definitions and modify other chapters related to these changes. (L1)

**Subarea Plans & Initiatives**

16. Complete North Forsyth Subarea Study. (L1, L3)
17. Carryout additional subarea plans for select areas. (L1, L3)
  - Undertake a subarea study and plan for the South Georgia 400 character area.
  - Undertake a subarea study and plan for the North Georgia 400 character area.
  - Undertake a subarea study and plan for the Haw Creek & Daves Creek character area.
  - Undertake a subarea study and plan for the Campground character area.
18. Develop design guidelines for Vickery Creek, Big Creek, and Sawnee Mountain character areas. (L1)
19. Carry out a major plan update to the McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). (L1, L3)
  - Include new market analysis, review of existing conditions, etc. and framework from which to develop a new plan.
  - Place emphasis on a specific implementation plan that is actionable and achievable.

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

1. Consider addition of higher density, multi-family residential zoning districts to allow for highest and best use of land around development nodes and address *missing middle* housing, defined as higher quality and more affordable townhomes, cottage court homes, and similar products, generally provided at eight to twelve units per acre. Without RES8 (8 dwelling units per acre) or RES12 (12 dwelling units per acre), higher-density townhomes, cottage courts, and similar products cannot be built.
2. Revisit the opportunity to create and maintain a consolidated plan or other inclusive housing strategy to provide for programs that help address the needs of disadvantaged populations and address affordable housing and related community development needs.



From top to bottom: 1) Low-impact stormwater landscape design (Source: City of Seattle); 2) Bungalow with mature trees in the Virginia Highland neighborhood

## POLICIES

- Encourage development that is environmentally sensitive, receptive to cultural resource protection, and that maintains or creates a sense of place for community members.
- Preserve portions of the community's rural character through greenspace planning, enhancement of the County's conservation tools, and creation of functional open space.
- Provide public gathering spaces, parks, and recreational facilities throughout the County.
- Advance the preservation of green space and tree cover and the incorporation of pocket parks and useable open space amenities within planned developments.
- Foster land uses and design styles that are in keeping with the Community Character Map and that build on the unique character of each community within the County.
- Ensure that new and existing development is supported with necessary investments in infrastructure, particularly roads, water supply, wastewater treatment systems, public facilities including schools, and public safety protection.
- Phase expansion of utilities and services to encourage rational expansion of development in areas that are contiguous to already-developed areas of the community and consistent with the development vision of the Community Character Map.
- Support walkable and safe neighborhoods. Where appropriate, residential areas should each have access to other land uses including schools, parks, and nearby commercial services without having to travel by vehicle.
- Promote interconnected networks of sidewalks and multi-use trails, particularly between development nodes and surrounding residential areas.
- Contribute to the retention of our historic built environment through the support of cultural resource preservation and education for area residents and property owners.
- Advocate community and development-supported agriculture through the encouragement of community gardens and farm-based amenities within master planned developments.
- Capitalize upon existing infrastructure investments by encouraging infill development and higher intensity uses within defined development nodes.
- Encourage compact, nodal development to increase land use efficiency and improve the appearance and access to major roadways.
- Encourage pedestrian-scaled developments in select areas of the County that include an interconnected mix of uses and multi-modal transportation connections.
- Foster design elements that enhance the visual character of the community, preserve tree cover or replace tree cover, provide community open space and green space, and add value.
- Explore density incentive options for developments in regional and community nodes that provide increased public open space, community amenities, and transit facilities.
- Examine possible remediation requirements for future re-use of existing sites such as quarries, mines, and landfills on an as-needed basis.
- Seek to expand non-residential uses in appropriate areas to balance the County's tax digest.
- Cluster non-residential uses and higher intensity residential areas to build a series of regional and community town centers.
- Guide attached residential products and smaller lot single-family to appropriate districts along the GA 400 corridor and major transportation routes, while fostering lower intensity residential types off of major roadways.



Walkable, mixed-use neighborhood in Statesville, NC (Source: Land Design)



## HOUSING ACTIONS & POLICIES

### PRIORITIES

**H1.** UPDATE THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE

**H2.** FACILITATE MULTI-GENERATIONAL HOUSING

**H3.** ENSURE THAT NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS PAY PROPORTIONATE INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

### 2017-2021 ACTIONS

1. Complete housing study to develop a more robust understanding of housing needs and develop a realistic action plan.
  - Study should take into account Economic Development Plan recommendations.
2. Amend code to minimize and discourage mass grading and tree loss within residential developments and existing residential properties. See environmental actions under Land Use, action items 3 and 4. (H1)
3. Revisit the County's variance procedure. (H1)
  - Identify firm criteria for appropriate situations for variances from the County's zoning and development regulations.
  - Formalize variance allowance procedure in Code of Ordinances.
4. Implement code changes that allow for mixed-use zoning districts with housing to facilitate incorporation of a greater variety of housing types and price points. See Land Use action item 6. (H2)
5. Assess effectiveness of new impact fee structure on housing developments and efficacy at assigning accurate costs of infrastructure to different housing development types. (H3)
6. Complete review and assessment of residential subdivision ordinance (Chapter 18 of Unified Development Code) to address the following goals and needs. Proceed with recommended adjustments within 12 months of recommendation. (H1, H3)
  - Identify new requirements and/or incentives to facilitate connectivity within and exterior to the subdivision.
  - Identify new requirements and/or incentives for greenspace conservation.
  - Compare standards and regulations to other counties and consider application of best practices identified in those communities to the subdivision code.
7. Complete analysis of County code and policies to identify ways to facilitate custom housing. (H2)
  - Include in analysis conversations with neighboring jurisdictions and housing developers.
  - Address housing within a certain price point, identifying not only context characteristics that facilitate development of this housing type, but also common amenities.
  - Adjust policies and programs to remove barriers.
8. Evaluate staff capacity to meet and implement new design standards and zoning/development code components. Consider augmentation of County staff. (H1)
9. Incorporate density bonus options within the UDC for multi-family developments. (H1, H2)
  - Create a density bonus package proposal so that the code is better able to accommodate multi-family units.
10. Explore incentive programs for higher density residential products based on the provision of specific amenities. (H1, H2)
  - Recommend code changes related to non-residential performance standards and residential density to achieve character area goals and objectives.

### LONG TERM ACTIONS

1. Consider addition of higher density, multi-family residential zoning districts to allow for highest and best use of land around development nodes and address *missing middle* housing, defined as higher quality and more affordable townhomes, cottage court homes, and similar products, generally provided at 8 to 12 units per acre. Without RES8 (8 dwelling units per acre) or RES12 (12 dwelling units per acre), higher-density townhomes, cottage courts, and similar products cannot be built.



2. Revisit the opportunity to create and maintain a consolidated plan or other inclusive housing strategy to provide for programs that help address the needs of disadvantaged population and address affordable housing and related community development needs.

## POLICIES

- Encourage medium- and higher-density housing in targeted locations.
- Ensure that the adequate provision of water and sewer infrastructure is in place to support new residential growth.
- Encourage a variety of housing choices to accommodate residents across generations.
- Encourage development of housing options that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- Promote the concept of 'lifecycle' housing within the community by supporting the development of a variety of housing types, styles, and price ranges.
- Encourage interactive neighborhoods where people have easy access to parks, common open space, residences, and businesses through walkways, bike paths, and roads thereby creating a live-work-play atmosphere.
- Require that quality housing be constructed and properly maintained.
- Encourage mixed-use developments in appropriate areas of the County as identified in the Character Area narratives, see Chapter 4.
- Advocate subdivision designs that are contextually sensitive to the existing landscape and that are screened from the major roadways with natural buffers or geographical features.
- Protect the County's mature tree canopy from clear cutting in new developments.
- Encourage more compact development in order to preserve natural and cultural resources.
- Encourage mixed-use developments and other options to allow residents to live in close proximity to their places of employment.



From top to bottom: 1) Multi-family housing designed for compatibility with single-family homes in Berkeley County, SC; 2) Cottage court homes surrounding a shared green space (Source: The Tiny Life); 3) Townhomes in Vickery Village



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS & POLICIES

### PRIORITIES

**E1.** DECREASE THE COUNTY'S DEPENDENCE ON RESIDENTIAL TAXES BY ATTRACTING MORE BUSINESSES

**E2.** INCREASE THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COUNTY

**E3.** ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN CENTERS AS NODES OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

### 2017-2021 ACTIONS

1. Evaluate the current role and services of the Chamber; identify best partnership strategy moving forward, including funding from County. Coordinate with the update to the Economic Development Plan. Include a consideration of possible differences in economic development goals between the County and the City of Cumming. (E1, E2, E3)
2. Complete annual Opportunity Zone report pursuant to state requirements. (E1)
3. Strengthen the partnership with the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce to expand economic development opportunities. (E1, E2)
4. Establish and maintain economic development page on County website. Explain Chamber's role in County's economic development. (E1)
5. Establish an ongoing partnership with Northeast Georgia Mountains Georgia Department of Community Affairs Tourism Division. (E1, E2)
6. Update Economic Development Plan maintained by the Chamber of Commerce. (E1, E2, E3)
7. Establish an economic development role within the County administration pursuant to the outcomes of the Economic Development Plan. Possible responsibilities include marketing, liaison to existing and prospective businesses on permitting processes, small business resource, tourism support, and facilitation of development in town centers. (E1, E2, E3)
  - ◇ Include review of best practices in other communities and close coordination with the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce to further enhance current efforts.
  - ◇ Incorporate the role within the Planning and Development Department with direct report to the County Manager. Further analysis should be completed to determine exact location in organizational structure.
8. Formally establish a Community Improvement District in the southern portion of the County. (E1)
9. Identify incentives that are underused or required to attract businesses in service of the Economic Development plan. (E1, E3)
10. Implement incentive recommendations from item 9. (E1)
11. Review development process to identify opportunities to improve efficiency for businesses and staff that facilitate desired development. (E1, E3)
12. Update regulations and related administrative tools to implement recommendations from item 11. (E3)
13. Create a small business initiative focused on supporting locally owned shops and restaurants. (E2, E3)
  - Small business assistance support, grants, staff support needed for this.
14. Update ordinances to ensure that effective public gatherings (festivals, etc.) are permitted in appropriate locations. (E2)
15. Develop County-wide tourism strategy to include branding, marketing, and funding. (E2, E3)
16. Incorporate recommendations of tourism strategy in Community Work Program. (E1, E2, E3)
17. Expand County brand to market Forsyth to visitors. (E1, E2)
  - Create multiple sub-brands.
  - Need to include staff from Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, Planning and Community Development, Communications Department, and County Manager.
18. Complete feasibility study for a dedicated civic and performing arts center in the County. (E2)
  - The facility is envisioned at having capacity to serve multiple functions, including host meetings, performances, and other community events.

- The feasibility study is intended to determine whether this facilitate makes sense for the County. The study would identify next steps if appropriate.
- The study should consider such facilities in nearby communities to help determine market capacity and also consider case studies of long-term success of such facilities.

**LONG TERM ACTIONS**

1. Continue partnership and collaborative relationship with Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce.
2. Continue small business initiative.

**POLICIES**

- Seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community to reduce traffic and expand the non-residential tax base.
- Support programs for the retention, expansion, and creation of businesses that enhance our economy.
- Continue to partner with the Georgia DCA, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce, and other entities to find solutions to establishing diverse, long-term employment opportunities and to advance economic development within the County.
- Encourage reinvestment in declining, existing corridors to promote private sector redevelopment and accommodate future growth.
- Continue to work closely with the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce, citizens, and land

developers to promote the County as an attractive area for industries to locate.

- Secure stable water supply sources for future business growth.
- Continue to make transportation improvements that boost business recruitment.
- Seek partnerships with higher education institutions located within the County to assist new and existing businesses with employee training.
- Market quality of life amenities within Forsyth County to the business community.
- Promote the expansion of a fiber optic network to increase communication capabilities.
- Market Lake Lanier and other target destinations through tourist initiatives and promotions, including the support of resort developments in appropriate locations.
- Promote tourism through inter-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Continue to participate in local and regional economic development organizations.



From left to right: 1) Digital advertisement from the Idaho Department of Commerce Division of Tourism (Source: Visit Idaho); 2) Installation of fiber network (Source: The Observer)





From top to bottom; 1) Streetscape project (Source: Franklin Downtown Partnership); 2) Intelligent Transportation Systems (Source: TransCore); 3) Trail connects recreational riders to Downtown Winter Garden (Source: SW Orlando Blog)

## TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS & POLICIES

### PRIORITIES

**T1. REDUCE CONGESTION THROUGH A SMART TRANSPORTATION NETWORK**

**T2. IMPROVE INTERNAL CONNECTIVITY**

**T3. PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE-OCCUPANCY VEHICLES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS AND WORKERS**

**T4. ENSURE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS POSITIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND AESTHETICS**

### 2017-2021 ACTIONS

1. Support implementation of the County's bicycle and pedestrian walkways plan in cooperation with the County school system as well as surrounding jurisdictions. (T2, T3)
  - Continue to implement the bicycle and pedestrian walkways plan and collaborate with non-County staff, as necessary, to meet the plan's vision of creating an integrated, alternative transportation network.
2. Complete land use action item 10; create design standards for RES2, RES3, and RES4 zoning districts.
3. Complete full update to McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) to leverage regional transportation funding. See Land Use action item 21. (T1, T2, T3, T4)
4. Complete review of UDC to identify opportunities to improve internal connectivity and community character through new streetway design and related design requirements. Coordinate with Land Use action item. (T2, T4)

## LONG TERM ACTIONS

1. Carryout transportation and roads projects included in the identified in the Capital Improvements Program and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

## POLICIES

- Promote connections between residential developments via ongoing development of the multi-use trail system.
- Ensure that prime commercial and industrial acreage is served with the necessary transportation infrastructure.
- Ensure that new and reconstructed roadways continue to be designed to accommodate multiple functions, including pedestrian facilities and bicycle routes as well as local vehicular circulation (complete streets approach).
- Promote necessary transportation projects within the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), particularly addressing key corridors such as GA 400.
- Design new and reconstructed roadways using context-sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts.
- Continue to partner with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to address traffic issues along state routes.
- Foster existing relationships with the ARC in terms of regional transportation planning and air quality concerns.
- Pursue funding opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels to support identified transportation projects.
- Encourage design that facilitates walking, biking, carpooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- Continue to support the creation of a County-wide pedestrian and bike path network that connects with surrounding jurisdictions.
- Continue to coordinate the bike and pedestrian

network with the Forsyth County Board of Education and neighboring jurisdictions to create a regional network.

- Encourage safe pedestrian and bicycle travel through the provision of grade or grade-separated trail and sidewalk crossings.

## QUALITY OF LIFE ACTIONS & POLICIES

### 2017-2021 ACTIONS

1. Continue compliance with the procedures for annual review and update of the Capital Improvements Element and Community Work Program as required by the Impact Fee Program. (Q2, Q3)
2. Identify, review, and update the *Comprehensive Plan* and continue to monitor development to determine if the goals and objectives of the plan are being attained. (VS, GOALS)
3. Coordinate with the City of Cumming to identify further opportunities for joint service delivery.
  - Continue to perform annual reviews in order to identify and execute any necessary modifications to the Service Delivery Strategy.
4. Complete and implement the update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; update the Community Work Program to reflect resulting project list. (Q2, Q3)
5. Continue to identify and implement restoration projects as part of the county's watershed improvement plan. (VS)
  - This is an ongoing effort. Staff will continue to implement projects as required by the Georgia Natural Resource Department's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.
6. Perform public education and sponsor outreach activities related to water quality, water conservation and solid waste recycling. (Q3)
  - Continue to provide public programs to inform and engage citizens. This program is now operated as a joint partnership between Forsyth



## PRIORITIES

**Q1. MAINTAIN THE COUNTY'S HIGH QUALITY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

**Q2. ENHANCE AND EXPAND PASSIVE AND ACTIVE PARK SPACE**

**Q3. PROTECT AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE COUNTY'S NATURAL ASSETS**

**VS. VISION STATEMENT (SEE SECTION 3.2)**

County and the 501C3 created for Keep Forsyth County Beautiful; the reduction in costs reflects this new service arrangement. In-kind services will also be provided by the County to keep the program in full operation.

7. Expand best management practices related to water quality, including green infrastructure and low impact development, to protect water resources. (Q3)
  - Continue to evaluate water quality protection measures per state and federal regulations.
8. Update County Water System and Sewer Distribution System Master Plans to align both plans with projections and the land use vision provided in the *Comprehensive Plan*.
9. Hold Work Session between County leadership and Forsyth County Schools leadership to review growth and school planning implications of newly adopted comprehensive plan. (Q1)
10. Review open space requirements within the UDC and make revisions to maximize the utility of these areas. (Q2, Q3)
11. Continue to update existing and future conditions floodplain maps. (VS)
  - Efforts on the map updates per the Metropolitan North Georgia Water District requirements were largely completed in 2014. The County began work with State of Georgia Coordinating Technical Partner to initiate FIRM update work for the Etowah River Watershed during 2015. In early 2016, the contractor requested that the study be extended downstream into Cherokee County to update a small portion of floodplain on the left bank of the Etowah that falls within Forsyth County, and to provide a better tie-in to the effective Cherokee County floodplain. FEMA expects periodic updates of the floodplain maps, approximately every five years.
12. Perform mandatory stormwater management plan update. (VS)
  - Ensure the completion of the plan update per the Metropolitan North Georgia Water District requirements. The existing permit is dated 2012 and is renewed every five years with changes expected in 2017.
13. Carry out land use action items 3 through 5 to help protect and provide access to the County's natural and cultural assets. (Q3)
14. Develop greenspace infrastructure plan to reflect the goals and objectives of the *Comprehensive Plan* as it relates to green infrastructure planning. (Q2, Q3)
  - The plan should incorporate elements of the County's various plans that contribute to the county's green infrastructure, including: parks and recreation, land use policies, ordinance elements, development standards and other elements determined appropriate.
  - Updates to the parks and recreation master plan will also be used to assist the process.
  - As a part of the request for proposal process, the County should clearly articulate its goals for this plan; the effort is foreseen as a multi-department effort.
15. Recommend linkages between local, state and federal recreational resources and assist with the pursuit of funding to implement these linkages. (Q2)

16. Promote cultural resource protection and education through partnership with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and research potential protection measures that could be incorporated into code regulations. (Q3)
- Outline ways to pursue cultural preservation. Staff to present these options at a Board of Commissioners' work session.

### LONG TERM ACTIONS

1. Continue to update existing and future conditions floodplain maps.
2. Perform mandatory stormwater management plan update.

### POLICIES

- Preserve greenspace and meaningful open space.
- Continue to implement greenway plans and passive recreation opportunities that will foster the conservation of open space and viewsheds.
- Work towards the creation of inter-jurisdictional trail systems and recreational resources.
- Maintain tree replacement efforts including the pursuit of funding for tree planting projects.
- Ensure safe and adequate supplies of water through conservation and protection of surface and ground water sources.
- Pursue a long-term water supply through a multi-faceted approach via public as well as private partnerships, including the potential use of additional reservoirs, adaptive re-use of existing quarries, and groundwater resources.
- Implement water quality protection for all water bodies per local, state, and federal requirements.
- Adequately address drought conditions through conservation measures and public education for indoor and outdoor water use.
- Encourage the reduction of impervious surfaces including the use of methods such as pervious parking surfaces.
- Support cultural resource preservation education, related to both architectural and landscape resources, in order to promote preservation choices for property owners.
- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure, rights-of-way, and public facilities in order to minimize the need for costly new or expanded facilities.
- Continue to invest in accessible parks, open space, recreational facilities, and public gathering places to enhance the quality of life.
- Support the local school board and encourage school location decisions that sustain County growth and development plans.
- Continue regular coordination with Forsyth County schools on impacts of residential developments of a certain size.
- Stay abreast of recommendations and plan updates of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and update policies/programs as appropriate.
- Provide educational tools and resources for the community to increase water conservation.
- Support the use and development of environmentally sustainable building and landscape practices to reduce energy and water needs.
- Address the necessity to treat and return wastewater to the watersheds as quickly as possible.
- Continue to work with the state health department to guarantee septic systems are in compliance to prevent groundwater contamination.
- Support water re-use methods as part of an integrated water conservation program including water re-use irrigation systems.
- Foster high design standards for community facilities to generate local community pride and to establish standards for quality private sector development within the community.
- Accommodate expansion of senior services as necessary to meet the needs of the senior population.
- Coordinate natural resource protection with regional planning initiatives such as the designation of special areas through the state's Regionally Important Resource (RIR) program that is incorporated into regional resource plans.



## 6.3 COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM (2017-2021)

The formal five-year Community Work Program (CWP), formerly called the Short Term Work Program, is provided on the following pages in table format as required by the Georgia DCA. Two tables are provided:

- Figure 6.1 lists all capital improvements that tie directly to impact fees. This list addresses investment in public facilities, including parks, public safety, and water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure.
- Figures 6.2 lists planning action items that do not require a capital investment, organized by plan element. These actions align with the lists introduced in Section 6.2, Actions and Policies.

A CWP Report of Accomplishments will be provided as a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan beginning in 2018, which shall be integrated with the County's capital improvement element (CIE) and impact fee report update that is annually required to meet state planning requirements.



From top to bottom; 1) Big Creek Greenway; 2) Children at play at local park; 3) Lake Lanier



Figure 6.1: 2017-2021 Community Work Program, Capital Improvement Projects

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>										
Fire Station 8 - Hwy 306 North-Replacement	✓						Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ SPLOST	\$2,900,000	84.07%
Fire Station 6 - Johns Creek-New	✓						Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ SPLOST	\$2,900,000	100.00%
Fire Station 9- Rt 369 E. Forsyth Co Replacement	✓						Fire and Rescue	Impact Fee/ SPLOST	\$3,460,000	66.90%
Fire Station 15 -Hwy 20 Haw Creek Replacement		✓					Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ County	\$3,460,000	63.90%
Fire Station 11 - Pittman Road New			✓				Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ SPLOST	\$2,615,550	100.00%
Fire Station 10 Old Atlanta Road - Replacement			✓				Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ County	\$3,460,000	63.90%
Fire Station 13 Old Federal Road-New				✓	✓		Fire and Rescue	Impact Fees/ County	\$3,460,212	100.00%
<b>PUBLIC LIBRARIES</b>						2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
South District Expansion and Renovation (Sharon Forks)	✓	✓	✓				Public Libraries	SPLOST/ Impact Fees	\$5,919,646	53.00%
<b>PARKS AND RECREATION</b>						2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
Ducktown Park Improvements	✓						Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	\$550,000	100.00%
South Forsyth Soccer Complex Improvements	✓						Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	\$32,000	100.00%
Matt Community Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Parks & Recreation	Impact Fees/ Park Bond	\$12,400,000	64.92%
Lanierland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Parks & Recreation	Impact Fees/ Park Bond	\$31,000,000	85.67%
Caney Creek Park-Waterscape/ Pavilion	✓						Parks & Recreation	Park Bond	\$1,450,000	100.00%
Big Creek Greenway Phase 5		✓					Parks & Recreation	Park Bond	\$4,600,000	100.00%



<b>PARKS AND RECREATION</b>										Impact Fee % of Eligibility
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
Sharon Springs Parking Lot			✓				Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	\$900,000	100.00%
Threatt Park				✓			Parks & Recreation	Park Bond	\$20,000,000	100.00%
Fowler Park Expansion			✓				Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	\$1,500,000	100.00%
<b>WATER</b>										Impact Fee % of Eligibility
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
<b>Source Water</b>										
Groundwater Wells	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,000,000	0.00%
Forsyth Lanier Intake						✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$29,000,000	0.00%
48" Raw Water Pipeline						✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$7,139,400	0.00%
<b>Distribution</b>										
North Tank	✓	✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$2,000,000	0.00%
Water Master Plan Improvements - Lines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$18,388,222	0.00%
Water Master Plan Improvements - Tanks						✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$77,820,000	0.00%
Water Master Plan Improvements - Pumps	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$8,020,000	0.00%
Water Master Plan Improvements - PRVs		✓	✓	✓		✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,780,000	0.00%
Gwinnett Water Connection		✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%
<b>Transportation Relocations</b>										
SR 369 at Six Mile Creek Bridge - Water Relocates					✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%
SR 369 at Two Mile Creek - Water Relocates					✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%

WATER	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
SR 369 at Lake Lanier - New Water Line	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$653,685	0.00%
SR 53 at Lake Lanier - New Water Line	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$590,325	0.00%
Facilities					✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%
Bethelview Road - Phase 2	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%
SR 9 Fulton to McFarland				✓			Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$790,000	0.00%
SR 9 McFarland to Post					✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,900,000	0.00%
SR 9 Post to SR 141					✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$7,400,000	0.00%
<b>Facilities</b>										
Water Treatment Facility Expansion	✓					✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$33,000,000	0.00%
Water Treatment Facility - Chemical Feed Upgrades	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$2,000,000	0.00%
Water Renewal and Replacement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$12,250,000	0.00%
SCADA Improvements (engineering & implementation)	✓	✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,000,000	0.00%
Security / Vulnerability Assessment Upgrades	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$300,000	0.00%
Water & Sewer Administration Building	✓	✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,000,000	0.00%
Expansion of Maintenance Facility	✓	✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,000,000	0.00%



WASTEWATER		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
<b>Collection System</b>											
Lower Cogburn Gravity Line	✓							Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$2,466,855	0.00%
Brannon Road Gravity Sewer	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,766,682	0.00%
Newton PS and FM	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,663,890	0.00%
Chadbourne Gravity Sewer Upgrade	✓							Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$913,792	0.00%
Sewer Master Plan Upgrades			✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,318,180	0.00%
<b>Facilities</b>											
Chattahoochee Discharge	✓							Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,775,000	0.00%
Shakerag WRF	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$36,887,853	0.00%
Shakerag WRF Design (permitting & construction management)	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,820,028	0.00%
Shakerag Collection System	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$3,970,000	0.00%
Fowler WRF Expansion - 5 MGD	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$30,000,000	0.00%
Septage Receiving Station (Fowler)	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,000,000	0.00%
Dick's Creek WRF 365 Discharge (permitting)	✓							Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$60,000	0.00%
Dicks Creek Reuse Connection to 20-inch main			✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$500,000	0.00%
Dicks Creek Plant Phase Out				✓				Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,000,000	0.00%
James Creek 365 Discharge	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$753,000	0.00%
James Creek WRF Future Expansion - 2.0 mgd	✓	✓						Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$12,000,000	0.00%

<b>WASTEWATER</b>	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
Manor WRF Cold Weather Discharge	✓	✓					Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$1,300,000	0.00%
Lake Lanier WRF - Conceptual Planning & Design	✓	✓	✓				Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$900,000	0.00%
Lake Lanier WRF - 1 MGD Facility		✓	✓	✓	✓		Water & Sewer	Water & Sewer	\$14,000,000	0.00%
<b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; ROADS</b>	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
PEW22SR 371SR 9 to Kelly Mill Road	✓	✓					Engineering	Bond	\$3,000,000	100.00%
PEW29SR 369SR 9 to SR 306	✓	✓					Engineering	Bond	\$15,600,000	100.00%
PEI114 SR 369 Interchange	✓	✓					Engineering	Bond, Impact Fees	\$18,000,000	100.00%
GI400 McGinnis Ferry Road at GA 400 Interchange/Bethany Bend to Union Hill Road	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	Bond	\$12,089,697	100.00%
PEN12 Ronald Reagan Boulevard Extension/Majors Road to McFarland Parkway	✓	✓					Engineering	Bond	\$43,430,000	100.00%
PEN13 Ronald Reagan Boulevard Extension/McFarland Parkway to Union Hill Road	✓	✓					Engineering	Bond	\$1,287,500	100.00%
PE07W Bethelview Road, Phase II/Cas-tleberry Road to SR 20	✓	✓	✓	✓			Engineering	State/Fed	\$4,504,711	100.00%
PEW13 Brookwood Road SR 141 to McGinnis Ferry Road (SPLOST V, VI & VII project)	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$6,200,000	100.00%
PEW12 Castleberry Road City Limits to Bethelview Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$13,000,000	100.00%
PEW11 McFarland Parkway/GA 400 to McGinnis Ferry Road						✓	Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$200,000	100.00%



TRANSPORTATION & ROADS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
PEW08 McGinnis Ferry Road Sargent Road to Union Hill Road (SPLOST V, VI & VII project)	✓	✓	✓	✓			Engineering	Bond	\$19,250,000	100.00%
PEW10 Mullinax Road/Union Hill Road/McFarland Parkway to SR 9	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VI SPLOST VII	\$13,000,000	0.00%
PEW16 Pilgrim Mill Road/City Limits to Freedom Parkway (SPLOST VI & VII project)	✓						Engineering	BOND SPLOST VII	\$9,750,000	0.00%
PEW15 Sharon Road/SR 141 to Old Atlanta Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$9,924,252	100.00%
PEW09 Union Hill Road & BridgeGA 400 to McFarland Parkway (SPLOST V, VI & VII project)	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$19,760,000	0.00%
PEW14 Old Atlanta Road, Phase II/ Sharon Road to Nichols Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VI & VII	\$6,000,000	100.00%
PEW28 Old Atlanta Road, Phase III/St. Marlo Country Club Pkway to McGinnis Ferry Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$5,000,000	100.00%
PEW27 Old Atlanta Road, Phase IV/St. Marlo Country Club Pkway to Old Atlanta Club (SPLOST V, VI & VII/Category B project)	✓						Engineering	Bond/SPLOST VII	\$13,000,000	100.00%
PEW26 Old Atlanta Road, Phase V/Old Atlanta Club to James Burgess Road (SPLOST V, VI & VII project)	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$14,000,000	100.00%
PE100 SR 369 at Mount Tabor Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$650,000	0.00%
PE101 SR 369 at Old Federal Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$650,000	0.00%
PE102 SR 369 at Pooles Mill Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$600,000	0.00%
PE105 SR 306 at Little Mill Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$550,000	0.00%
PE106 SR 400 at Jot-em-down Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$500,000	0.00%

TRANSPORTATION & ROADS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
PE108SR 9 at Campground Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$200,000	0.00%
PE109 SR 9 at Smith Lane	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$200,000	0.00%
PE110 SR 9 at Martin Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$200,000	0.00%
PE111 SR 53 at Dogwood Path	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$300,000	0.00%
PE113 Old Alpharetta Road at SR 141	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$250,000	100.00%
PE184 John Burruss Road at Karr Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$750,000	0.00%
PE185 Bannister Road at Elmo Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE186 Wallace Tatum Road Wright Bridge Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE187 Wallace Tatum Road at Burnt Bridge Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE188 Holbrook Road at Burnt Bridge Rd	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE190 Settingdown Rd at Martin Rd	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$750,000	0.00%
PE192 SR 9 at Oak Grove Circle (south end)	✓	✓					Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE193 Cross Roads Road at Ben-nett Road	✓	✓					Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE194 SR 9 at Dr. Dunn Road	✓	✓					Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE195 SR 9 at Piney Grove Road	✓	✓					Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PE196 Campground Road at Dickerson Road	✓	✓					Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%



TRANSPORTATION & ROADS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
PEB09 McFarland Road/Shiloh Road Sidewalk 5' Sidewalk for pedestrian access to Big Creek Greenway from Ronald Reagan to Shiloh Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VI / Grant	\$420,000	0.00%
PEF39 Settingdown RoadSR 369 to GA 400 - Road Reclamation & Overlay	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VI	\$450,000	0.00%
PEI97 McGinnis Ferry/McFarland Signal UpgradesSignal Work for 6 locations on McGinnis Ferry & 9 locations on McFarland Blvd- PFA W/State funding of \$320,000	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII / Grant	\$400,000	0.00%
PB19A Nichols RoadOld Atlanta Road to Nichols Drive	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$1,000,000	0.00%
PB19B Nichols DriveNichols Road to James Burgess	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$500,000	0.00%
PEB20 Majors RoadPost Road to Big Creek Greenway	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$600,000	0.00%
PEB21 Caney RoadBrookwood Road to Old Alpharetta Road	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$2,320,455	0.00%
PEB22 Old Alpharetta RoadCaney Road to SR 141							Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$880,000	100.00%
PEB23 Majors RoadSR 141 to Ronald Reagan Blvd	✓						Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$280,000	0.00%
PEB25 Trammel Road-Windermere S/D to SR 20	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$352,453	0.00%
PEB26 James Burgess Road - West side from current ending to SR 20	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$210,000	0.00%
PEB27 Sanders Rd-East side from SR 20 to Buford Dam Rd	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$293,552	0.00%



TRANSPORTATION & ROADS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
PEB28 Nuckolls Rd -East side from SR 20 to Buford Dam Rd	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$542,205	0.00%
PEB29 Echols Rd - North & East side from SR 20 to SR 20	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$501,160	0.00%
PEB30 Audreys Way - North Side from Grand Cascades S/D to James Burgess Rd	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$255,000	0.00%
PEB07 Freedom Pkwy - Pilgrm Mill Rd to SR 306	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$431,479	0.00%
PEB31 Samples Rd - SR 20 to Buford Dam Rd	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$485,000	0.00%
PEB24 Old Atlanta RoadNorthern Oak Drive to Melody Mizer Lane	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$1,300,000	0.00%
PEB16 Melody Mize LaneDaves Creek Park to Old Atlanta Road	✓						Engineering	Bond	\$540,000	0.00%
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT Moreland Altobelli Program Management Services	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	Project related funding	\$300,000	0.00%
RESURFACINGResurfacing 2015-2020	✓	✓	✓	✓			Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$17,300,000	0.00%
UNPAVED ROAD IMPROVEMENT-SU Upgrade Gravel Roads	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$750,000	0.00%
Engineering, right of way, utilities, construction or undesignated-contingency	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	Bond/ SPLOST VII	\$2,820,000	0.00%
Not identified TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS-Bond projects	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	Bond	\$4,850,000	0.00%
Not identified TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS-SPLOST VII	✓	✓	✓				Engineering	SPLOST VII	\$9,500,000	0.00%
Not identified TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS-State Funding							Engineering	State	\$320,000	0.00%

Note: "Impact Fee % of Eligibility" - those projects showing 100% are arterial roads and their related improvements that would be eligible for impact fee funding if a Transportation Impact Fee was adopted.



Figure 6.2: 2017-2021 Community Work Program, Planning Projects

LAND USE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
1 Provide staff support to implement the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Planning and Community Development	General Fund	120 hours		0.00%
2 Monitor progress of the McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and adapt strategies to address major plan update (see action item 2.1).	✓	✓	✓				Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 hours annually		0.00%
3 Create an effective mass grading ordinance.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund	100 Hours	\$25,000 for Consultant	0.00%
4 Renovate the current Countywide tree ordinance, directing focus on preserving tree strands and legacy trees while preventing clear cutting.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	100 Hours	\$50,000 for Consultant	0.00%
5 Create an incentives program for innovative, low impact storm water design that minimizes storm water infrastructure.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund	100 Hours	\$25,000 for Consultant	0.00%
6 Create new mixed-use zoning districts that ensure the combination of multiple uses while overhauling the MPD zoning district to encourage mixed type and density residential developments without the requirement of an additional commercial component.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	160 Hours		0.00%
7 Complete North Forsyth Subarea Study.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund	96 Hours	\$80,000 for Consultant	0.00%
8 Evaluate and update the rezoning and conditional use permit processes to improve ease of administration.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	120 hours		0.00%
9 Create Coal Mountain Overlay.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 hours		0.00%
10 Create additional design standards for RES2, RES3, and RES4 zoning districts to encourage quality development.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund	160 Hours		0.00%

LAND USE		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
11	Identify and refine corridors for commercial development.		✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	96 Hours		0.00%
12	Undertake a subarea study and plan for the South GA 400 character area.		✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	96 Hours	\$80,000 for Consultant	0.00%
13	Undertake a subarea study and plan for the North GA 400 Corridor character area.		✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	96 Hours	\$80,000 for Consultant	0.00%
14	Undertake a subarea study and plan for the Haw Creek/Daves Creek character area.		✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 Hours	\$40,000 for Consultant	0.00%
15	Undertake a subarea study and plan for the Campground Area.		✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 Hours	\$40,000 for Consultant	0.00%
16	Establish a County-wide Design Review Board.			✓				Planning and Community Development	General Fund	175 Hours <sup>1</sup>		0.00%
17	Develop design guidelines for the Vickery Creek, Big Creek, and Sawnee Mountain character areas.			✓				Planning and Community Development	General Fund	300 hours	\$180,000 for Consultant	0.00%
18	Evaluate and update six corridor overlay districts.			✓				Planning and Community Development	General Fund	600 hours		0.00%
19	Evaluate UDC Chapter 3 for necessary improvements for code definitions and modify other chapters related to these changes.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	75 hours		0.00%
20	Reformulate Conservation Sub-division Standards and evaluate potential incentives as well as requirements for protection and accessibility.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	120 Hours		0.00%
21	Carryout a major plan update to the McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI).				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	160 Hours	\$120,000 for Consultant	0.00%
22	Create a land trust and/or transfer of development rights program.					✓		Planning and Community Development	General Fund	240 Hours		0.00%

<sup>1</sup> May necessitate additional staffing for implementation.



HOUSING		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
1	Complete housing study to develop a more robust understanding of housing needs and develop a realistic action plan to address needs.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 hours	\$60,000-\$80,000 for Consultant	0.00%
2	Amend code to minimize and discourage mass grading and tree loss within residential developments and existing residential properties. See Land Use action items 3 and 4.	✓	✓					Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund			0.00%
3	Revisit the County's variance procedure.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund	160 hours		0.00%
4	Implement code changes that allow for mixed-use zoning districts with housing to facilitate incorporation of a greater variety of housing types and price points. See Land Use action item 6.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund			0.00%
5	Assess effectiveness of new impact fee structure on housing developments and efficacy at assigning accurate costs of infrastructure to different housing development types.			✓				Planning and Community Development, Finance	General Fund	200 hours		0.00%
6	Complete review and assessment of residential subdivision ordinance and address identified improvements in code revision.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	200 hours		0.00%
7	Complete analysis of County code and policies to identify ways to facilitate custom housing.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 hours		0.00%
8	Evaluate staff capacity to meet and implement new design standards and zoning/development code components.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	40 hours		0.00%
9	Incorporate density bonus options within the Unified Development Code for multi-family developments.				✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund	100 hours		0.00%
10	Explore programs for higher density residential products based on the provision of specific amenities.					✓		Planning and Community Development	General Fund	50 hours		0.00%

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
1	Evaluate the current role and services of the Chamber; identify best partnership strategy moving forward, including funding from County. Coordinate with action items 6 and 7 and refine role and ongoing activities moving forward.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Chamber of Commerce	Occupancy Tax, Development Authority		\$370,000 annually <sup>1</sup>	0.00%
2	Complete annual Opportunity Zone report pursuant to state requirements.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning and Community Development	General Fund	25 hours annually		0.00%
3	Strengthen the partnership with the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce to expand economic development opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Multiple County Departments	General Fund	100 hours annually <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
4	Establish and maintain economic development page on County website. Explain Chamber's role in County's economic development and connection to County goals and funding.	✓						Planning and Community Development, Information Systems & Technology, Communications		40 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	General Fund		20 hours annually <sup>2</sup>		
5	Establish an ongoing partnership with Northeast Georgia Mountains Georgia Department of Community Affairs Tourism	✓						Chamber of Commerce, Planning and Community	General Fund	40 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	General Fund		20 hours annually <sup>2</sup>		
6	Update Economic Development Plan maintained by the Chamber of Commerce.	✓						Chamber of Commerce	General Fund	120 hours	\$150,000	0.00%
7	Establish an economic development role within the County administration pursuant to the outcomes of the Economic Development Plan.	✓						County Manager, BOC, Chamber of Commerce	General Fund		\$100,000-150,000 annually	0.00%

<sup>1</sup> Funding amount should be reevaluated as a part of the Economic Development Plan.

<sup>2</sup> This action is intended to fall under the direction of the new position as outlined in item 7



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
8	Formally establish a Community Improvement District in the southern portion of the County.		✓					Chamber of Commerce, BOC	Occupy Tax, Development Authority		Included in item cost <sup>1</sup>	0.00%
9	Identify incentives that are underused or required to attract businesses in service of the Economic Development Plan.		✓					County Manager	General Fund	80 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
10	Implement incentive recommendations from item 9.			✓				County Manager, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	See Note 2	TBD <sup>3</sup>	0.00%
11	Review development process to identify opportunities to improve efficiency for businesses and staff that facilitate desired development.			✓				County Manager, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	80 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
12	Update regulations and related administrative tools to implement recommendations of item 11.				✓			County Manager	General Fund	60 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
13	Create a small business initiative focused on supporting locally owned shops and restaurants.				✓	✓	✓	County Manager	General Fund	250 hours annually <sup>2</sup>		0.00%
14	Update ordinances to ensure that effective public gatherings (festivals, etc.) are permitted in appropriate locations.				✓			County Manager, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	40 hours		0.00%
15	Develop County-wide tourism strategy to include branding, marketing, and funding.					✓		County Manager, Chamber of Commerce	General Fund	100 hours <sup>2</sup>	\$150,000	0.00%
16	Incorporate recommendations of tourism strategy in Community Work Program.					✓		County Manager, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	10 hours <sup>2</sup>		0.00%

<sup>1</sup> Funding amount should be reevaluated as a part of the Economic Development Plan.

<sup>2</sup> This action will fall under the direction of the new position as outlined in Item 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cost dependent upon outcomes of Action 9.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT										Impact Fee % of Eligibility	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	
17	Expand County brand to market Forsyth to visitors.				✓		County Manager, Chamber of Commerce, Communications	General Fund	See Note 2.	Included in item 15 fee	0.00%
18	Complete feasibility study for a dedicated civic and performing arts center in the County.				✓		County Manager	General Fund, Grants	50 hours	\$50,000 for Consultant	0.00%
TRANSPORTATION										Impact Fee % of Eligibility	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	
1	Support implementation of the County's bicycle and pedestrian walkways plan in cooperation with the county school system as well as surrounding jurisdictions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund	40 hours annually		0.00%
2	Complete land use action item 10: Create design standards for RES2, RES3, and RES4 zoning districts.	✓					Planning and Community Development	General Fund			0.00%
3	Complete full update to McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) to leverage regional transportation funding. See Land Use action item 21.			✓			Planning and Community Development	General Fund			0.00%
4	Complete review and update of Unified Development Code to identify opportunities to improve internal connectivity and community character through new streetway design and related design requirements.			✓			Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund	120 hours		0.00%



QUALITY OF LIFE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
1 Continue compliance with the procedures for annual review and update of the Capital Improvements Element and Community Work Program as required by the Impact Fee Program.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Finance Planning and Community Development	General Fund	85 hours annually		0.00%
2 Identify, review, and update the Comprehensive Plan and continue to monitor development to determine if the goals and objectives of the plan are being attained.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning and Community Development	General Fund	75 hours annually		0.00%
3 Coordinate with the City of Cumming to identify further opportunities for joint service delivery.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning and Community Development	General Fund	20 hours annually		0.00%
4 Complete and implement the update to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; update the Community Work Program to reflect resulting project list. <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	40 hours annually		0.00%
5 Continue to identify and implement restoration projects as part of the County's watershed improvement plan.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Engineering	General Fund, Potential Grants		\$25,000	0.00%
6 Perform public education and sponsor outreach activities related to water quality, water conservation and solid waste recycling.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Keep Forsyth County Beautiful	Sponsorships & Donations		\$25,000	0.00%

<sup>1</sup> Hours and task reflect coordination of Planning and Community Development with the Parks and Recreation Department. All hours listed pertain to Planning and Community Development Department. Hours required by Parks and Recreation Department to be determined based on adopted plan.



QUALITY OF LIFE		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
7	Expand best management practices related to water quality, including green infrastructure and low impact development to protect water resources.	✓	✓	✓	✓			Multiple County Departments	General Fund	100 hours annually 40 hours per year	\$1,000,000	0.00%
8	Update County Water System and Sewer Distribution System Master Plans to align both plans with projections and the land use vision provided in the <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> .	✓	✓					Water and Sewer, Planning and Community Development	General Fund	200 hours		0.00%
9	Hold Work Session between County leadership and Forsyth County Schools leadership to review growth and school planning implications of newly adopted <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> .	✓						Multiple County Departments	General Fund	40 hours		0.00%
10	Review open space requirements within the Unified Development Code and make revisions to maximize the utility of these areas.	✓						Planning and Community Development	General Fund	65 hours		0.00%
11	Continue to update existing and future conditions floodplain maps.	✓					✓	Engineering	General Fund		\$80,000	0.00%
12	Perform mandatory stormwater management plan update.	✓					✓	Engineering	General Fund		\$80,000	0.00%
13	Carryout land use action items 3 through 5 to help protect and provide access to the county's natural and cultural assets.			✓	✓	✓		Planning and Community Development	General Fund			0.00%
14	Develop greenspace infrastructure plan to reflect the goals and objectives of the <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> as it relates to green infrastructure planning.			✓				Planning and Community Development	General Fund	160 hours	\$120,000 for Consultant	0.00%



QUALITY OF LIFE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022-2032	Responsibility	Funding Source	Estimated Staff Hours	Estimated Cost	Impact Fee % of Eligibility
15 Recommend linkages between local, state and federal recreational resources and assist with the pursuit of funding to implement these linkages.			✓				Planning and Community Development, Engineering	General Fund	40 hours		0.00%
16 Promote cultural resource protection and education through partnership with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and research potential protection measures that could be incorporated into code regulations.					✓		Planning and Community Development	General Fund	60 hours		0.00%

# APPENDIX A. EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

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# APPENDIX A: EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

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## A.1 INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

This Existing Conditions Report is a snapshot in time of Forsyth County—it documents where the County has been since the previous comprehensive planning effort in 2012 and where we were as a community when this plan was drafted in 2016.

Understanding existing conditions helps educate us on how recent changes may call for a continued or refreshed approach to planning our future. The review and inventory of existing conditions was one of the first steps in the process of updating the County's *Comprehensive Plan*, followed by visioning, prioritization, and implementation planning phases. This appendix was originally published during the planning process as the Existing Conditions Summary Report, which provided technical information and analysis as a starting point for the community to develop and refine its vision for Forsyth County's future.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

**Demographics** – What are the population trends in the County over time? How does Forsyth County's population compare to its neighbors?

**Economic Development** – How does Forsyth County stack up in terms of employment and business? What major developments are coming online soon?

**Community Resources** – The County has continuously invested in its community resources—what's new in the last five years? And how does the future of Forsyth County influence its residents, the region, and beyond?

**Transportation** – GA 400 is the spine of Forsyth County—it's the County's major transportation corridor, and generator of growth. What other transportation infrastructure and services will potentially drive or limit growth?

**Existing Land Use** – Growth is a way of life in Forsyth County—where is it occurring, and how is it changing the community?

**Housing** – What kinds of housing are most common in the County? What are the emerging trends?

Review of **Existing Plans** – What work has already been done, and what is underway?



## FORSYTH 2016

Located approximately 30 miles northeast of Atlanta, Forsyth County is part of the fast-growing, affluent suburbs of the northern metropolitan area (see Figure A.1). The County spans almost 250 square miles, and shares a border with Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Dawson, and Cherokee Counties. Major features include its eastern border with Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River, as well as Sawnee Mountain at the geographic heart of the County. The City of Cumming is the County's only incorporated area.

Like most of northern Georgia, Forsyth County was once populated by Native Americans for hundreds of years. By the early 1800s, the area had become a gateway for settlers traveling west on the Federal Road. Settlement increased when gold was discovered in the late 1820s, and the state officially recognized Forsyth County in 1832.

For most of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, the County remained a rural, largely agricultural area. This began to change in the 1980s, when GA 400 was completed to provide a direct link to Atlanta. Thanks in large part to this new conduit, the County grew in population by over 577 percent between 1980 and 2010. North of the established suburbs of Dunwoody, Roswell and Alpharetta, but directly in the path of growth, Forsyth County now has six GA 400 exits providing residents access to Atlanta's premier job centers just south of its border. As north Fulton County nears buildout, there is increasing interest in development in Forsyth County, evidenced by large-scale projects coming online, such as the Halcyon development in the far south of the County.

As the region's economy continues to rebound following the Great Recession (2008), Forsyth County's excellent schools, quality housing, access to employment, and natural beauty are likely to continue creating demand for more housing and services. Although this growth is positive, the County will be challenged to keep pace and provide additional infrastructure and services. Housing diversity will likely be a particular challenge; as the County's service and retail footprint increases, local employers may find it harder to attract the best employees if a variety of housing types and price points are located too far afield.

---

Maintaining the quality of life which makes Forsyth so attractive is key to the County's future. Without careful forethought and planning, a congested Forsyth County with a lower quality of life is probable. By thoroughly understanding the existing conditions of the County, residents and stakeholders have an opportunity now to foster Forsyth's growth and development in alignment with a community-led vision for the future.

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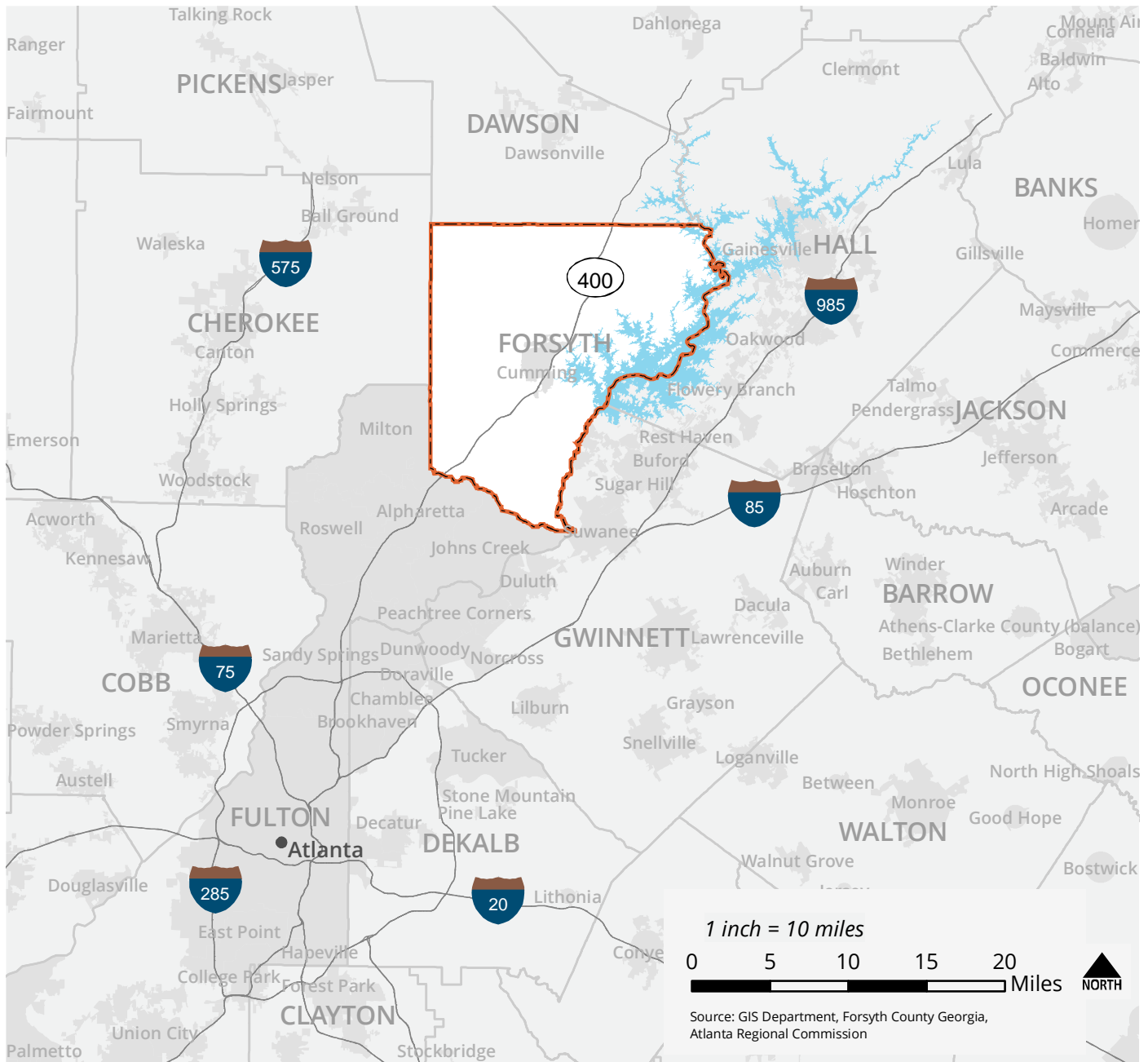
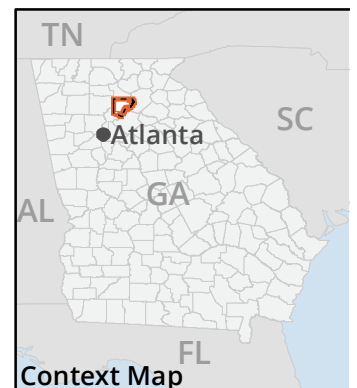


Figure A.1: Location Map

- Forsyth County Boundary
- County Boundaries
- Municipalities
- Lake Lanier
- Expressways

Source: GIS Department, Forsyth County Georgia; Atlanta Regional Commission



## REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS

The Comprehensive Plan builds upon the foundation of a number of existing plans, summarized below.

### 2012 FORSYTH COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan was intended to guide Forsyth County's growth by directing intensity, location, and phasing of development while maintaining general land use compatibility. At its core was the identification of character areas, which were established to help guide future growth in a manner that respected the look and identity of the County's variety of communities. The 2012 Comprehensive Plan also considered a variety of game-changers that included existing land use patterns, blighted and transitional areas, environmentally-sensitive land, potential infill development, and local development policies.

### COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Forsyth County completed a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) in 2011, and an update of the CTP is scheduled to begin in 2016. The 2011 CTP provided a comprehensive series of transportation projects identified for short-, medium- and long-term action. In the short term, most projects address roadway capacity and operations; medium- and long-term projects are also mostly roadway capacity projects in addition to bicycle and pedestrian improvements concentrated in the southern half of the County. Because of the close connection between land use and transportation, this update to the Comprehensive Plan will significantly influence the 2016 CTP.

### BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION & PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS PLAN

The vision for active transportation in Forsyth County is set by the Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways (BTPWP) 2025 Plan. The BTPWP was first adopted in 2002 with updates completed in 2008 and 2015. In total, the 2015 BTPWP had six policy recommendations focusing on coordination and more detailed planning, in addition to an extensive project list. One of the main challenges identified in the 2015 BTPWP update is finding funding for active transportation projects. Active transportation projects are generally supportive of higher development densities and can be coveted community amenities; the recommendations from the 2015 plan can help guide growth towards areas that will have more complete pedestrian and bicyclist networks.

### FORSYTH COUNTY WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

Completed in March 2008, the County's Water Distribution System Master Plan's (WDSMP) intent was to create a model of its system to act as a decision-making tool for existing and future improvements. This model was then used to develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) focusing on serving existing needs and future growth in the most cost-effective manner. Using the model, the plan recommended a series of projects for a total investment of \$107 million. These projects included 483,292 linear feet of new or duplicate pipe, 3 new storage tanks, 2 expansions of existing tanks, 1 new pump station and 1 significant upgrade to an existing pump station. The WDSMP anticipated a future with much quicker growth than the County has experienced in the past years, and its recommended infrastructure can likely support the population growth expected in Forsyth County until 2040. Revised population projections and updated infrastructure recommendations are included in the County's new Water Distribution System Master Plan, recently updated in 2016.

### **FORSYTH COUNTY SEWER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

Like the Water Distribution System Plan, the Sewer System Master Plan Update (SSMP) used a model of the system to analyze current and future conditions. Published in August 2009, the plan evaluated existing sewer flow allocation, accounted for future sewer flow projections and capacity limitations, and examined water treatment alternatives. To serve the anticipated future population, the plan recommended a number of sewer extensions and replacements, the installation of major and minor lift stations, and alterations to existing lift stations for a total of \$81.1 million in improvements. An update to the 2009 Sewer System Master Plan is currently underway and will be complete later in 2016.

### **COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM-WIDE RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

Originally created in 1998, the Comprehensive System-Wide Recreation Master Plan has been updated multiple times, and is currently undergoing a fourth revision. The plan addresses both active and passive recreation facilities in the County, and includes recommendations for land acquisitions, improvement to existing sites, programming recommendations, greenways and trail development, an implementation strategy and a capital improvements program. Since it was last completed, the County has implemented multiple projects and expanded its parks system significantly. The current update is expected to be complete in late 2016, and will be incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan as appropriate.

### **MCFARLAND-STONEY POINT LCI**

The McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study area is located east of GA 400 and runs from the Fulton County line to Lanier Technical College. The LCI provided a framework for the County to pursue a higher quality of life in the study area by linking land use planning with greater transportation options. The plan, most recently updated in 2011, specifically focused on access management that would enable the new Ronald Reagan Boulevard to serve as a village center. Extension of and access to the Big Creek Greenway is another key element.



## A.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

### INTRODUCTION

Demographic data for Forsyth County and comparison communities was analyzed to identify population trends, and to provide a snapshot of its population to inform discussions surrounding the long-term needs of the community.

Information regarding population, household, age, race, ethnicity, education, and income was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. This information was reported from the 2010 Decennial Census as well as the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS). Figures from the 2014 ACS Report, the most recent information report on file with the U.S. Census Bureau, were developed through estimated data gathered over the year of 2014.

This demographic analysis uses U.S. Census Bureau information to create educated demographic observations based on data trends. Both actual population counts and data estimates were reviewed to help ensure that the analysis covers the most recent time period. In order to evaluate Forsyth

County within the regional context, comparative data for the adjacent counties of Fulton, Cherokee, Gwinnett, and Hall were examined. In addition, data were also analyzed over an extended period of time to identify trends. For example, although Forsyth County has one of the smaller populations of the comparison counties, it has the highest growth rate during a 40-year time period.

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Analyzing age, race, ethnicity, and education trends in Forsyth County helps develop an understanding of the values and culture of the County's population. This is important when determining a direction for growth and development. It is also important to consider average household size, income, and number of households to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan makes appropriate recommendations for improving quality of life.

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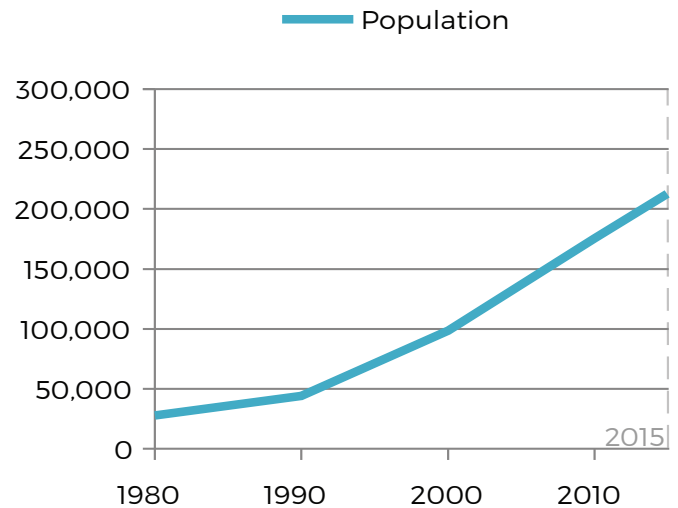


## EXISTING POPULATION

The population estimate for Forsyth County in 2015 is 212,438. Forsyth County is the second smallest of the five comparison counties, being slightly larger than Hall County with a population estimate of 193,535 in 2015. The largest county of the study group is Fulton with a population of 1,010,562 in 2015. Although the population of Forsyth County is smaller in comparison to others in the region, its recorded population growth rate of 21 percent from 2010 to 2015 is the highest. Forsyth County has recorded dramatic population growth for all Decennial Census reports since 1980, with ten-year growth rates consistently above 50 percent. This rate of growth is more than triple that of the State of Georgia.

The City of Cumming is the only incorporated area in Forsyth County, representing 2.7 percent of the total Forsyth County population as recorded by the 2014 American Community Survey; this is less than the 3 percent of the population that it accounted for in the 2010 Census. Unincorporated Forsyth County has seen disproportionate growth compared to the City of Cumming since 1990, with Cumming dropping from 6.4 percent to 2.7 percent of the total Forsyth County population. These data are significant in showing the growth of the unincorporated area in Forsyth County and should be considered when evaluating the possibility of more incorporated areas.

Figure A.4: Population Growth 1980-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Figure A.5 illustrates the population density distribution throughout the County, with southern portion of the County having the highest concentration of people. The map also shows limited population just east of GA 400, reflecting the large amount of commercial uses in these areas.

Figure A.2: Total Population 1980-2015

	Forsyth	Fulton	Cherokee	Gwinnett	Hall	Georgia
2015	212,438	1,010,562	235,900	895,823	193,535	10,214,860
2010	175,511	920,581	214,346	805,321	179,684	9,687,653
2000	98,407	816,006	141,903	588,448	139,277	8,186,453
1990	44,083	648,951	90,204	352,190	95,428	6,478,216
1980	27,958	589,904	51,699	166,903	75,649	5,463,105
Total Change	21.0%	9.8%	10.1%	11.2%	7.7%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Figure A.3: Total Population and Percent Change 1980-2014

	1990		2000		2010		2014	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
City of Cumming	2,828	6.4%	4,220	4.3%	5,283	3.0%	5,538	2.7%
Unincorporated County	41,255	93.6%	94,187	95.7%	170,228	97.0%	198,764	97.3%
Total Forsyth County	44,083	100.0%	98,407	100.0 %	175,511	100.0 %	204,302	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2015 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan



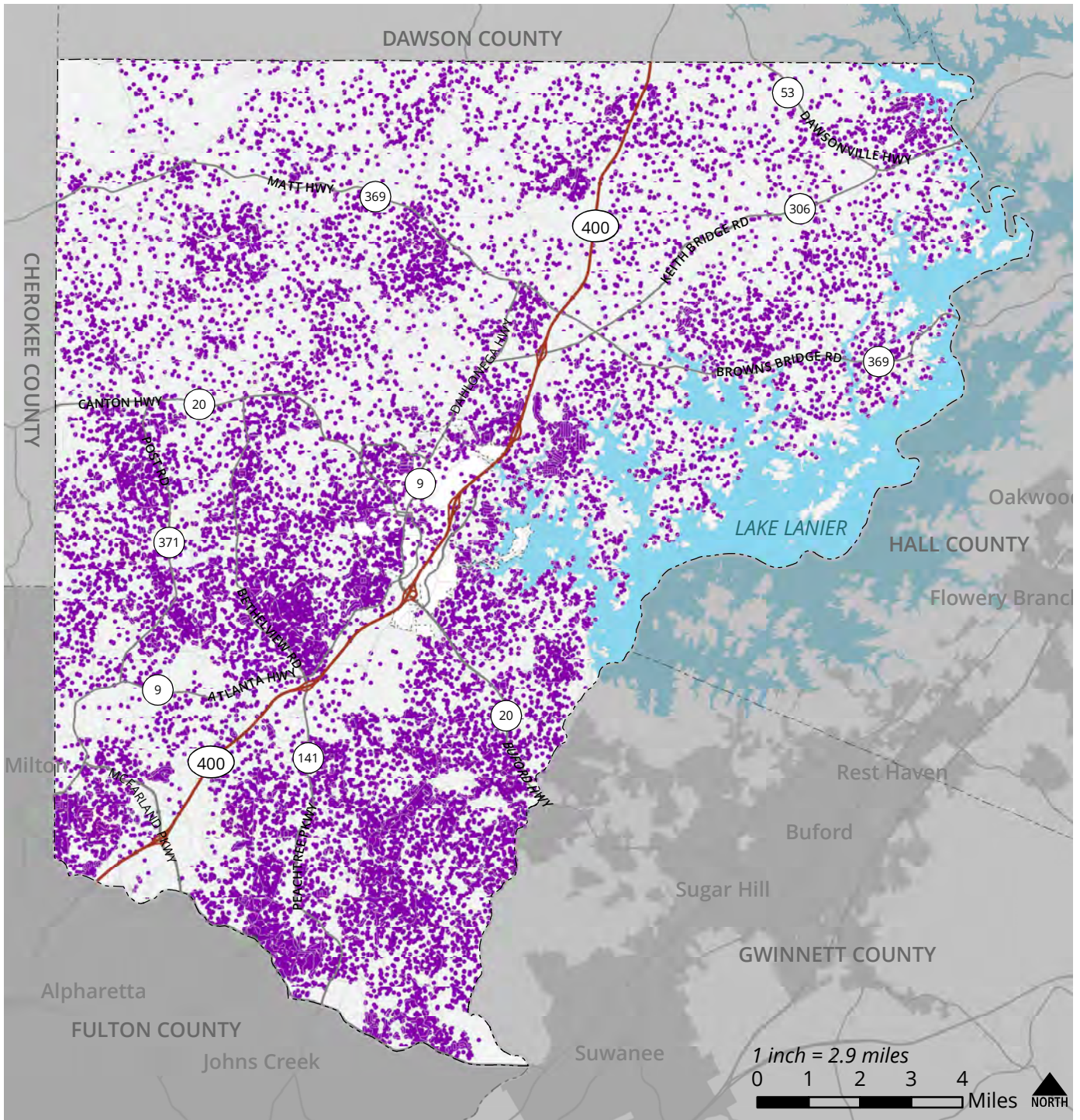


Figure A.5: Population Dot Density

- 10 Residents



## PROJECTED POPULATION

A population projection is an estimate of future population based on assumptions for growth. For the update to the County's *Comprehensive Plan*, a preliminary population projection was calculated based on recent development and demographic trends. County permitting data was examined to determine a general pace of residential growth. Based on permits approved for new housing units between 2013 and 2015, the County has averaged 3,172 new residential units per year. When the County's average household size is applied to this figure, the population of Forsyth County is growing by approximately 9,326 new residents annually.

If one assumes that this number stays relatively constant, the total population is projected to be 353,518 by 2030, and 446,778 by 2040 (Figure A.7). For 2037, the planning horizon of this Comprehensive Plan update, the projected population based on residential permits is 418,800. These projections do assume rezonings to land in various parts of the County, consistent with rezonings pursued by property owners in recent years.

Following the visioning process and refinement of the community's vision for future growth and development, revised population projections were created. These revised projections, provided in Section 3.7 of the main document, reflect the community's vision for future growth and development and the County's ability to accommodate additional population in its remaining, undeveloped land.

Figure A.6: 2013-2015 County Residential Permit Data

Type of Permit	2013	2014	2015
Single-Family	2,563	2,436	2,812
Multi-Family	0	427	539
Apartment	216	458	15
Mobile Home	11	21	14
TOTAL	2,790	3,342	3,383

Source: Forsyth County permitting data

Figure A.7: Population Projection Based on Recent County Permit Approvals

2015	2020	2030	2040
213,628	260,258	353,518	446,778

Source: Jacobs



## HOUSEHOLDS

Forsyth County had an estimated 59,433 households in 2010. At that time, the average household size was measured to be 2.94 persons. This is similar to that of Gwinnett County (2.98), the highest of the areas analyzed and much greater than that of Fulton County (2.36), which is the lowest average household size. The average household size in Forsyth County has only mildly fluctuated since 1980. There were an estimated 66,429 households in 2014 according to the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS.

Figure A.8: Number of Households/Average Household Size, Forsyth County

	Number of Households	Average Household Size
1980	9,395	2.97
1990	15,395	2.75
2000	34,565	2.83
2010	59,433	2.94
2014	66,429 (+/-1,307)	3.07

Source: US Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Figure A.9: Number of Households/Average Household Size in 2010 and 2014

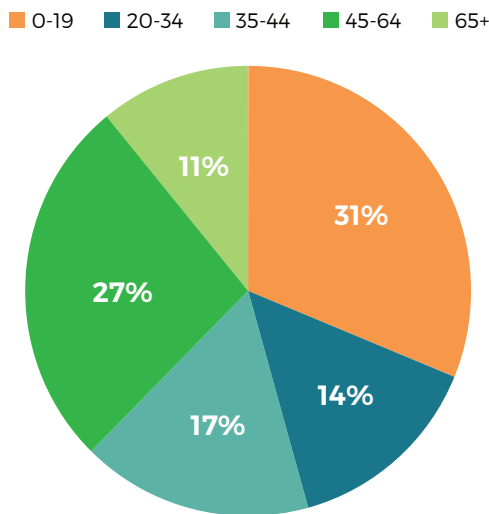
	2010		2014	
	Number of Households	Average Household Size	Number of Households	Average Household Size
Forsyth County	59,433	2.94	66,429	3.07
Fulton County	376,377	2.36	381,990	2.61
Cherokee County	75,936	2.80	81,991	2.82
Gwinnett County	268,519	2.98	278,652	3.15
Hall County	60,691	2.91	63,383	3.01
Georgia	3,585,584	2.63	3,587,521	2.81

Source: US Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

The median age in Forsyth County, as estimated by the 2014 ACS, is 37.7. This is the highest median age for all of the geographies that are being analyzed. The next highest median age is 37.2, which was estimated for Cherokee County. The largest age group in Forsyth County is age 0-19 years, and makes up 31.2 percent of the Forsyth County population.

Figure A.10: Forsyth County Age Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates

Figure A.12: Age Distribution 1980-2014, Forsyth County

	1980		1990		2000		2010		2014	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
0-19	9,743	34.9%	12,612	28.6%	29,309	29.8%	56,682	32.3%	63,805	31.2%
20-34	7,042	25.2%	11,276	25.6%	20,694	21.0%	25,843	14.7%	29,484	14.4%
35-44	3,752	13.4%	7,498	17.0%	20,014	20.3%	32,802	18.7%	34,154	16.7%
45-64	5,068	18.1%	8,776	19.9%	21,450	21.8%	44,546	25.4%	54,540	26.7%
65+	2,353	8.4%	3,921	8.9%	6,940	7.0%	15,638	8.9%	22,319	10.9%
Total	27,958		44,083		98,407		175,511		204,302	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census; Forsyth County 2012 Comprehensive Plan

Figure A.13: Age Distribution 2014

	Forsyth	Fulton	Cherokee	Gwinnett	Hall	Georgia
0-19	31.2%	26.1%	27.5%	30.5%	28.9%	27.7%
20-34	14.4%	23.9%	18.9%	19.9%	20.0%	20.8%
35-44	16.7%	14.9%	15.3%	15.3%	13.1%	13.8%
45-64	26.7%	24.6%	26.6%	25.7%	24.3%	25.5%
65+	10.9%	10.5%	11.7%	8.6%	13.7%	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates

A few trends can be identified in Forsyth County's age distribution data since 1980. There are nearly 9 percent more people between the ages of 45 and 64 now than there were in 1980, and the 20-34 year old age group has diminished by nearly 11 percent over the same period. This shift to a slightly older population has been slow but consistent. Age distribution in Forsyth County, as estimated by the 2014 ACS, is similar to all surrounding areas. The only age group that stands out from other areas is individuals between the ages of 20 and 34. This age group accounts for only 14.4 percent of the County population, while it makes up roughly 20 percent of all other study areas. These numbers suggest an opportunity to consider and pursue policies that may attract more young professionals to the County.

Figure A.11: Median Age

	2010	2014
Forsyth County	36.9	37.7
Fulton County	34.2	35
Cherokee County	36.3	37.2
Gwinnett County	33.7	34.7
Hall County	34.5	35.8
Georgia	35.3	36.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census



## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race distribution in Forsyth County, as estimated by the 2014 ACS, is comparable to the surrounding counties of Hall and Cherokee, but shows significant differences from the State of Georgia, Fulton County, and Gwinnett County. Forsyth County is reportedly 84.02 percent White. This is similar to the racial distribution of Hall and Cherokee Counties with 81.86 percent and 86.26 percent White populations, respectively. Fulton County, Gwinnett County, and the State of Georgia all have non-White populations that make-up more than 40 percent of their racial distribution. This is more than double that of Forsyth, Hall and Cherokee Counties.

As of 2014, the Hispanic population in Forsyth County accounted for an estimated 9.7 percent of the population. This is comparable with the State of Georgia at 9.1 percent and significantly below Gwinnett and Hall Counties, which had Hispanic populations of 20.5 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively.

Between 2000 and 2014 in Forsyth County, the Hispanic population has grown by 262 percent. This fluctuation of growth can be seen in data gathered for all other comparative geographies, including the State of Georgia. The changes in racial makeup and Hispanic population suggest a trend that Forsyth County is becoming increasingly diverse.

Asians are the fastest growing population in Forsyth County. Between 2000 and 2014, the Asian population increased from 798 to 18,691, representing an average annual population growth of approximately 25 percent.

Figure A.14: Racial Composition 2000-2014, Forsyth County

Race	2000		2010		2014	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	93,531	95.0%	149,946	85.4%	171,663	84.0%
Black or African American	684	0.7%	4,510	2.6%	6,781	3.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	247	0.3%	575	0.3%	758	0.4%
Asian	798	0.8%	10,925	6.2%	18,691	9.1%
Other	2,236	2.3%	6,679	3.8%	3,443	1.7%
Two or more races	911	0.9%	2,876	1.6%	2,966	1.5%
Total Population	98,407		175,511		204,302	

Source: US Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census, 2000 Decennial Census

Figure A.15: Hispanic Population (as percent of total)

	2000	2010	2014
Forsyth County	5.6%	9.4%	9.7%
Fulton County	5.9%	7.9%	7.6%
Cherokee County	5.4%	9.6%	10.1%
Gwinnett County	10.9%	20.1%	20.5%
Hall County	19.6%	26.1%	27.5%
Georgia	5.3 %	8. %	9.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 Decennial Census, 2000 Decennial Census

## EDUCATION

According to the 2014 ACS, Forsyth County’s population is well-educated in comparison to the state and its neighboring counties. Among the five counties analyzed, Forsyth County has the lowest percentage of its population over 25 who have not graduated from high school (7.6 percent). For more details on educational attainment, see the Economic Development section on page A-17.

## INCOME

The median household income in Forsyth County is \$85,639. This is significantly higher than all of the other geographies analyzed, with the second-highest recorded as \$69,711 in Cherokee County, and nearly double that of the State of Georgia at \$49,321.

Figure A.16: Median Household Income, 2014

Median Household Income	
Forsyth County	\$85,639.00
Fulton County	\$55,807.00
Cherokee County	\$69,711.00
Gwinnett County	\$59,492.00
Hall County	\$52,519.00
Georgia	\$49,321.00

Source: US Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates

Figure A.17: Income Below Poverty Level 2010,2014

	Forsyth		Fulton		Cherokee		Gwinnett		Hall		Georgia	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
All Families	4.9 %	4.0 %	13.5 %	12.5%	6.0%	7.4%	10.6%	10.7%	13.3%	12.4%	13.7%	14.1%
All People	7.6%	6.1%	17.2%	16.8%	8.4%	9.7%	13.7%	13.3%	18.5%	16.6%	17.9%	18.3%

Source: US Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey estimates, 2010 American Community Survey

## CONCLUSIONS

A well-educated population and high median income make Forsyth County an attractive place to live. The County has a low median age of 27.7 years, but a relatively small population of young professionals compared to surrounding areas. This suggests that policies to encourage attracting more young professionals should be considered.

Forsyth County has seen significant population growth since 2000, with the 2015 population estimated at 212,438—a growth of 21 percent since 2010. The County has also seen significant growth in diversity since 2000. Since 1990, the Hispanic population has grown from 6 percent to 10 percent of the total population, while has grown from 1 percent to 9 percent of the total population. This trend toward diversification will likely require more diverse housing, services, and amenities.



## A.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### OVERVIEW

#### INTRODUCTION

From July 2013 to July 2014, Forsyth County grew by 4.6 percent, making it the seventh-fastest growing County in the U.S. Much of this growth can be attributed to its location on the north side of the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Atlanta's strongest population and job growth has typically occurred to the north, fueling development in affluent suburbs like Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, Roswell, and Alpharetta. Georgia 400 is a major highway connecting these communities to significant employment concentrations in north Fulton County, Perimeter Center, and Buckhead. North of the established suburbs but directly in the path of growth, Forsyth County has six GA 400 exits providing access to premier job centers just south of its border. As the broader Atlanta economy continues to rebound following the Great Recession (2008), Forsyth County's excellent schools, access to employment, and the beauty and recreation of its north Georgia location have fueled strong demand for new housing and accompanying services.

While the northern half of Forsyth County maintains a more low-density character and the east side offers homes on Lake Lanier, south Forsyth County largely functions as a bedroom community for well-educated, high-income families. As the population and incomes have increased, new retail has emerged along the GA 400 corridor. Also in response to the County's dramatic growth, Northside Hospital-Forsyth has expanded to become one of the area's largest employers.

While large-scale office space is still largely found in north Fulton County and points south, congestion on GA 400 and the quest for shorter commutes is generating demand for new Class A office in Forsyth County, some of which is currently planned in new mixed-use projects.

Economic development analysis considers how well the County is positioned to maintain a healthy economy and balanced tax base moving forward. Important measures include diversity of business sectors, vibrancy of the local market, labor force and workforce characteristics, and programs and resources in place to advance the County's ability to continue to attract a diversity of jobs and businesses.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FORSYTH

Economic Development efforts in Forsyth County are largely spearheaded by the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is dedicated to fostering job creation and capital investment within the community. Other partners in promoting economic development in Forsyth County include the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC), the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), and Georgia Power.

Most of the business development incentives offered in Forsyth County are made available through the State of Georgia. These include state tax exemptions and abatements, utility rebates, and incentives. Job tax credits, an Opportunity Zone, and the Quality Job Tax Credit round out the state programs most commonly used in Forsyth.

The Chamber also provides a number of local workforce development incentives. These include:

- Complimentary assistance in screening eligible candidates for employment
- Employee training via the Georgia QuikStart program
- Complimentary skills assessments for all new and existing employees
- Retraining tax credits
- Hiring and employee recruitment assistance through partnerships with the Georgia Department of Labor, the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute, Lanier Technical College, and the Governor's Office of Workforce Development

Additionally, Forsyth County has the ability to provide local incentives that include:

- Property tax abatements
- Bonus tax abatements for green developments and manufacturers
- 100 percent exemption on local inventory taxes

## 400 NORTH OPPORTUNITY ZONE

The 400 North Opportunity Zone (Figure A.18) was established in 2010. Businesses located in the Opportunity Zone can take advantage of:

- The maximum job tax credit allowed under law of \$3,500 per job created, which can be claimed for up to five years
- The lowest job creation threshold of any job tax credit program in Georgia
- Use of job tax credits against 100 percent of income tax liability and withholding
- Expansion of the definition "business enterprise" to include all businesses of any nature

## MCFARLAND-STONEY POINT LCI

The McFarland-Stoney Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study area is located east of GA 400 and runs from the Fulton County line to Lanier Technical College (Figure A.18). The LCI provides a framework for the County to pursue a higher quality of life in the study area by linking land use planning with greater transportation options. The plan, most recently updated in 2011, specifically focused on access management that would enable the new Ronald Reagan Boulevard to serve as a village center. Extension of and access to the Big Creek Greenway is another key element of the LCI plan. Given the amount of commercial space proposed in south Forsyth County, a proactive approach to the transportation network in this area is important to help mitigate the traffic impacts of new development.

## COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Various partners are working together to form a Community Improvement District (CID) in south Forsyth County. Such an entity would help advance efforts, such as targeted transportation and beautification initiatives, that would further advance business goals in the area. CIDs have played an important role in enhancing commercial areas throughout the Atlanta metro area, and this CID would be the first to form in Forsyth County.



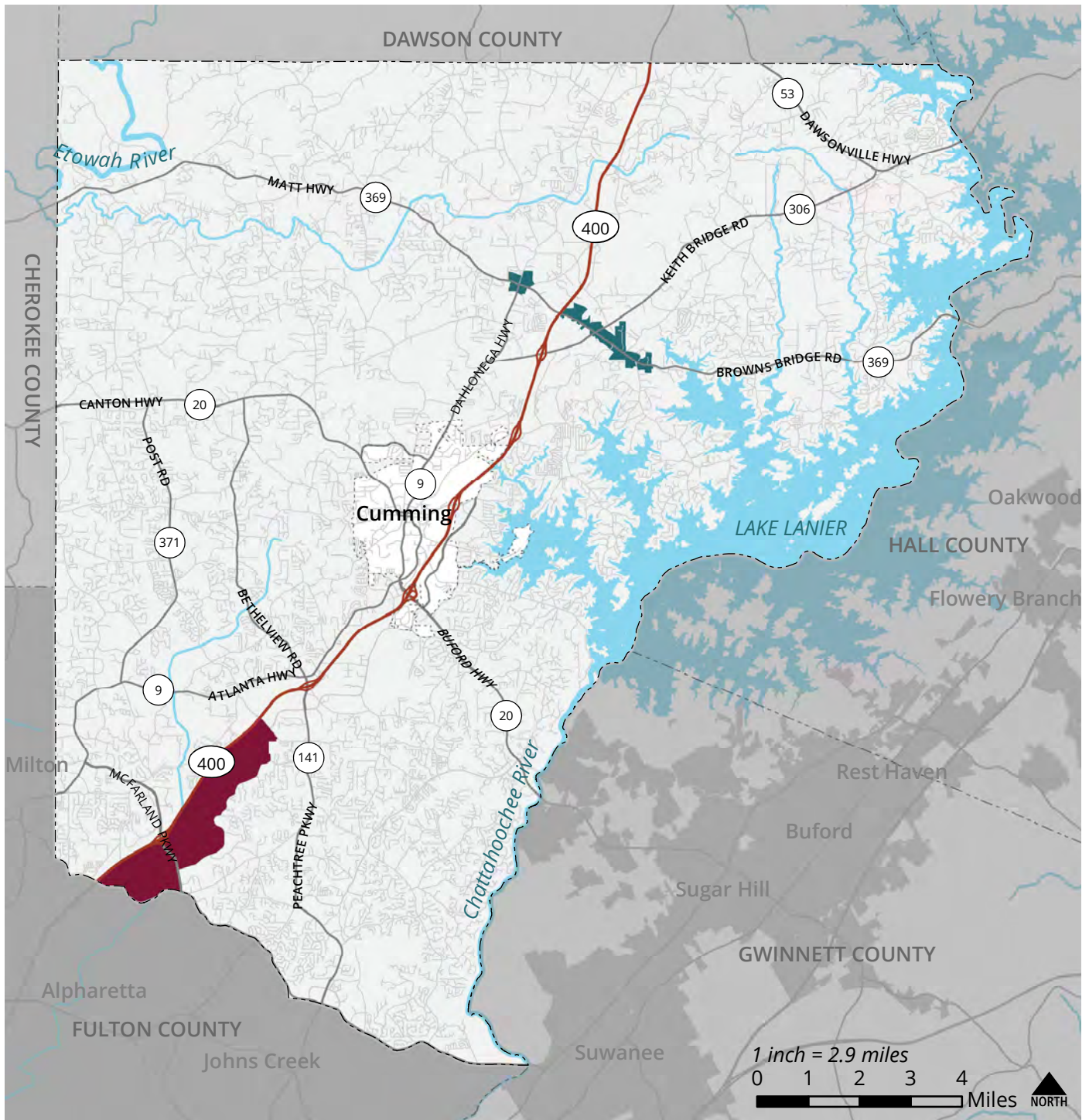


Figure A.18: LCI and Opportunity Zone

- North 400 Opportunity Zone
- LCI Study Area



## LOCAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Forsyth County has an educated workforce with low unemployment, and an increasing diversity in the types of jobs that are available locally.

### LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate for the Forsyth County labor force is among the lowest in the region, and has declined steadily over the last 12 months. Although the Forsyth County labor force grew by 1.7 percent in 2015, the number of employed residents in the County increased by 2.3 percent.

### LABOR FORCE DISTRIBUTION BY INDUSTRY

There were 89,099 Forsyth County residents in the labor force as of 2013. The largest industries for employment were Professional and Technology with 10,717 employees (12.0 percent of the workforce), Retail Trade (9,968 workers, 11.2 percent), and Manufacturing (8,738 workers, 9.8 percent).

In comparison to Cherokee, Gwinnett, and Fulton Counties, Forsyth County's workforce is over-represented in Manufacturing, Information, Finance and Insurance, Management, and Administration. Forsyth County is under-represented in Healthcare, Arts and Entertainment, Accommodation and Food, and Public Administration.

As seen in Figure A.21, as of December 2015, the unemployment rate in Forsyth County was 3.9 percent, compared to 4.8 percent across the MSA.

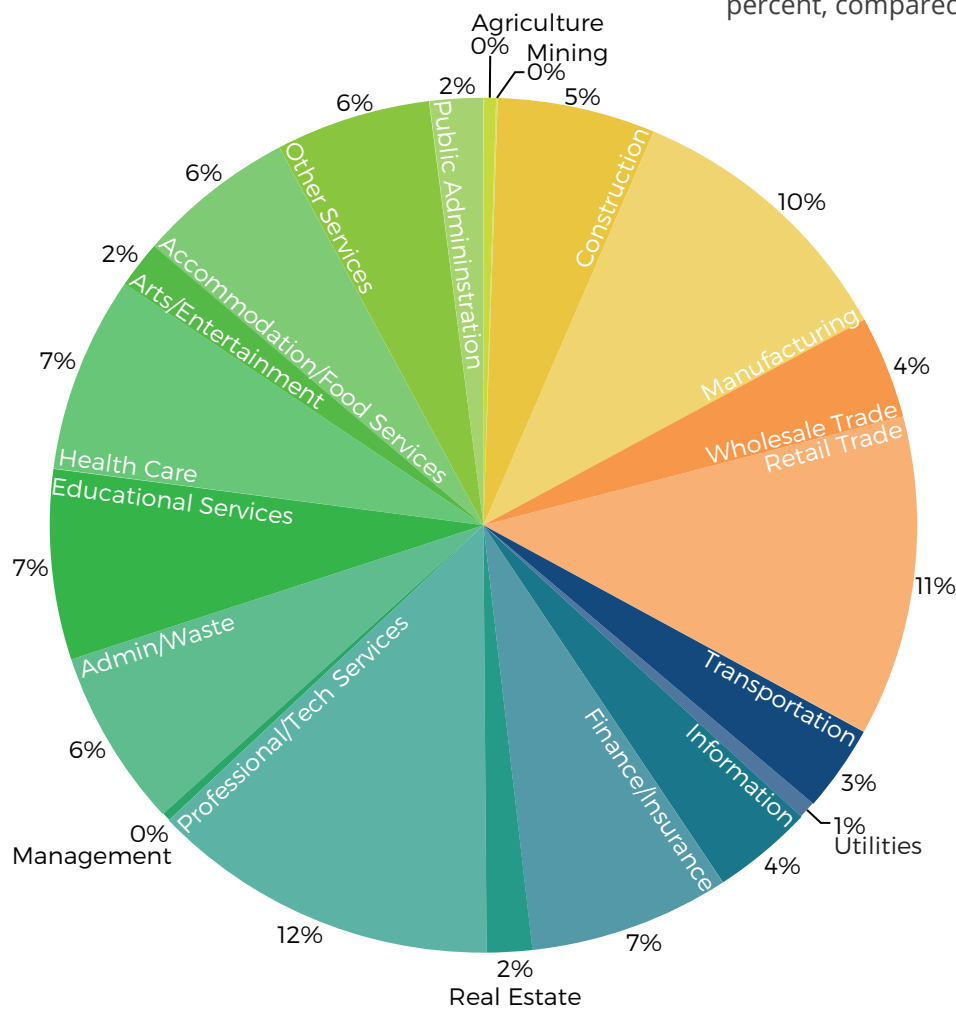
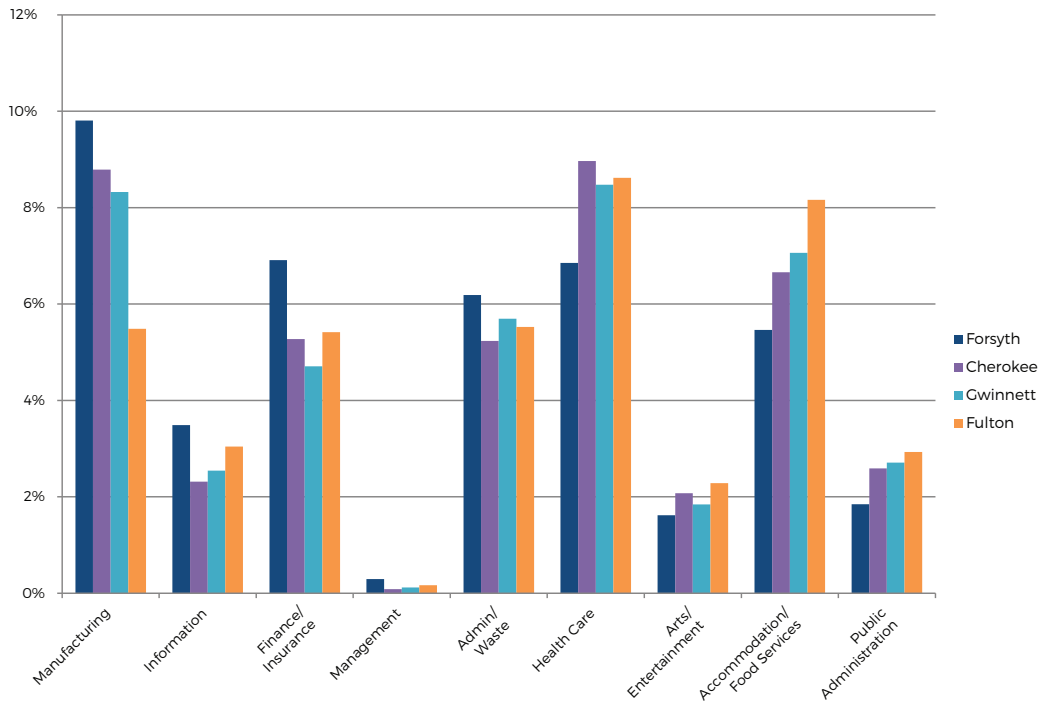


Figure A.19: Labor Force Distribution by Industry , Forsyth  
 Source: ESRI: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey

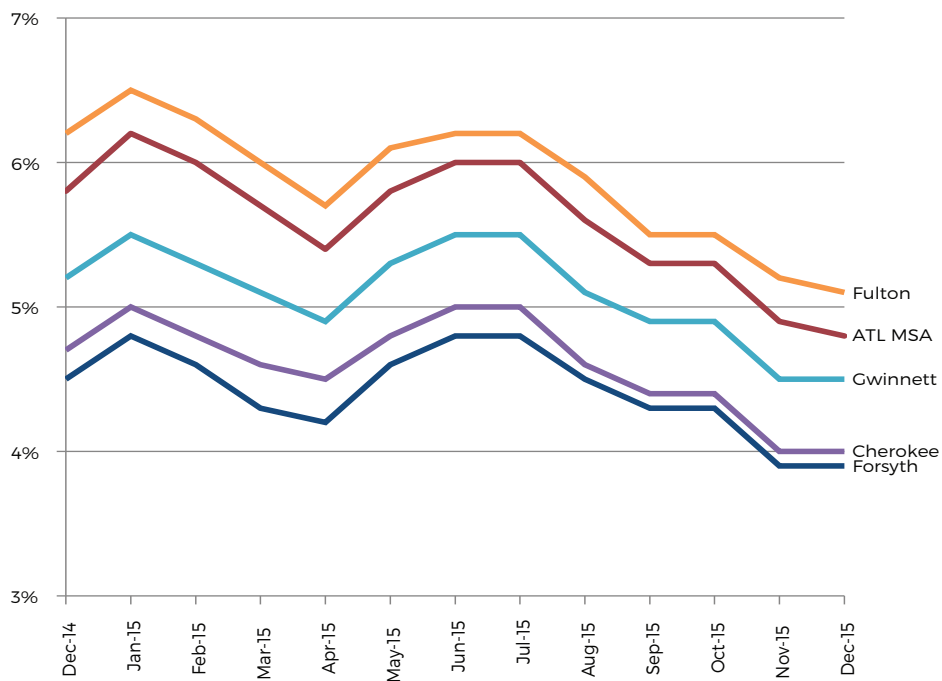


Figure A.20: Local Labor Force Distribution by Industry



Source: ESRI: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey

Figure A.21: 2015 Unemployment Rates



Source: Georgia Department of Labor

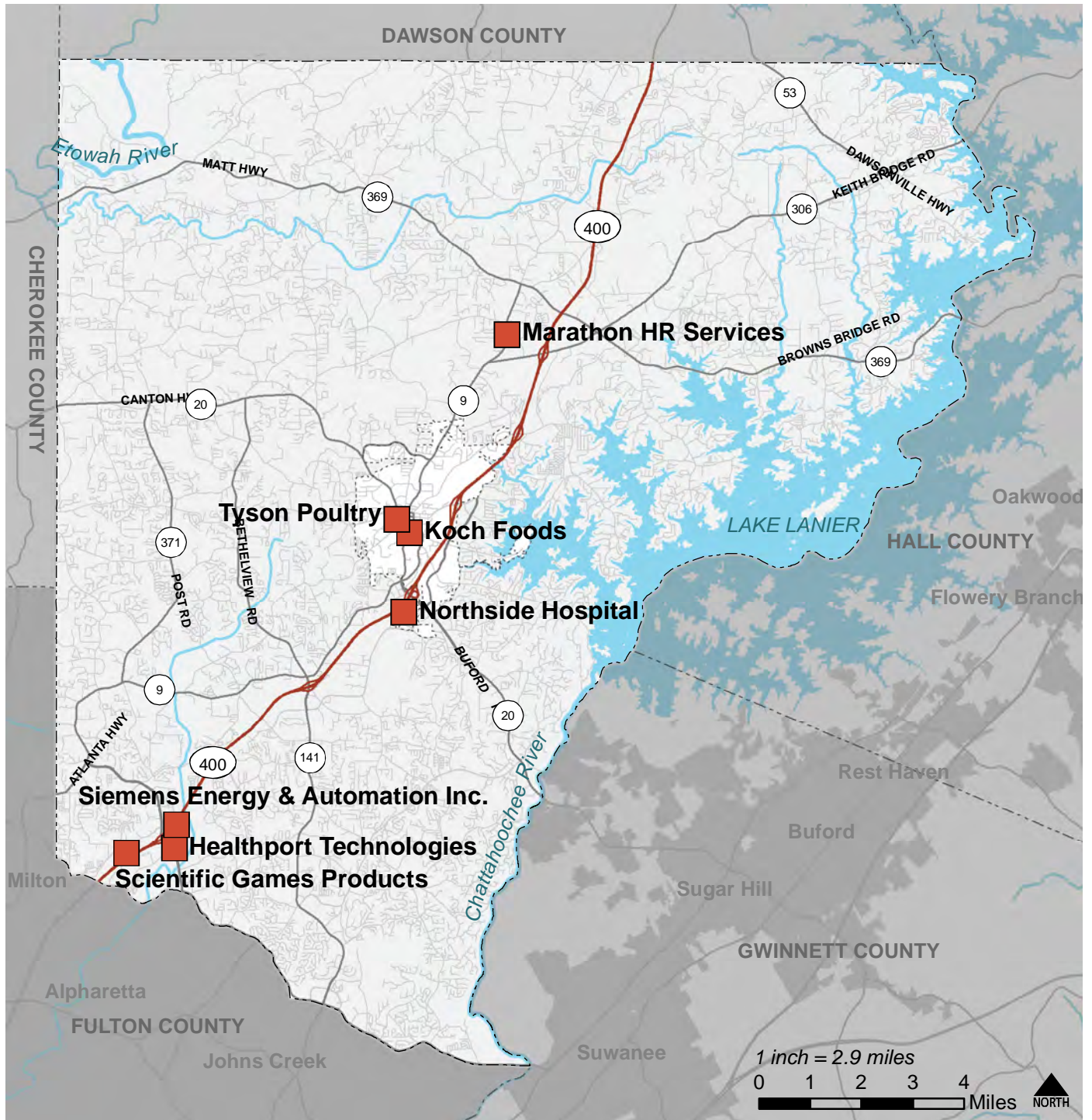


Figure A.22: Major Employers

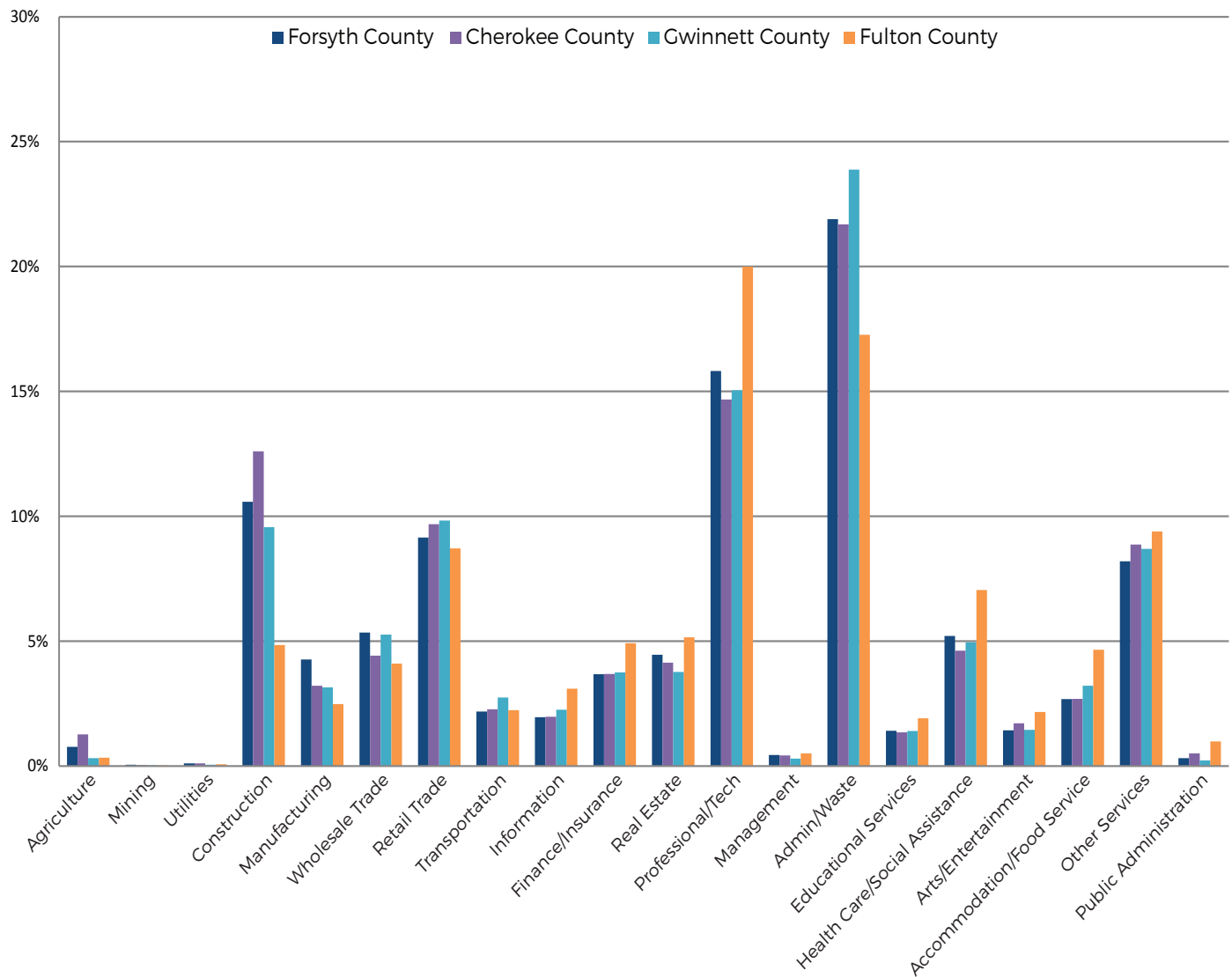
■ Major Employers

Not shown:

- Forsyth County School System
- Publix Super Markets
- Resourcing Edge I
- The Kroger Company
- Walmart



Figure A.23: County Businesses, 2013



Source: ESRI: US Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey

### COUNTY BUSINESSES

There are 13,285 employers in Forsyth County according to 2013 estimates from ESRI. Administrative and Support firms is the largest single industry and comprises 21.9 percent of businesses in Forsyth County. The second-largest industry in the County is Professional, Scientific and Tech Services (15.8 percent) followed by Construction (10.6 percent), and Retail Trade (9.2 percent). Forsyth County's largest employers in 2014 were Forsyth County Schools (4,182), Northside Hospital-Forsyth (1,500), and Tyson Foods (1,200).

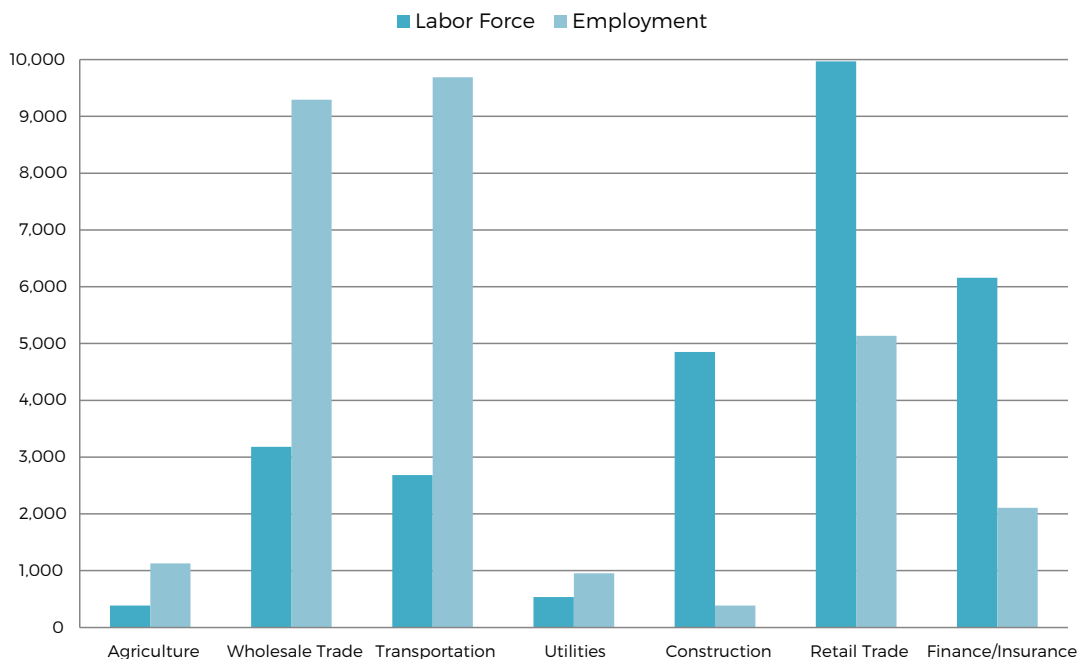
Compared to the neighboring counties of Cherokee, Gwinnett, and Fulton, Forsyth County has a larger share of employers in Administration (21.9 percent), Manufacturing (4.3 percent), and Wholesale Trade (5.4 percent). Forsyth County has a lower percentage of employers than its neighbors in Transportation (2.2 percent), Information (2.0 percent), Finance and Insurance (3.7 percent), Arts and Entertainment (1.4 percent), Accommodation and Food (2.7 percent), and Other Services (8.2 percent). There are some notable imbalances between the local workforce and the types of jobs available in Forsyth County. Jobs in Agriculture, Wholesale Trade, and Transportation are more common among Forsyth County employers than in the

County's labor force. Many of these jobs are therefore filled by people who live elsewhere (Figure A.25). Conversely, the County workforce has more people employed in Finance, Retail Trade, and Construction than there are local positions in these industries. These workers are employed outside of the County. One way to address this imbalance is through the provision of workforce housing that allows more people who work in the County to live nearby. There is also likely a growing opportunity for professional office space and executive suites within the County.

### COMMUTING PATTERNS

More people commute out of Forsyth County than into the County. Based on an analysis of Census Local Employment Dynamics (LED) data, roughly 69 percent of people employed in Forsyth County live in another County, while the remaining 31 percent live and work in Forsyth County. About 26 percent of the people employed in Forsyth County live in Gwinnett and Fulton counties. Meanwhile, 75 percent of the employed people that live in Forsyth County work in another county, primarily Fulton (31 percent). This is indicative of the County's role as a bedroom community, but this dynamic could shift somewhat if the share of commercial land increases, particularly in south Forsyth County.

Figure A.24: 2013 Labor Force Comparison, Forsyth County



Source: ESRI: US Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey



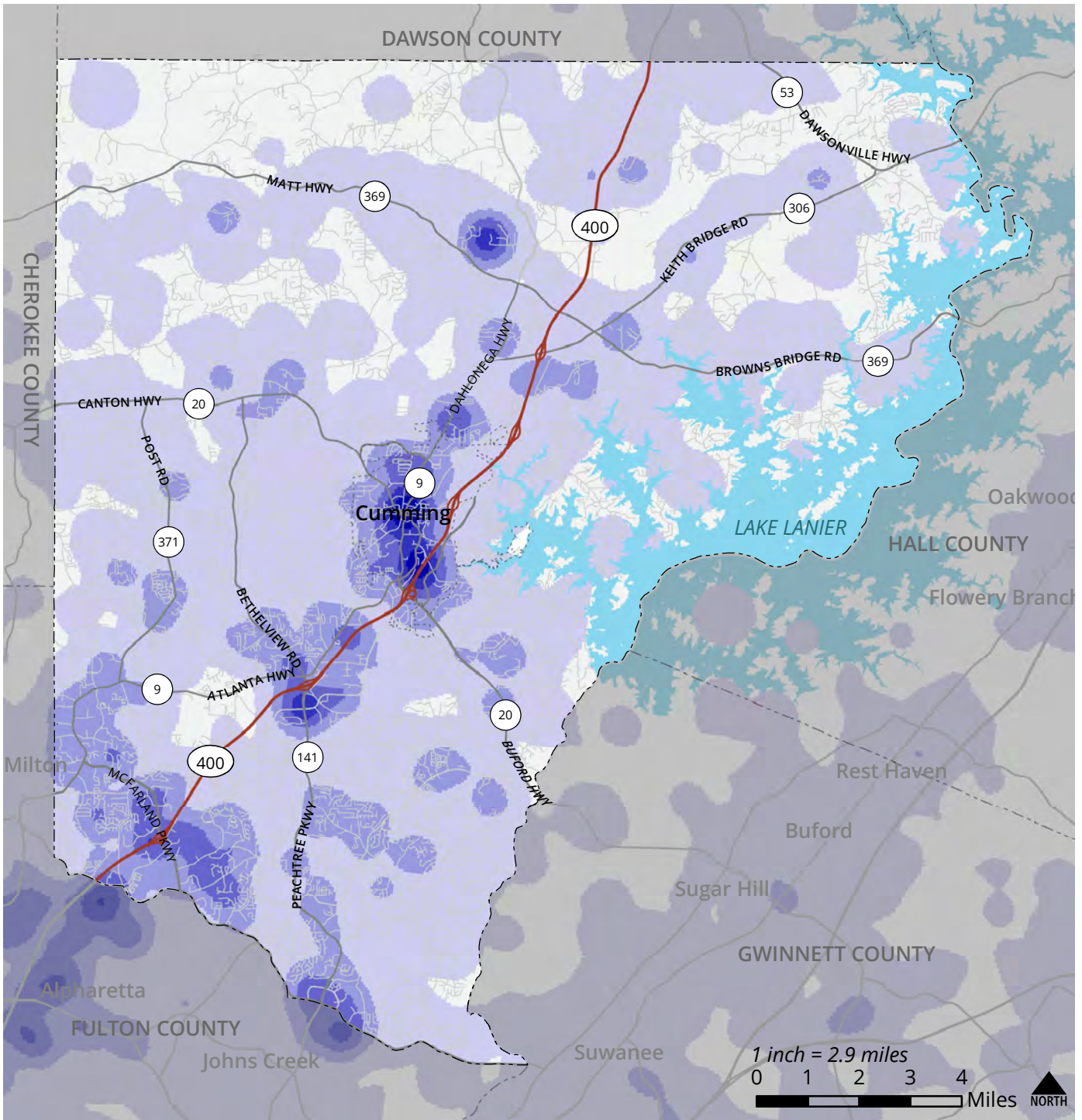


Figure A.25: Commuting Patterns - Employment Location, Forsyth County Residents

- 5-153 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 154-598 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 599-1,340 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 1,341-2,379 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 2,380-3,715 Jobs / Sq Mile

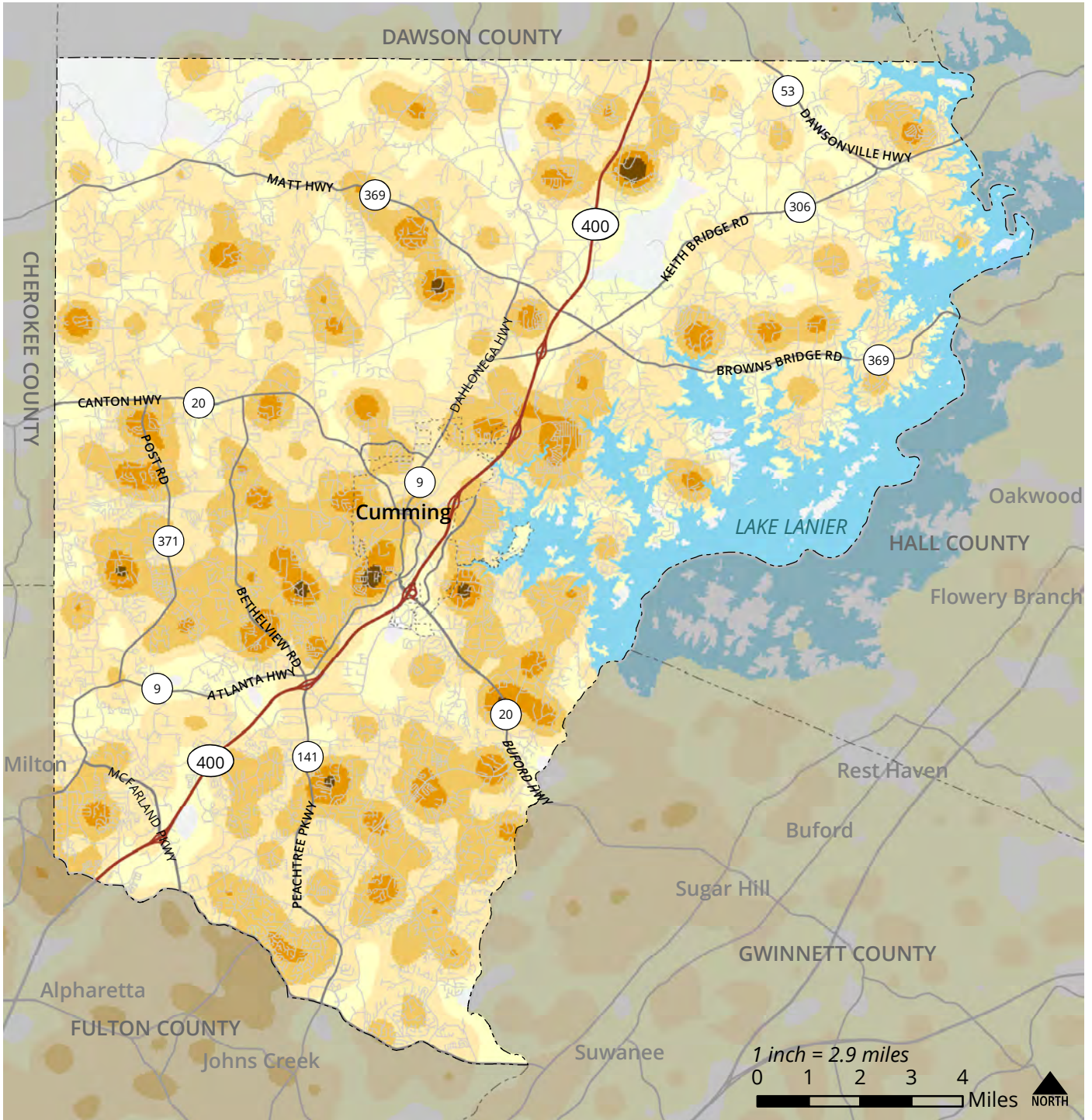


Figure A.26: Commuting Patterns - Place of Residence, People Employed in Forsyth County

- 5-34 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 35-122 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 123-270 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 271-476 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 477-742 Jobs / Sq Mile



## EDUCATION

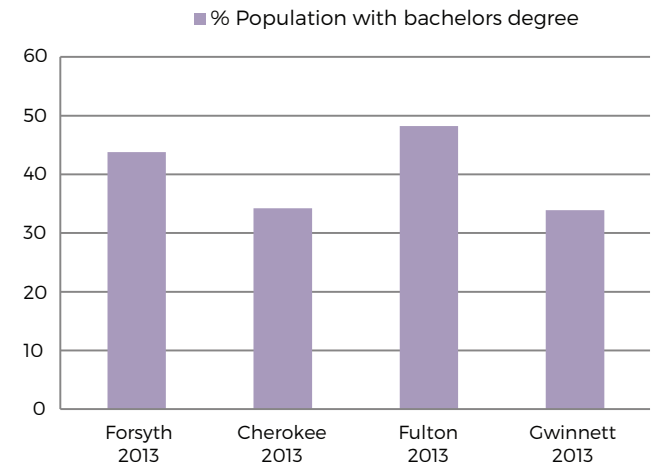
An educated labor force is critical to attract new businesses and retail opportunities to the area, and to ensure the continued low unemployment rate among County residents. Forsyth County's labor force is highly educated and increasingly so. In 1990, only 16 percent of the population had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This increased dramatically by 2013 when 44 percent of the population had a Bachelor's degree or higher, the second-highest percentage of all counties in the State of Georgia.

Additionally, K-12 schools in Forsyth County outperform Cherokee, Fulton, and Gwinnett County schools on the recently-adopted Georgia Milestones assessments, and as measured by high school graduation rates. In the spring 2015 test cycle, 88.4 percent of Forsyth County students rated as "developing learners" or higher across the eight Georgia Milestones tests. The County's strongest performance was in 9th grade literature with 92.3 percent of students at developing learner and above. The only subject where Forsyth County students do not outperform neighboring counties is physical science. Gwinnett County has a slightly higher percentage of students in the developing learner or higher categories (83.4 percent vs. 82.6 percent) in this subject, but Forsyth tops Fulton and Cherokee. The high school graduation rate for all Forsyth County Schools in 2015 was 94 percent. This surpasses the graduation rates for all compared counties.

The strong school performance re-enforces Forsyth County's desirability as a residential community, and its excellent schools will continue to attract new households from metropolitan Atlanta and beyond.

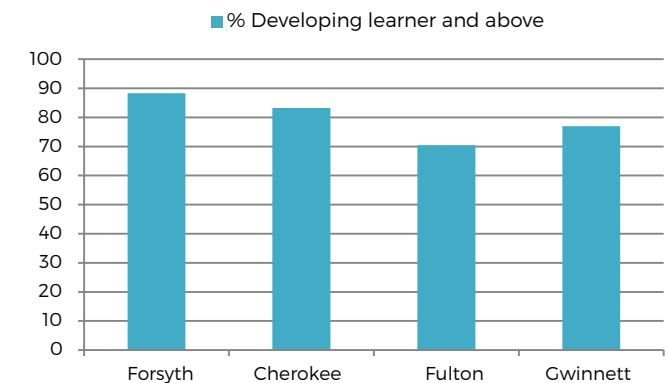
Demand for higher education in Forsyth County is also increasing. An estimated 9,321 Forsyth County residents were enrolled in undergraduate or professional school programs in 2014; this is up 40 percent from 6,671 residents in 2009. Although many of these students may be enrolled at schools outside of the County, higher education within Forsyth County is provided at University of North Georgia (UNG) and Lanier Technical College's (Lanier Tech) Cumming campuses. UNG programs offered in Cumming include undergraduate and graduate programs in business and education, with an enrollment of about 750 students. Lanier Tech programs in Forsyth County are focused on training students for high-paying technical jobs in business, technology, and healthcare.

Figure A.27: Population with Bachelors Degree



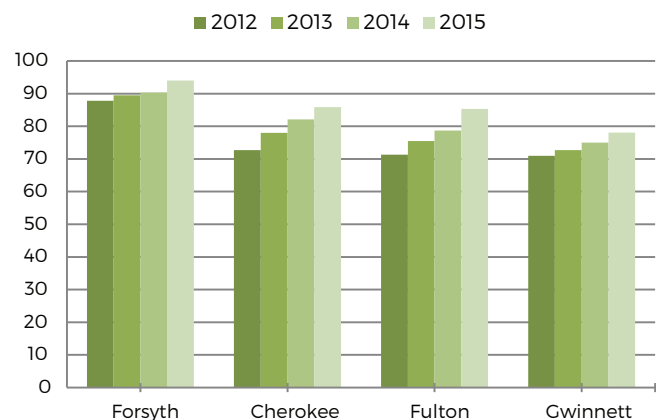
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census, Towncharts: 2013 American Community Survey

Figure A.28: Education Development



Source: ESRI

Figure A.29: Students Enrolled in Secondary School



Source: Georgia Department of Education



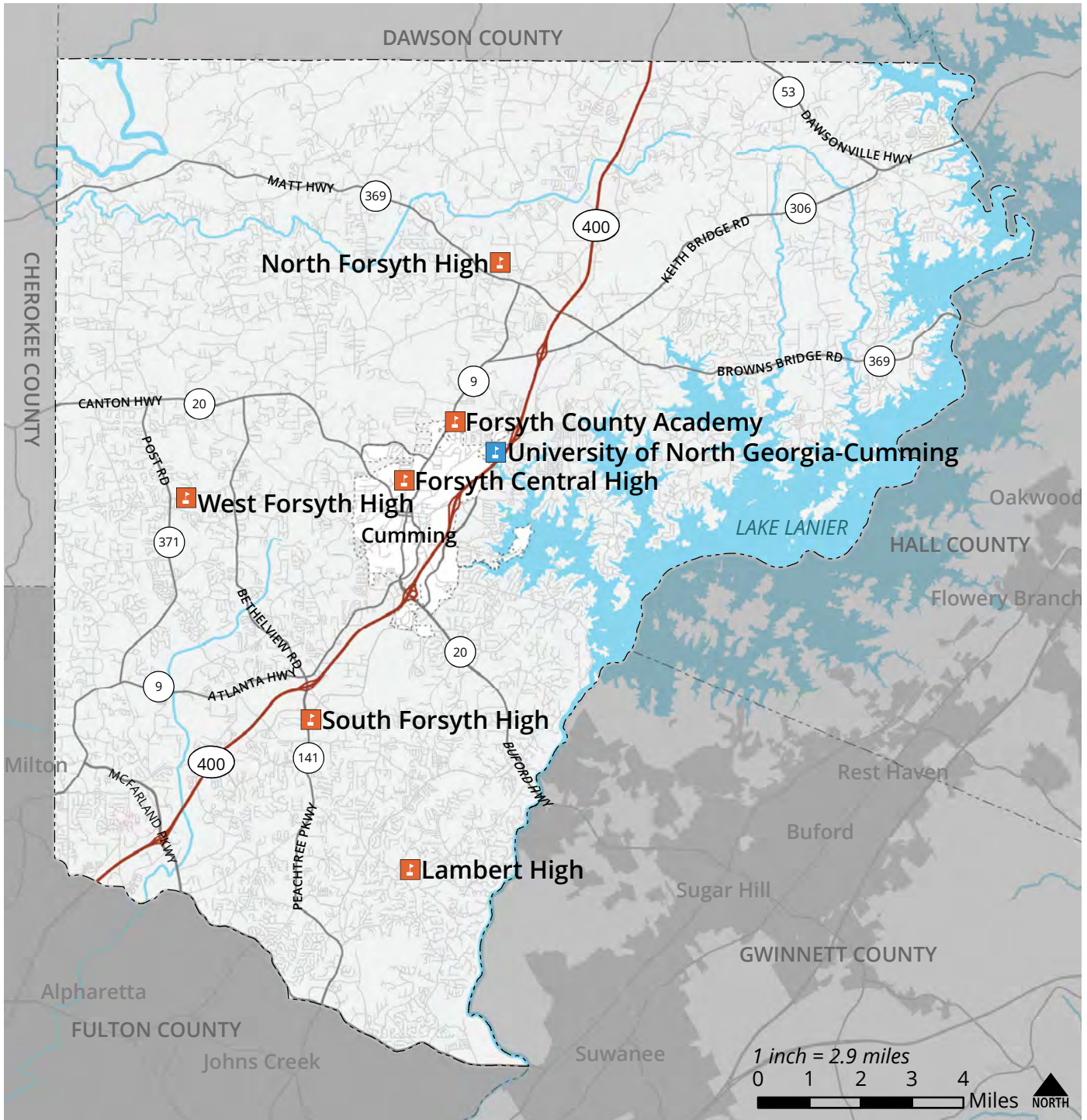


Figure A.30: Educational Facilities

- Colleges / Universities
- County Education Facilities (high schools only)



## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Forsyth County commercial real estate tends to fall outside of metropolitan Atlanta's conventionally-defined submarkets given its distance from the urban core. Smaller-format retail and office, along with industrial space focused around GA 400, tend to serve local businesses and residential communities. However there are substantial, growing clusters of commercial activity, particularly retail, at key interchanges in central and south Forsyth County.

### OFFICE

Forsyth County is not yet a substantial office market, as the large majority of Class A professional space in the area is located in north Fulton County. The north Fulton County submarket includes nearly 28 million square feet of office space and is notable for large corporate campuses, technology companies, and healthcare. This is a major destination for Forsyth County workforce commuters. As development pressure increases in south Forsyth County, more office development, such as that seen on Bluegrass Lakes Parkway and in Johns Creek Technology Park, is likely to occur. The benefits of this trend could include shorter commutes for Forsyth County workers and increased diversity in the property tax base.

There are smaller office buildings in and around Cumming, including condominium, executive suite, and small-format office space serving professional services and medical users. A large concentration of medical office building space surrounds Northside Hospital-Forsyth.

## COMMERCIAL RETAIL

Retail space in Forsyth County reflects a range of uses and types depending on the character of the surrounding area. The historic commercial hub of downtown Cumming includes local restaurants and small businesses in stand-alone structures oriented toward the public right-of-way. Strip retail, including grocery-anchored shopping centers and outparcels, can be found at GA 400 interchanges and along the County's larger arterials.

The most intensive concentration of existing retail is found at GA 400 Exit 14 (Buford Highway). More than 1.5 million square feet of community-scale retail is found in four main shopping centers including Cumming Marketplace (695,314 square feet), Cumming Town Center (311,396 square feet), Lakeland Plaza (307,578 square feet), and Merchants Square (167,661 square feet). A number of smaller strip centers are also clustered in this area. A Costco is located north of this cluster, closer to Exit 15.

Since 2008, the most notable shopping center development in the southern portion of the County has been the 566,000-square foot The Collection at Forsyth (previously The Avenue Forsyth). The lifestyle center, located at GA 400 and Peachtree Parkway, includes an AMC cinema and a number of mid-scale fashion and restaurant chains such as Earth Fare, Barnes & Noble, Talbot's, and Carrabba's.

## MIXED-USE PROJECTS

There are two regionally-significant, mixed-use projects planned for south Forsyth County. These are long-term projects in various stages of pre-development but either would generate significant activity in south Forsyth County. Combined, they would add several million square feet of commercial real estate and over 1,500 housing units to the County.

- Halcyon, proposed by RocaPoint Partners, will be located at GA 400 and McFarland Parkway. The project will include more than 450,000 square feet of retail and office space, including restaurants and hotels, along with almost 700 housing units to include detached homes, townhomes, and multi-family flats.
- Michigan-based Taubman Centers continues to pursue a regional, mall-anchored mixed-use development that was conceived in 2008 prior to the Great Recession. On a 164-acre site at McGinnis Ferry Road and Ronald Reagan Boulevard, Taubman is proposing a one-million square foot retail center along with 900,000 square feet of office space, 500 hotel rooms and 875 multi-family units (*Atlanta Business Chronicle*, "Gateway to Forsyth: Mcfarland corridor readies for growth", August 1, 2014). Taubman projects that the development would create 7,800 direct jobs at buildout.

It should be noted that mixed-use development initiatives have had inconsistent results in the County. The majority of such developments have been smaller in scale and implemented as a part of the MPD (Master Planned District) zoning district. These developments have often experienced challenges in achieving a true mixed-use character and a supportive context for commercial product success.

### Halcyon Development



Source: <http://atlanta.curbed.com/2015/10/28/9906534/forsyth-county-to-get-massive-mixeduse-development>

## INDUSTRIAL

Industrial property in Forsyth County is largely found in the southern area of the County, proximate to Georgia 400. McFarland Parkway, Old Alpharetta Road, Shiloh Road and Union Hill Road provide access to a number of warehouse and light industrial buildings in this area.

An older concentration of industrial property is located northwest of Ronald Reagan Boulevard and Old Atlanta Road, closer to Cumming and the 568-acre Bluegrass Materials Quarry.

Industrial space with good access to GA 400, particularly warehouses, will continue to be an important part of Forsyth County's land use mix. As retail and office become higher and better uses in the southern part of the County, industrial opportunities are likely to emerge further north.



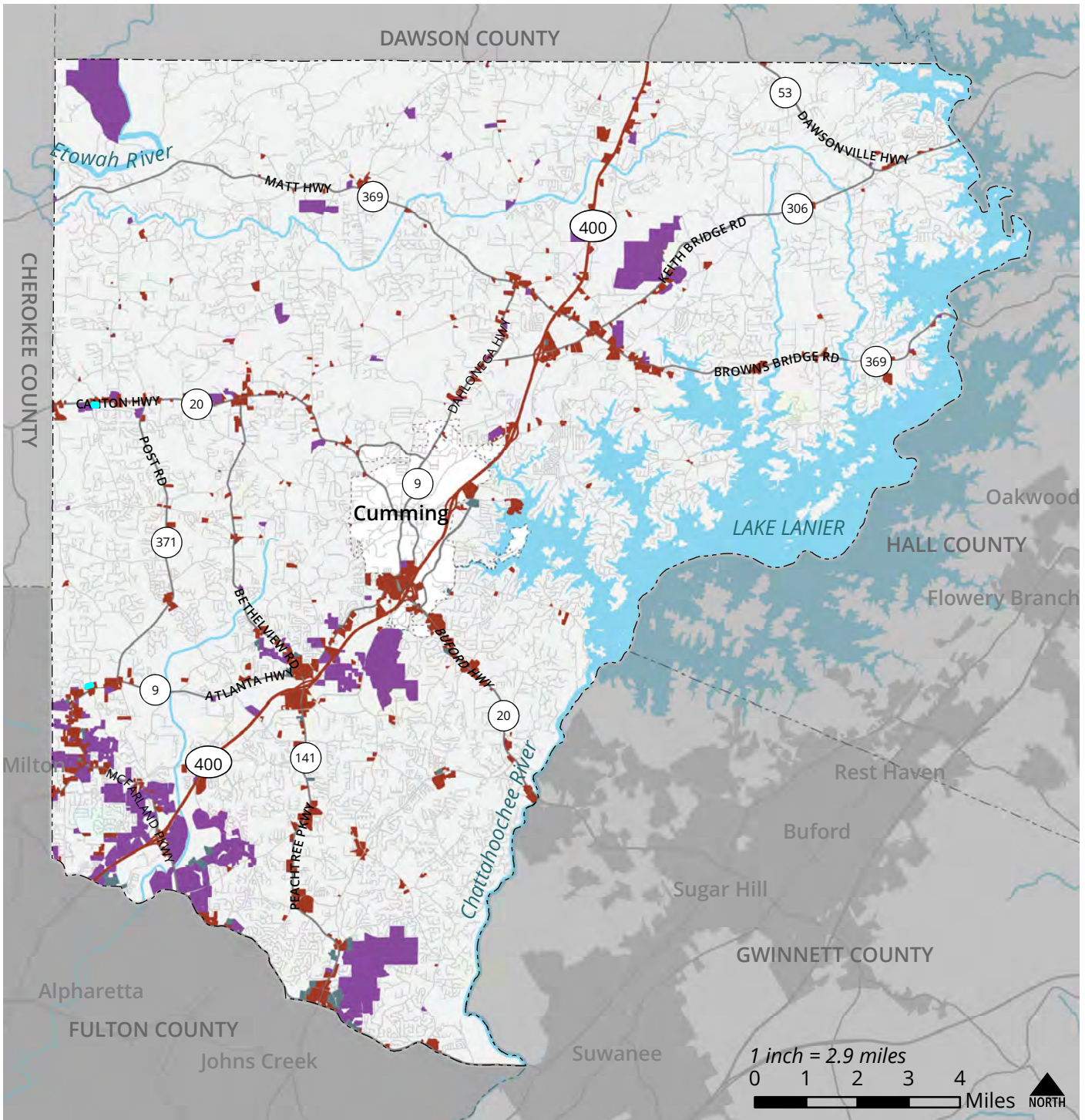


Figure A.31: Commercial Real Estate (ELU 2016)

- Commercial
- Office
- Industrial

## CONCLUSIONS

Forsyth County is well-positioned for economic growth. With large, greenfield sites in north Fulton County becoming increasingly scarce or expensive, the march of growth up GA 400 is expected to continue. Sites with strong highway access will be sought after, potentially drawing retail and office development to south Forsyth County. Meanwhile, older, existing retail centers should see redevelopment or re-tenanting opportunities to serve the educated and affluent households coming to the County.

There are a number of challenges presented by this pattern, however. Among them is a need to provide greater housing diversity. Many of the hourly-wage jobs found in Forsyth County are filled by people who live elsewhere. As the County’s service and retail footprint increases, local employers may find it harder to attract the best employees if attainable housing is located too far afield.

Maintaining the quality of life that makes Forsyth so attractive is also key to the County’s economic outlook. An overdeveloped, traffic-choked Forsyth County is hardly the future anyone longs for; now is the time to ensure that the provision of parks, trails, schools, infrastructure networks, and amenities can keep pace with this anticipated growth.

Ensuring the economic health of the entire County should be a priority. Forsyth County should build upon assets like Forsyth County Public Schools and its job training partnerships, Lanier Tech, UNG, and Northside Hospital-Forsyth, which collectively enhance the broader community, provide a well-trained workforce, and provide skilled jobs for local workers. The growth pressures affecting south Forsyth County today may eventually be experienced in the north, so economic development infrastructure needs to be in place throughout the County.



## A.4 COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

Forsyth County's community resources contribute greatly to the community's quality of life and the County's economic prosperity. Following is a summary of these resources, including public services and facilities, natural resources, and historic and cultural resources.

Over the past five years, Forsyth County's community facilities have expanded significantly. Specifically the County has:

- Consolidated the Sheriff's Office into a headquarters at the Old Courthouse
- Completed construction of the new Courthouse and Detention Center
- Expanded its Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and started construction on its seventh water reclamation facility
- Developed five new parks
- Completed Phase IV construction of the Big Creek Greenway
- Started construction on Matt Community Park and Lanierland Park
- Expanded its public school system through the construction of Kelly Mill Elementary School, with an additional three schools currently under construction
- Benefitted from the opening of the new UNG campus at Cumming
- Built the Post Road Library, and is currently expanding Sharon Forks Library
- Gained 99 beds at Northside Hospital-Forsyth
- Opened the Sexton Hall Enrichment Center for seniors

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In addition to its high quality of community facilities, one of the Forsyth County's major draws is its natural environment—the County borders Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River, and contains a number of other resources such as the Etowah River, Big Creek, and Sawnee Mountain.

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Most of the County's soils are appropriate for both cultivation and development, but steep slopes along Lake Lanier, on Sawnee Mountain, and in the far northwest and southeastern quadrant of the County pose constraints to development. Forsyth County's natural resources also play a pivotal role at a regional level. Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River are major drinking water sources for metropolitan Atlanta and beyond, and have been at the source of decades of litigation for water rights. Therefore, growth in Forsyth County not only impacts its residents, but also potentially affects millions of people downstream who rely on these resources for drinking water.

Despite a rich history, Forsyth County has relatively few officially recognized historic and cultural resources. Currently there are 2 sites on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), but an additional 44 sites potentially eligible as of 2007. There is no updated historic and cultural resource survey, and the County's remaining historic structures remain largely unprotected.



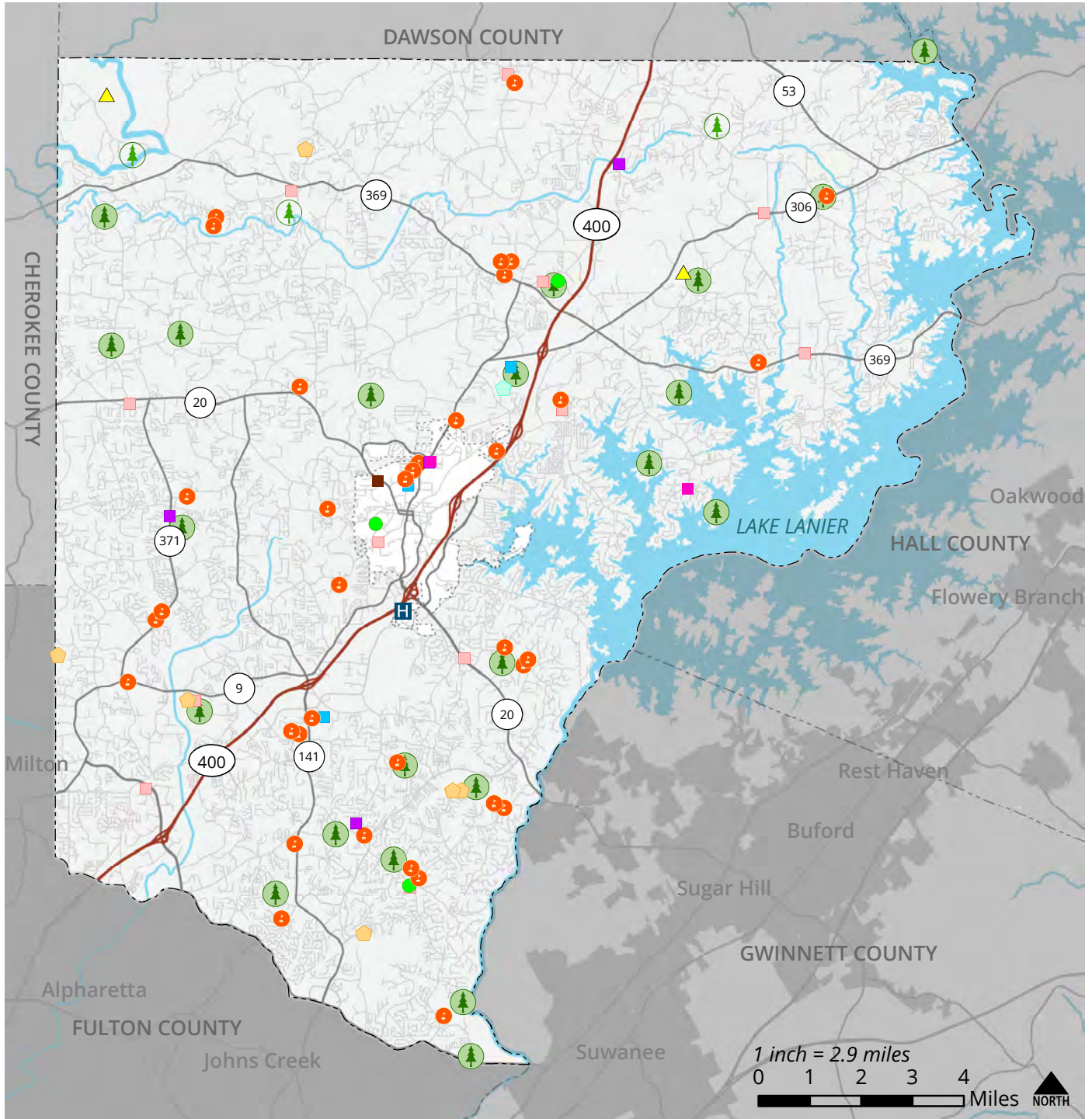


Figure A.32: Community Facilities and Services

- Library
- Social Services
- Senior Facility
- Hospital
- Fire Station
- Sheriff's Facilities
- School (Public)
- 🌲 County Park
- 🌲 County Park Under Construction / Design
- ▲ Landfill
- Recycling Facility
- ▭ Water Treatment Plant
- ⬠ County Water Reclamation Facilities

Source: GIS Department, Forsyth County Georgia



## COUNTY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Forsyth County provides a number of services and facilities for its residents and businesses. Figure A.32 illustrates the locations of all major County facilities. Currently, the County owns 120 parcels of land totaling 3,431 acres. In general, County facilities are well distributed, with higher concentrations of facilities in areas of greater population density. Future facilities are mostly planned in the southwest and northwest corners of the County.

### SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Forsyth County's primary law enforcement agency is the Sheriff's Office. Funding for the department comes from the General Fund, but the office does receive some revenue from fees and fines.

Historically, Sheriff's Office personnel was scattered throughout many facilities in the County. A 2008 bond referendum to build a new, consolidated facility failed to pass. However, the construction of the new County Courthouse created an opportunity to consolidate multiple Sheriff's departments into the former Courthouse in downtown Cumming. The Sheriff's headquarters moved to this location in late 2015; currently there is also a North Precinct and a South Precinct, and a third precinct is under consideration for the Denmark High School site.

Forsyth County recently completed construction of the new Detention Center. For years the facility struggled with capacity issues, and multiple bond referendums to construct a new center failed to pass. As a result, over 100 County inmates were held at other facilities, costing County taxpayers over \$1 million annually. Ultimately a new facility was built from the extension of the 1-cent sales tax program, and the new jail facility in downtown Cumming began operations in September, 2015.

## FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Forsyth County Fire Department provides fire protection and emergency management for the County. Currently the department employs 155 career firefighters and 32 employees distributed in 12 stations and the headquarters/administration building. In addition to serving unincorporated Forsyth County, the Department provides fire protection for the City of Cumming. The Department is independently funded through a 1.975 mill fire tax.

Like many other local fire departments, the Forsyth County Fire Department adheres to a standard of 5 road miles to determine the area for protection. As of the 2014 Forsyth County Fire Department Annual Report, average response time for the Department was 6 minutes, 42 seconds. This represents an increase from 2009, when average response time was 5 minutes and 13 seconds. The County's goal response time is 5 minutes; to better meet this goal, the Department has identified three additional fire stations that will provide more complete coverage of the County.





## UTILITIES

### WATER AND SEWER

The Forsyth County Water and Sewer Department manages the County's water and sewer services. The County's water treatment plant (WTP) is adjacent to Central Park northeast of Cumming. In 2013, an expansion to the WTP was completed, incorporating membrane technology that enhances water quality and improves efficiency. The expansion has enabled the plant to treat an additional 12 million gallons per day.

Currently the County has six water reclamation facilities operated privately on a contractual basis. In 2011, the County's Windermere water treatment facility was named "Plant of the Year" by the Georgia Association of Water Professionals (GAWP). A seventh treatment facility, the Shakerag Water Reclamation Facility, is expected to be complete in 2016. This \$29-million facility is under construction on the Chattahoochee River and will help accommodate growth in the southern part of the County. Through the use of an advanced membrane bioreactor (MBR), the new plant will also improve the quality of the water put back into the environment.

Over time, the number of sewer customers is expected to increase steadily as communities are transitioned off of septic systems. County residents currently not served by the Water and Sewer Department use privately-owned treatment facilities or septic tanks, or are served by the City of Cumming.

### RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

Forsyth County does not provide curbside trash pickup; residents must contract with private haulers for this service. The County does, however, provide three manned recycling centers at Tolbert Street, Old Atlanta Road, and Coal Mountain.

Two large landfills serve the needs of the County. Located in the far northwest, the Eagle Point Landfill is a privately-operated landfill for municipal solid waste, construction waste, and demolition waste. The Greenleaf Landfill is a privately-owned construction and demolition landfill northeast of Cumming near Lake Lanier.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

The Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department manages 23 park facilities. Developed parks include the following:

- Bennett Park
- Big Creek Greenway
- Caney Creek Preserve
- Central Park
- Charleston Park
- Chattahoochee Pointe
- Chestatee Community Building
- Coal Mountain Park
- Dave's Creek Park
- Ducktown Community Park
- Fowler Park
- Haw Creek Park
- Midway Park
- Old Atlanta Park
- Poole's Mill Park
- Sawnee Mountain Park
- Sawnee Mountain Preserve
- Shady Grove Campground
- Sharon Springs Park
- Six Mile Creek Park - New
- South Forsyth Soccer Complex
- Windermere Park
- Young Deer Creek Park

In addition to managing facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department sponsors a variety of recreation programs including summer camps, community yard sales, and winter basketball leagues.

Over the past five years, the County's parks system has expanded significantly. Sawnee Mountain Preserve gained six miles of hiking trails, two picnic pavilions, a playground, restrooms, and additional parking. Phase IV construction for the Big Creek Greenway was recently completed and Phase V is currently under design. When open to the public, these two phases will add 7 miles of new multi-use trail to the greenway. In addition to the Big Creek Greenway, Forsyth County has plans to develop three other greenways. One will be approximately 9.5 miles along the Chattahoochee River; another will be approximately 6 miles along the Etowah River; and the third is the Sawnee Mountain Greenway, an 8-mile trail that will connect the Sawnee Mountain Preserve to Poole's Mill Park. These three greenways are long-term projects and are not yet underway.



Since 2011, the Parks and Recreation Department has developed four new parks (Old Atlanta, Haw Creek, Caney Creek Preserve, and Chattahoochee Point), and took over management and leasing of six lakeside properties from the Corps of Engineers (USACE) in October 2011. One of these sites, Six Mile Creek, has been developed; the other five remain undeveloped, but plans are underway to construct facilities at the Wildcat Creek property.

Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department has a number of major construction and design projects in progress. Matt Community Park and Lanierland Park are currently under construction, and will add significant acreage to the parks system. Plans for the new Eagles Beak Park are underway, as is the Department's update to the Parks and Recreation System Master Plan.

In addition to County-owned parks, the Parks and Recreation Department has agreements in place for the use of facilities at eight schools across the County. Other parkland within the County includes hundreds of acres of state and federal recreation sites owned by USACE and 215.76 acres of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA). The City of Cumming Recreation and Parks Department operates facilities for the City, including the Dobbs Creek Recreation Center.



## SCHOOLS

Forsyth County is known for its exemplary school system. In 2015, the County's students had the highest ACT scores in the State of Georgia and the highest SAT scores of the state's 15 largest school districts. In recent years, staff and students have achieved over 60 state awards and recognitions, and over 40 national/international awards. South Forsyth Middle School was also one of only eight schools in Georgia to be recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School.

The Forsyth County Board of Education is the governing body of the Forsyth County School System. Its schools are home to 44,400 students and 4,500 employees. Currently, County campuses include 21 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 5 high schools, and 3 Academies of Creative Education that offer alternatives to traditional school environments. Since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, Kelly Mill Elementary School has been built, and another three schools are underway. Brandywine Elementary School and DeSana Middle School will open in August, 2016 and Denmark High School is projected to open in 2018. Two additional schools, East Forsyth High School and Pooles Mills Elementary School, are planned but not currently funded.

Beyond K-12, there are opportunities for higher education within the County. The Forsyth campus of Lanier Tech is part of the Technical College System of Georgia that provides workforce training. In 2012, the UNG Cumming campus opened and has since tripled its enrollment; the campus helps fill a need for additional higher education opportunities in Forsyth County, which had previously been identified by the University of Georgia system. For further information, see the Economic Development section on page 17.

## OTHER SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### LIBRARIES

The Forsyth County Public Library has four locations. Currently the system has over 405,000 materials. In 2015, there were more than 648,000 visits to the libraries and 2.4 million items checked out. The newest library at Post Road was completed in 2013; this LEED-certified building uses the latest technology, including a drive-up book drop and automated sorting equipment. An expansion for the Sharon Forks Library is underway. Planned future library branches include one adjacent to Matt Community Park in northwest Forsyth County and one at the Denmark High School site in southwest Forsyth.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

The largest medical facility in the County is Northside Hospital-Forsyth, which is located within the City of Cumming limits. The not-for-profit community hospital recently added 99 beds bringing its total to 231. Its 150-acre campus includes additional medical office buildings and serves residents of Forsyth County, Dawson County, north Fulton County, west Gwinnett County, east Cherokee County and parts of Hall County. Nearby hospitals outside of Forsyth County include Emory-Johns Creek, Lanier Park, North Fulton, and the Northeast Georgia Health System & Medical Center.

The Forsyth County Health Department provides both physical and environmental health services, including referrals, basic screening, permitting and inspection of food facilities and on-site sewer systems, rabies prevention, and enforcement of Georgia's pool regulations.

### SOCIAL SERVICES

Forsyth County does not directly offer social services but provides funding for a variety of programs run through the Georgia Department of Human Services' Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). The County's DFCS office is located northwest of downtown Cumming. Other social services are provided by a range of non-profit organizations, some of which receive funding at the recommendation of the Forsyth County Social Services Committee.

### SENIOR SERVICES

For over 40 years, the Forsyth County Senior Services Department has offered the local senior community a variety of services such as meal delivery, group meals, referrals, transportation, and wellness activities. Previously, some of these programs were privatized but have now been managed by the County since 2001. Three large senior centers serve as hubs for services: the Center at Charles Place, Hearthstone Lodge Community Center, and Sexton Hall Enrichment Center which opened in 2011.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

Forsyth County has made a strong commitment to conserving its natural resources. Since the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, the County has placed approximately 45.6 more acres under conservation easements for a total of 3,018 acres in County-owned passive parks, conservation easements, and greenways. Major natural features include Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee River, the Etowah River, Big Creek, and Sawnee Mountain.

Many of these resources are already protected under state mandates such as the Georgia Water Quality Control Act, the Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act, and the Georgia Metropolitan River Protection Act. Federal environmental regulations are also in effect, including the Endangered Species Act, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, and the identification of areas prone to flooding. State Environmental Planning Criteria protect critical resources in the County including the Big Creek water supply watershed, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and the Etowah River. The Chattahoochee River is protected under both the Environmental Planning Criteria and the Metropolitan River Protection Act. These mandates will affect the degree of development that can occur in Forsyth County near the protected resources.

## SOILS AND GEOLOGY

Based on the USDA General Soil Survey, Forsyth County has almost 100 different types of soils. These soils are generally acidic, and are grouped under five basic series: Cecil-Madison, Cecil-Louisa, Cecil-Habersham, Madison-Louisa, and Congaree-Wickham. Almost three quarters of the County has Cecil-Madison soils, which are well-drained, gently-sloping soils well-suited for cultivation. Cecil soil types are also suitable for earth work, septic tanks, and building foundations.

Soil types are developed based on the County's geology, which primarily consists of a mix of granite, gneiss, schist, quartzite, hornblende gneiss, mica schist, and quartz mica schist. In the past, talc, marble, mica and manganese has been mined in Forsyth County, but only crushed stone and construction sand and gravel are currently extracted. No other large-scale mining is expected in the future.

## TOPOGRAPHY

Forsyth County is characterized by rolling topography punctuated with areas of steep slopes. Steep slopes, defined as areas with a grade of 15 percent or over, are mostly concentrated at Sawnee Mountain, the shores of Lake Lanier, the northwest corner of the County near the Etowah River, and areas east of GA 400. Although County ordinances discourage construction on steep slopes, it is not currently prohibited. There are no mountains within the County that meet DNR criteria for protection.

Flooding can be an issue in some parts of Forsyth County, particularly in the Big Creek, Etowah River, and Chattahoochee River corridors. In addition to these three areas, the U.S Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified 33 other stream corridors within the County as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). The County's Floodplain Management and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance contain regulations and requirements for development within these areas.

## FOREST LAND

There are three major types of forest in the County: Loblolly-Shortleaf Pine, Oak-Pine, and Oak-Hickory. In coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, the Georgia Forest Commission conducts ongoing inventories of forestland in Georgia. In 2011, there were approximately 59,271 acres of forestland in the County, representing a small decline of 347 acres from 2008. No recent data on forest land are currently available.

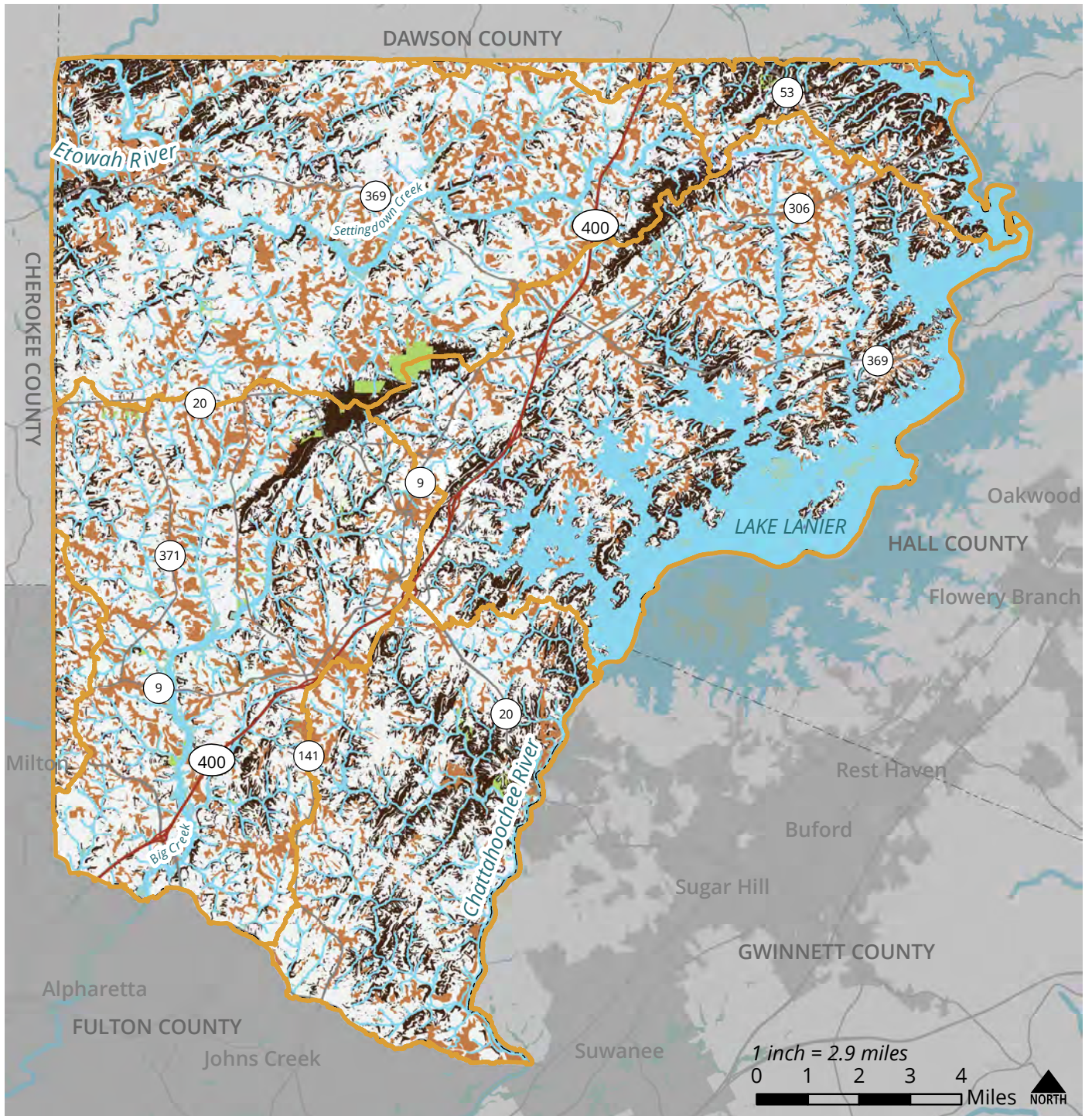


Figure A.33: Natural Resources

- Rivers and Major Streams
- All Rivers & Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Watersheds
- Wetlands
- Conservation Easements
- Prime Farmland
- Slope Over 15%



## AGRICULTURAL LAND

Traditionally, agriculture played a major role in the County. However, the number of acres in cultivation has declined steadily over the decades, from 142,759 acres in 1935 to just 33,932 acres used as farmland in 2002. Today, 24,443 acres are classified as prime farmland. Despite the high-quality soils for cultivation, the most common agricultural activities in the County are raising poultry or cattle. Agricultural land use has continued to decline as property becomes more valuable for development than for agricultural production. This trend, seen in metropolitan areas across the country, makes it challenging to preserve agricultural land and open space. Over time, the rural character that attracted new residents in the first place tends to give way to increasing suburbanization, making it difficult for remaining agricultural businesses to remain viable.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

As of December 2014, there were known occurrences of six animals of special concern and five plant species. The animal species are all associated with the County's water habitats. The Cherokee Darter fish (*Etheostoma scotti*) is a species with federal status. Three of the six animal species—the Chattahoochee Crayfish (*Cambarus howardi*), the Rock Darter (*Etheostoma rupestre*), and the Coosa Chub (*Macrhybopsis sp. 1*)—are Georgia protected species. The remaining two fish, the Etowah Chub (*Hybopsis sp. 9*) and the Shoal Bass (*Micropterus cataractae*) are species of concern.

Two plant species occurrences, the Monkeyface Orchid (*Platanthera integrilabia*) and the Georgia Aster (*Symphyotrichum georgianum*) have federal status, and the Ozark Bunchflower (*Veratrum woodii*) is a Georgia protected species. Shining indigo-bush (*Amorpha nitens*) and the Schwerin Indigo-bush (*Amorpha schwerinii*) are species of concern.

## WATER RESOURCES

The County has a variety of water resources that are important sources of drinking water, wildlife habitat, and recreation. This includes lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, as well as aquifers.

### *Lake Lanier*

At nearly 39,000 acres, Lake Lanier is the largest lake entirely contained in the State of Georgia. The lake had its beginnings in 1950 when a dam was built on the Chattahoochee River; it took 9 years for the lake to reach its "full" depth. Today Lake Lanier is the primary source of drinking water for not just the County, but the region and is one of metropolitan Atlanta's premier destinations for recreation.

### *Chattahoochee River*

The Chattahoochee River forms approximately 9.5 miles of Forsyth County's eastern boundary with Gwinnett County, and is a source of drinking water as well as a recreation destination. In total, the river spans 540 miles from Habersham County in north Georgia to its convergence with the Flint River in southwest Georgia at Lake Seminole. Ultimately, the river drains into the Gulf of Mexico. In the 20th century, the river's health came under threat from increasing development in Georgia. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a law to protect part of the river valley, and hundreds of acres came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service and became the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA).

### *Etowah River*

Located in the far northwest of the County, the Etowah River is one of the most biologically-diverse rivers in the country. It is home to over 75 species of fish, including a number of imperiled species that are likely present in Forsyth County.

A canoe trail along the Etowah River was recently completed using money from the 2008 parkland bond; approximately 6 miles of the Etowah River are contained within the County.

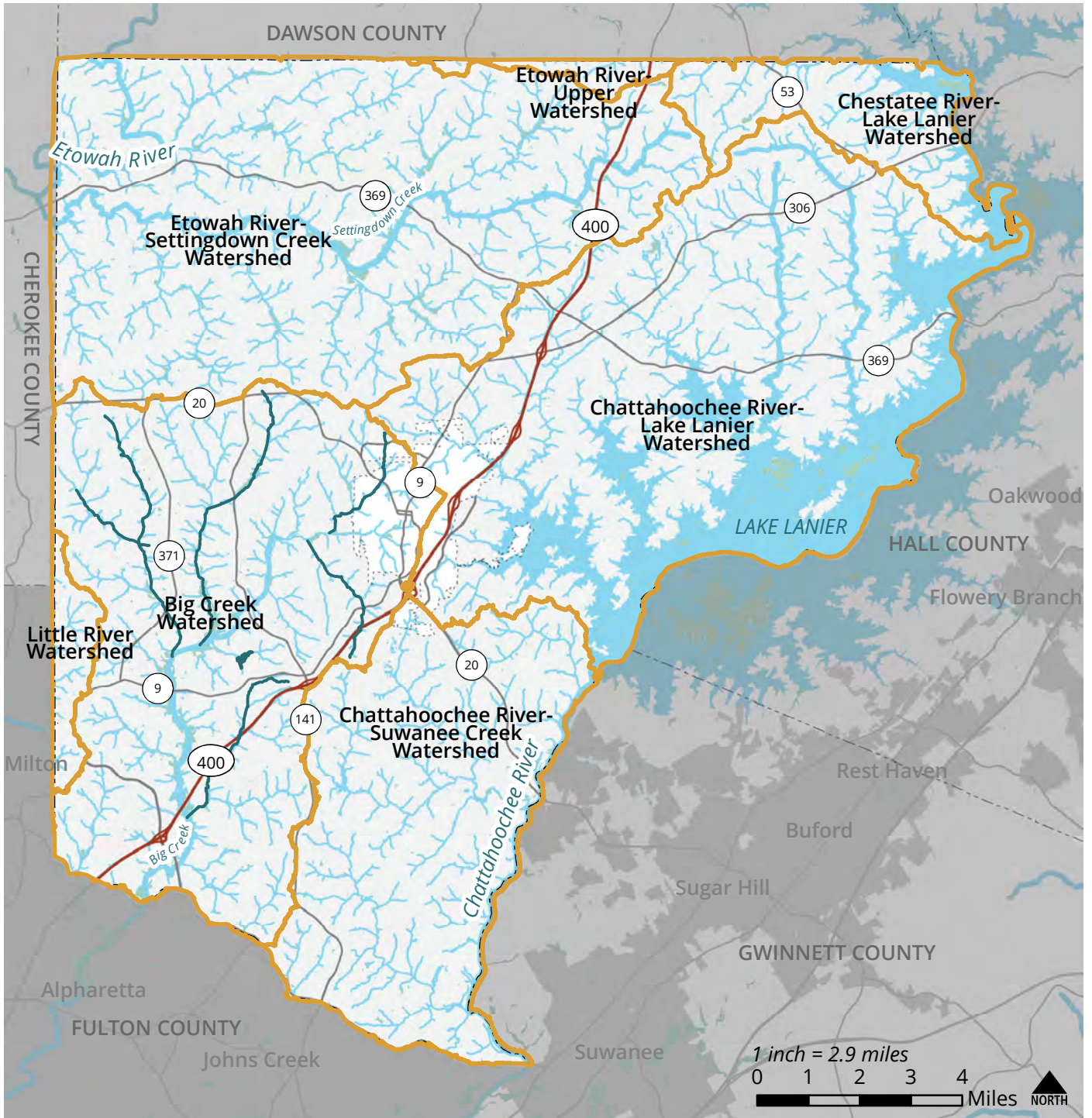


Figure A.34: Natural Resources (Water)

- ▭ Watersheds
- Rivers and Major Streams
- All Rivers & Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Stream & Lake Buffer (150ft)
- Wetlands



### *Creeks, Streams and Wetlands*

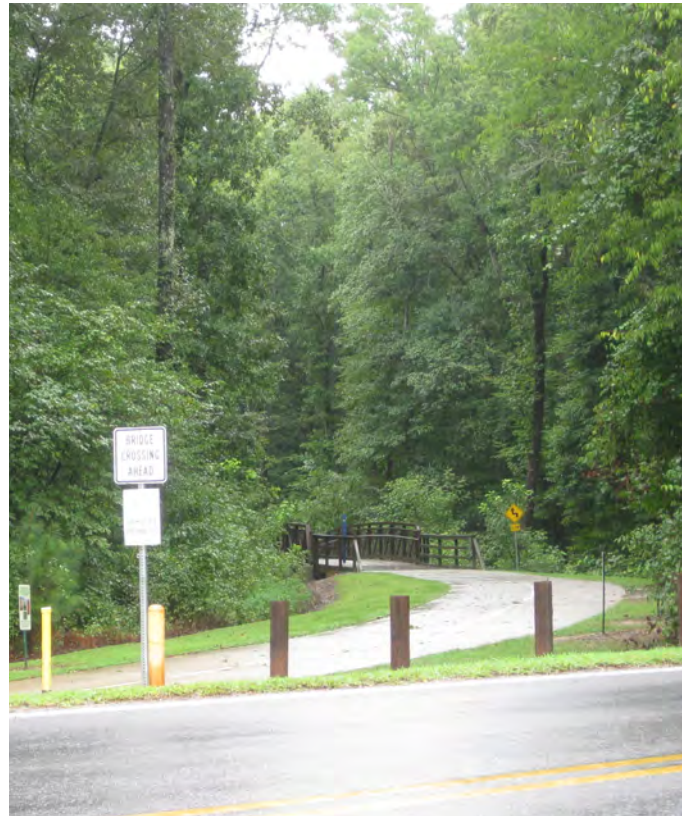
Forsyth County has an intricate system of creeks and streams; all drain into one of two major river basins, the Chattahoochee River Basin in the southeast and the Coosa River Basin in the northwest. Two of the most prominent creeks in the County are Big Creek and Settingdown Creek, both of which have extensive wetlands. County-wide, there are approximately 3,338 acres of wetlands.

### *Water Supply*

Forsyth County is part of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD), which establishes strategies, policies and recommendations for management of water resources. Like most of the other counties in the District, the County is heavily reliant on surface water for its water supply. The bulk of its drinking water is from the Chattahoochee River and Lake Lanier.

The water supplied by Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River has been at the center of controversy since the 1980s. The water is an important resource not only for the Atlanta metropolitan area, but for other areas of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. These other areas were concerned about the Atlanta region's increased water withdrawals and the downstream impacts on water supply and ecological systems. After multiple rounds of litigation, a federal judge determined in 2011 that one of the primary purposes of Lake Lanier is to provide water to the Atlanta region, and gave USACE a deadline to re-determine allocation of water from Lake Lanier. As directed by the court, USACE issued a legal opinion in 2012 that it has the legal authority to grant Georgia's entire water supply request of 705 million gallons per day pending the completion of an environmental impact statement (EIS). A draft EIS and Master Water Control Manual were issued in September, 2015; final versions are expected to be complete in 2017.

In addition to surface water sources, Forsyth County has also explored the usage of groundwater through a multi-stage study. The County has 9 groundwater recharge areas that cover 33,556 acres. Through the installation of exploratory test wells, the County has determined that there is the potential to withdraw 1 million gallons per day of high-quality groundwater that is not under the direct influence of surface water. In November 2015, Forsyth County filed a permit to begin withdrawing groundwater from four wells in the Crystalline Rock aquifer.





### METROPOLITAN NORTH GEORGIA WATER PLANNING DISTRICT PLANS

In 2001 the Georgia General Assembly created the MNGWPD to facilitate planning for water at the regional level. The district includes 15 metropolitan Atlanta counties, including Forsyth County. One of the District’s primary directives was to complete a number of regional and watershed-specific plans. Originally adopted in 2003 and updated in 2009, these plans are the District-wide Watershed Management Plan, the Long-term Wastewater Management Plan and the Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan. Each county and municipality is responsible for their implementation; in Forsyth County, the Department of Water and Sewer oversees the implementation of MNGWPD policies and directives and the Stormwater division oversees implementation of the Watershed Management Plan.

### WATER SUPPLY AND WATER CONSERVATION PLAN

The MNGWPD’s Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan is a regional, high-level document intended for refinement and implementation at the local level. As part of its Comprehensive Plan process, Forsyth County certifies that it has reviewed the Water Supply and Water Conservation Plan and its 2015 Amendment. The Amendment contains seven new actions applicable to Forsyth County; Figure A.35 shows the current status in Forsyth County of each of these new actions, as well as the 12 previously established in 2003 and 2009.

Figure A.35: MNGWPD Water Supply and Water Conservation Actions in Forsyth County

		Implementation Action	Action Status
2003 Actions	5.1	Conservation pricing	Implemented
	5.2	Replace older, inefficient fixtures	Implemented
	5.3	Require Pre-rise spray valve retrofit education program	Implemented
	5.4	Rain sensor shut-off switches on new irrigation systems	Implemented
	5.5	Require sub-meters in new multi-family buildings	Implemented
	5.6	Assess and reduce water system leakage	Implemented
	5.7	Conduct residential water audits	Implemented
	5.8	Distribute low-flow retrofit kits to residential users	Implemented
	5.9	Conduct commercial water audits	Implemented
	5.10	Implement education and public awareness plan	Implemented
2009 Update	5.11	Install high-efficiency toilets and urinals in government buildings	Implemented
	5.12	Require new car washes to recycle water	Implemented
2015 Amendments	5.13	Expedited water loss reduction	Implemented
	5.14	Multi-family HET rebates	Not Applicable
	5.15	Install meters with point of use leak detection	In Progress
	5.16	Require private fire lines to be metered	Implemented
	5.17	Maintain a water conservation program	Implemented
	5.18	Adopt a water waste policy	Implemented
	5.19	Require high efficiency plumbing fixtures consistent with state legislation	Implemented

Source: Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan (2009 and 2015 Amendments)



### WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

MNGWPD's Watershed Management Plan was first adopted in 2003, updated in 2009, and amended in 2013. Its purpose is to look regionally at watersheds, and guide localities in how to mitigate stormwater runoff impacts, protect drinking water supply sources, address rivers and streams that fail to meet water quality standards, improve water quality in lakes, protect aquatic habitats, and educate the public.

Forsyth County's location within the Chattahoochee and Coosa Basins makes watershed protection particularly important. The Watershed Management Plan provided five model ordinances for each jurisdiction to adopt, which have all been incorporated in Forsyth County's Code of Ordinances. Figure A.36 illustrates all of the implementation measures that MNGWPD designated as a local responsibility.

Figure A.36: MNGWPD Watershed Management Plan Implementation Status in Forsyth County

	Implementation Action	Action Status
5.A.1	Post-Development Stormwater Management	Implemented
5.A.2	Floodplain Management/Flood Damage Prevention	Implemented
5.A.3	Stream Buffer Protection	Implemented
5.A.4	Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connection	Implemented
5.A.5	Litter Control	Implemented
5.B.1	Comprehensive Land Use Planning	Implemented
5.B.2	Future Conditions Floodplain Delineation	In Progress
5.B.3	Sewer and Septic Planning	Implemented
5.B.4	Greenspace and Green Infrastructure Tools for Watershed Protection	Implemented
5.C.1	Integrated Development Review Process	Implemented
5.C.2	Stormwater Design Criteria and Standards (Georgia Stormwater Management Manual)	Implemented
5.C.3	Construction Erosion and Sediment Control	TBD
5.D.1	Stormwater Infrastructure Inventory	TBD
5.D.2	Extent and Level of Service Policy	TBD
5.D.3	Inspections (public and private systems)	Implemented
5.D.4	Maintenance	Implemented
5.D.5	Capital Improvement Program	TBD
5.E.1	Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Local Operations	Implemented
5.E.2	Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Program	TBD
5.F.1	Long-term Ambient Trend Monitoring	Implemented
5.F.2	Habitat and Biological Monitoring	TBD
5.G.1	Local Education and Public Awareness Program	Implemented
5.H.1	Source Water Watershed Protection	Implemented
5.H.2	Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Management	Implemented
5.H.3	Endangered Species Protection	Implemented
5.H.4	Watershed Improvement Projects	Implemented

Source: Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan (2009 and 2015 Amendments)

## DNR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CRITERIA

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources established minimum Environmental Planning Criteria for the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains. All comprehensive plans in Georgia must certify that these Environmental Planning Criteria were considered as part of the planning process.

All aspects of this Comprehensive Plan Update will be in compliance with the State’s Environmental Planning Criteria and the County’s Code of Ordinances. Forsyth County already meets these criteria through the following ordinances in Chapter 21 – Overlay Districts:

- ARTICLE II. – PROTECTED WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED OVERLAY DISTRICT
  - 21-2.1. – Minimum criteria for the Big Creek Small Water Supply Water Shed
  - 21-2.2. – Minimum criteria for the Etowah and Upper Chattahoochee Large Water Supply Watershed
- ARTICLE III. – PROTECTED GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA DISTRICT
  - 21-3.1. – Permitted Uses
  - 21-3.2. – Exemptions
- ARTICLE IV. – THE ETOWAH RIVER CORRIDOR PROTECTION DISTRICT
  - 21-4.1. – Permitted Uses
  - 21-4.2 – Exemptions
- ARTICLE V. – WETLAND PROTECTION DISTRICT
  - 21.-5.1. – Permitted uses

Forsyth County has no mountains that meet the state’s definition for protection under the Environmental Planning Criteria.

## CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Cultural resources are an important component of Forsyth County—they tell the story of Forsyth County and provide opportunities for education and learning. The term “cultural resources” is broad, and includes archaeological sites, historic structures, historic landscapes, and other places associated with the County’s heritage.

Like most of northern Georgia, the County was populated by members of the Cherokee Nation for hundreds of years. Beginning in the early 1800s, the area now known as Forsyth County was a gateway for settlers traveling west on the Federal Road. An increased numbers of settlers began to come to the area in 1829 when gold was discovered, and the state officially created Forsyth County in 1832. The Cherokees were forced in 1838 to relocate to Oklahoma via the “Trail of Tears.”

For most of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, Forsyth County remained a rural, largely agricultural area. This began to change in the 1980s, when GA 400 was completed and provided a new, direct link to Atlanta. Between 1980 and 2010, the County grew from 27,958 residents to 189,314, representing population growth of over 577 percent.

This growth has placed tremendous pressure on Forsyth County’s cultural resources. Although there are many known cultural and historic sites within the County, they are largely unprotected. Some resources have been moved outside the County, including a petroglyph found near Silver City that is now on display in the University of Georgia, and the historic James Vann tavern that was torn down and rebuilt as part of New Echota State Park in Gordon County.



## CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are no recent, comprehensive County surveys of cultural resources in Forsyth County. Given the strong presence of the Cherokees in the area, it is very likely that many archeological sites remain unknown or undocumented. Areas potentially rich in cultural resources include the shores of the Chattahoochee and Etowah Rivers, and the major stream corridors of Settingdown Creek and Big Creek. Resources from both the Cherokees and later settlement are also likely to occur along the alignment of the Old Federal Road.



Source:  
<https://www.cummingforsythchamber.org/visit-us/what-to-do/film/>

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The most recent comprehensive historic resources survey was completed in 1993 and published in 1996. It identified over 490 historic properties, defined as anything 50 years-old or older, in unincorporated Forsyth County. The majority of the properties were single-family residences, small commercial structures, churches and schools.

The County performed an update in 2007 using aerial photography. This update identified if a resource had been demolished or compromised since the 1996 report. The update determined that a small number of properties had been destroyed since the first survey; of those that remained, 44 were potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). There has been no systematic update to the survey since 2007, but at least one property is known to be demolished.

Currently there are two properties on the NRHP: Poole's Mill Bridge and the Fowler Family Farmhouse. Poole's Mill Bridge is a covered bridge built in 1901. With its distinctive lattice-truss style, the bridge is a centerpiece of Poole's Mill Park and is included in the World Guide to Covered Bridges produced by the National Society for the Preservation of Covered Bridges. The Fowler Family Farmhouse is a farmstead in southwest Forsyth County dating from 1922; it is one of the few intact early 20th century farmsteads still standing in metropolitan Atlanta.

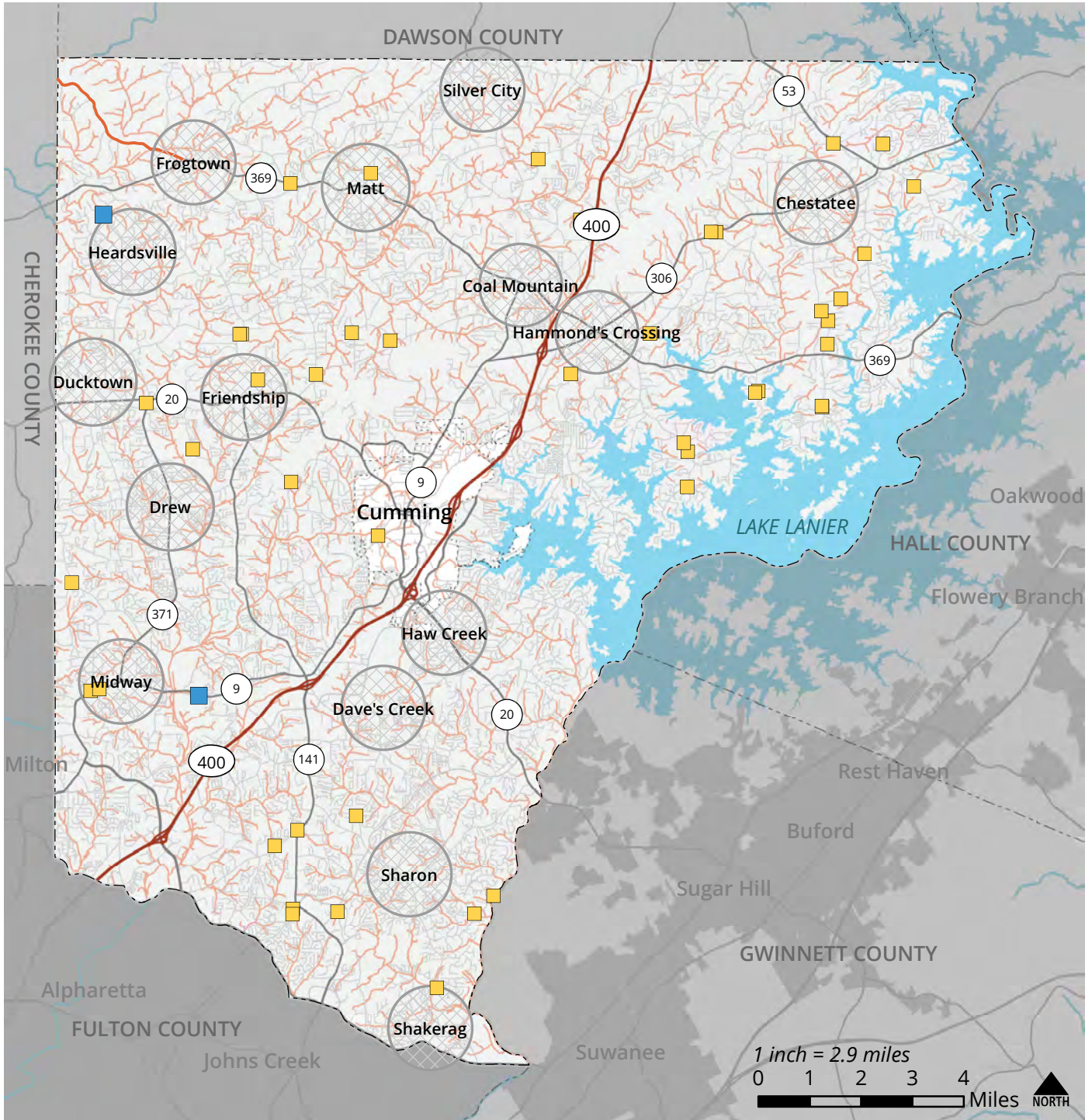


Figure A.37: Historic/Cultural Resources

- National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- Sites Potentially Eligible for NRHP
- Old Federal Road Setback (50ft)
- Streams Setback (50ft)
- Former Crossroads Villages



## STATE HERITAGE AREAS

Forsyth County is home to the Buford Trout Hatchery, a site designated as a state heritage preserve. Located on the Chattahoochee River, the hatchery is a public fish production facility and fishing area, and also has trails for wildlife viewing.

## CROSSROADS COMMUNITIES

Forsyth County also has fifteen small communities that historically served as village centers, mostly occurring at major crossroads. These communities include Chestatee, Silver City, Hammond's Crossing, Coal Mountain, Matt, Frogtown, Heardsville, Ducktown, Friendship, Drew, Midway, Haw Creek, Dave's Creek, Sharon, and Shakerag. Many no longer retain their historic character, but are still identifiable places in the community. Please see the Land Use chapter for additional information on these communities, which were designated as future community nodes in Forsyth County's previous planning efforts.

## CONCLUSIONS

Forsyth County has a broad range of community, natural, historic, and cultural resources. Particularly in the past five years, the County has made a concerted, ongoing effort to invest in its community facilities and services. These facilities will help meet existing needs for park space and services, and are largely located in the areas with the most potential for growth.

Future development will need to be mindful of both natural and cultural resources. Because of the County's location on Lake Lanier and in the Chattahoochee Basin, future development not only impacts the County's residents but may have effects on the water supply downstream. To maintain Forsyth County's character, development will also need to consider the remaining agricultural lands and historic and cultural resources.

## A.5 TRANSPORTATION

### INTRODUCTION

Transportation is an important part of the future of Forsyth County. The economics, quality of life, and accessibility of Forsyth County depend on transportation infrastructure.

High-functioning transportation is one of the fundamentals of economic development. The Atlanta region was able to develop historically as a vital rail hub for the southeast. Transportation infrastructure continues to drive the regional economy with the interstate system, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and the Port of Savannah providing links to the national and world economy. Likewise, GA 400 provides a vital link between Forsyth County and employment centers in Fulton County, the City of Atlanta, and recreation areas to the north. Transportation provides access to jobs, opportunities for goods movement, and market areas for businesses. Conversely, when the transportation system does not work well, there can be significant economic penalties through opportunity costs (such as spending too much time in traffic), fuel costs, and business relocations.

Transportation also affects the quality of life of Forsyth County residents. Recreation opportunities and health can be enhanced by transportation amenities like greenway trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes. By providing safe and comfortable places to be active, the transportation network allows residents the opportunity to walk or bike to school. Well-designed transportation will enhance safety, which is of high concern to all users.

Ultimately, transportation is about accessibility. Accessibility is the ability to reach desired goods, services, activities, and destinations. Without a highly-functioning transportation system, it will be difficult to reach these desired opportunities. This section provides an assessment of the existing and planned local transportation system. Forsyth County completed a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) in 2011, and an update of the CTP is scheduled to begin in 2016. In addition, an update to the Bicycle Transportation & Pedestrian Walkways (BTPW) 2025 Plan was completed in 2015.

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This section incorporates the findings of the 2011 CTP and 2015 BTPW with the understanding that major changes to the transportation vision will occur within the framework of the 2016 CTP update.

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## ROADWAY NETWORK

Forsyth County has a robust road network. It is centered on GA 400, which runs on a northeasterly axis the length of the County. Forsyth County has 40 miles of freeways, 97 miles of major arterials, 88 miles of minor arterials, and 169 miles of collector roads. GA 400 is the most important road in the County, carrying the highest traffic volumes, enabling county-wide connectivity, and providing access to regional employment centers.

## EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUTING PATTERNS

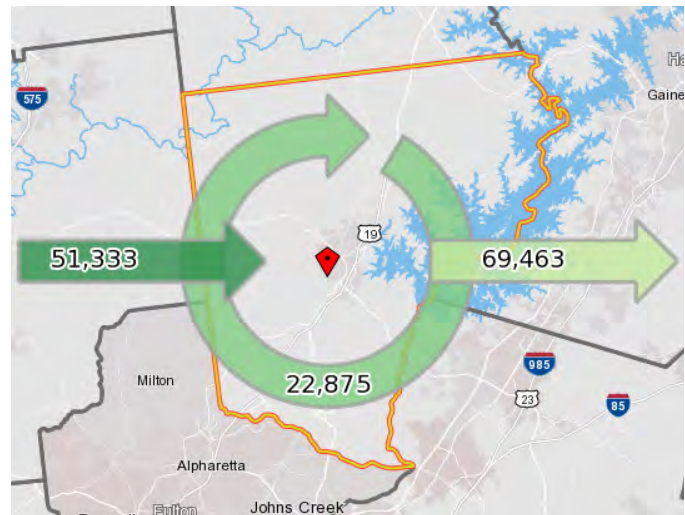
According to 2014 U.S. Census ACS estimates, there are just over 92,000 employed Forsyth County residents. Of this total, about 75 percent have jobs outside of the County and 25 percent have jobs within the County (Figure A.38). These data support the concept that Forsyth County is mainly a bedroom community. However, the County boasts a significant amount of internal jobs. As of 2014 there were approximately 74,000 jobs within Forsyth County. About 31 percent (22,875) of Forsyth jobs are filled by residents, with the remaining 69 percent (51,333) of jobs filled by people from areas outside of the County. In terms of commuting patterns, this means that outflow trips are roughly the same as inflow trips, (Figure A.39).

Figure A.38: Forsyth County Worker Characteristics

Forsyth County Residents	Total Workers	%
Employed Outside Forsyth County	69,463	75.2%
Employed Inside Forsyth County	22,875	24.8%
Total Forsyth County Workers	92,338	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014 American Community Survey

Figure A.39: Daily Forsyth County Commuting Flows



Source: US Census Bureau 2014 US Census

displays where residents of Forsyth County work. Significant employment centers for Forsyth County Residents include:

- City of Cumming
- GA 400 at the SR 20 interchange area, including Northside Hospital-Forsyth
- Southern Forsyth County centered on GA 400, McFarland Pkwy, and Shiloh Rd
- Emory Johns Creek Hospital/Johns Creek Town Center
- The GA 400 corridor in north Fulton County, especially around the Windward Pkwy interchange in Alpharetta
- Perimeter Center
- Buckhead
- Peachtree Corners
- Cumberland

Based on these patterns, the most important commuter corridors for Forsyth County residents are GA 400, SR 141, McFarland Pkwy, and SR 20 south. Considering the locations of employment, it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of GA 400 to Forsyth County.

Additional important commuter corridors for workers who live outside Forsyth County include SR 20 west and SR 369. These corridors provide east-west connections to Cherokee County and Hall County.



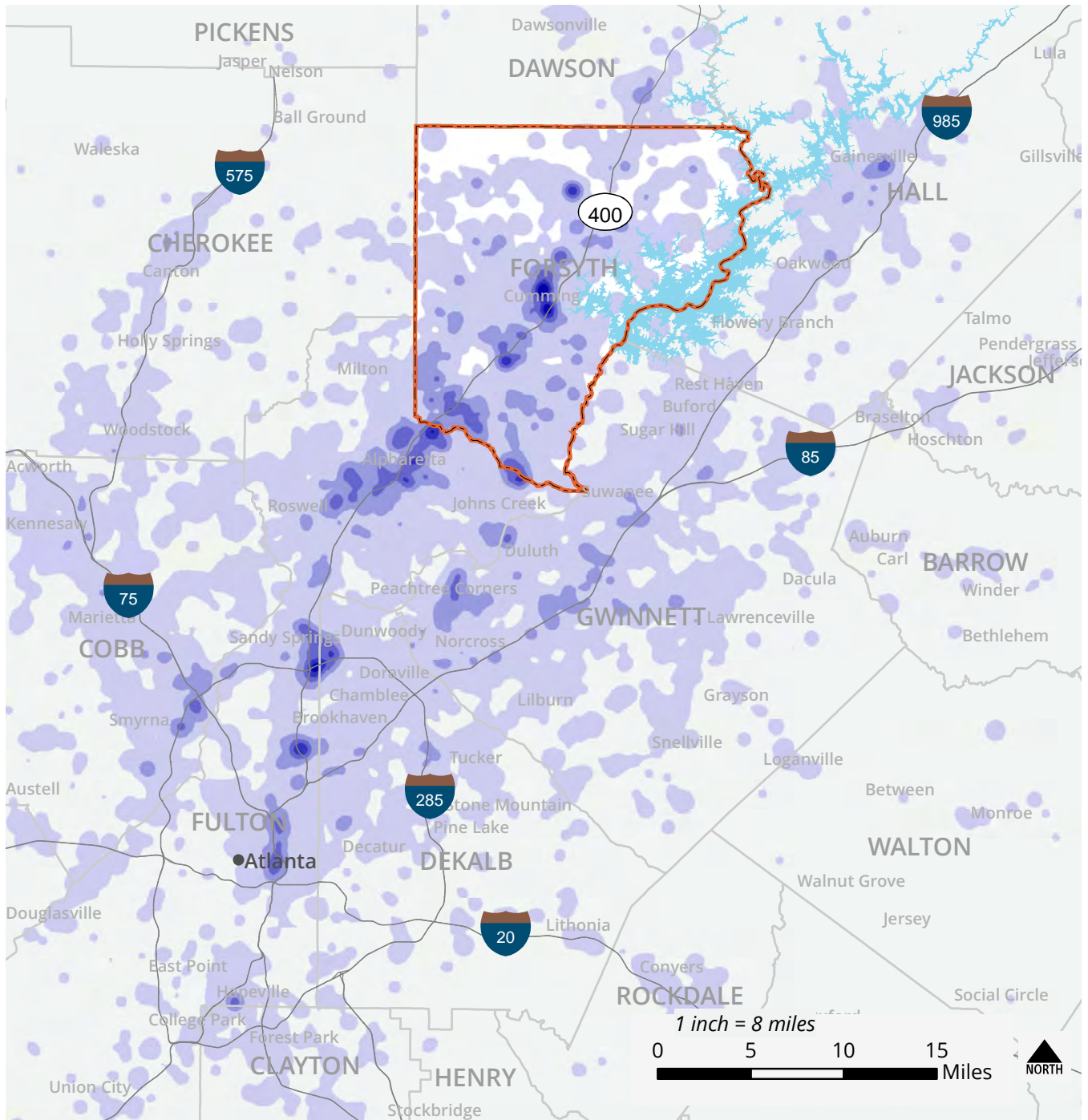


Figure A.40: Where Forsyth County Residents Work

- 5-153 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 154-598 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 599-1,340 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 1,341-2,379 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 2,380-3,715 Jobs / Sq Mile

Source: GIS Department, Forsyth County Georgia; Atlanta Regional Commission; US Census Bureau



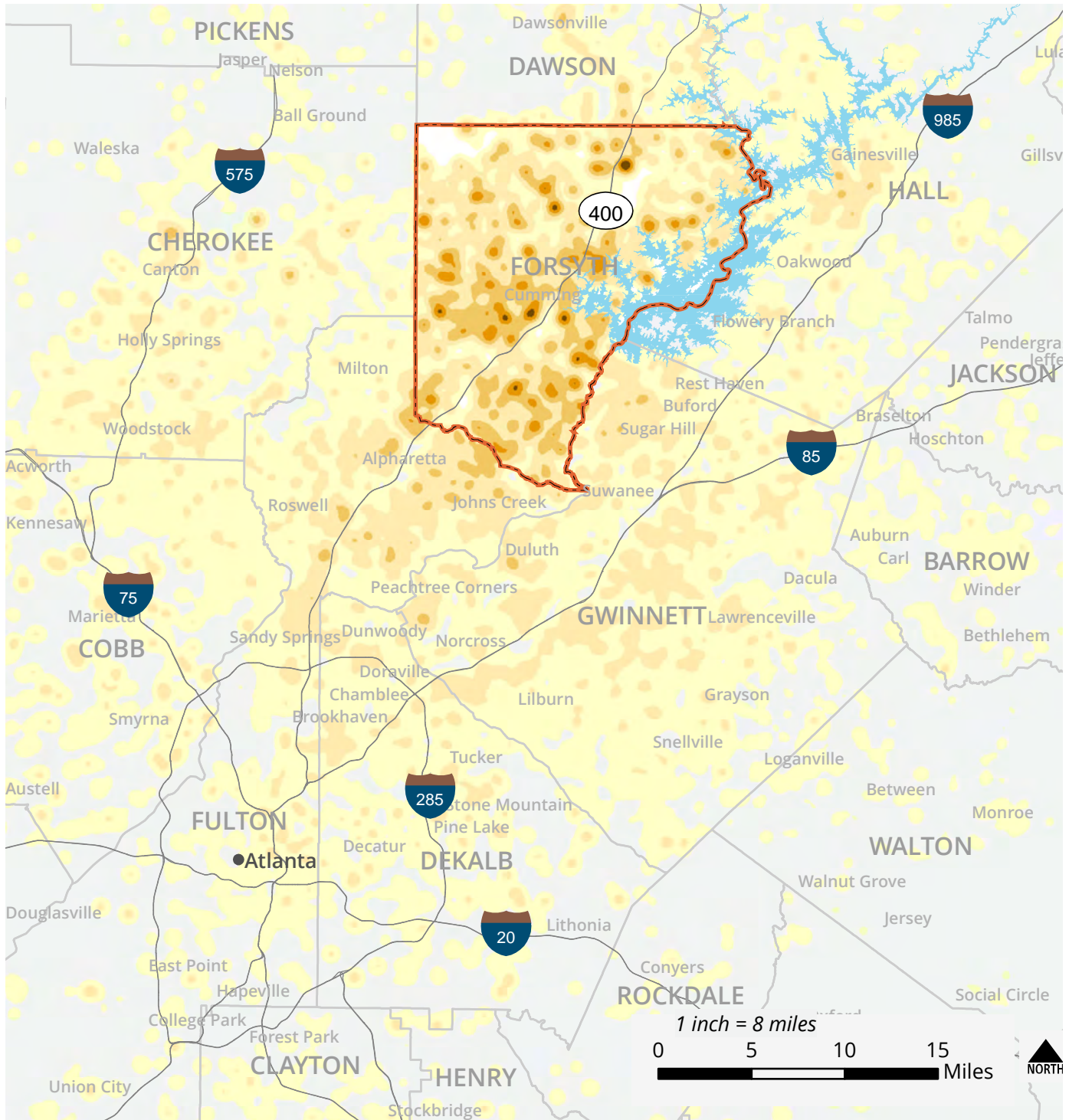


Figure A.41: Where Forsyth Workers Live

- 5-34 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 35-122 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 123-270 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 271-476 Jobs / Sq Mile
- 477-742 Jobs / Sq Mile

Source: GIS Department, Forsyth County Georgia; Atlanta Regional Commission; US Census Bureau

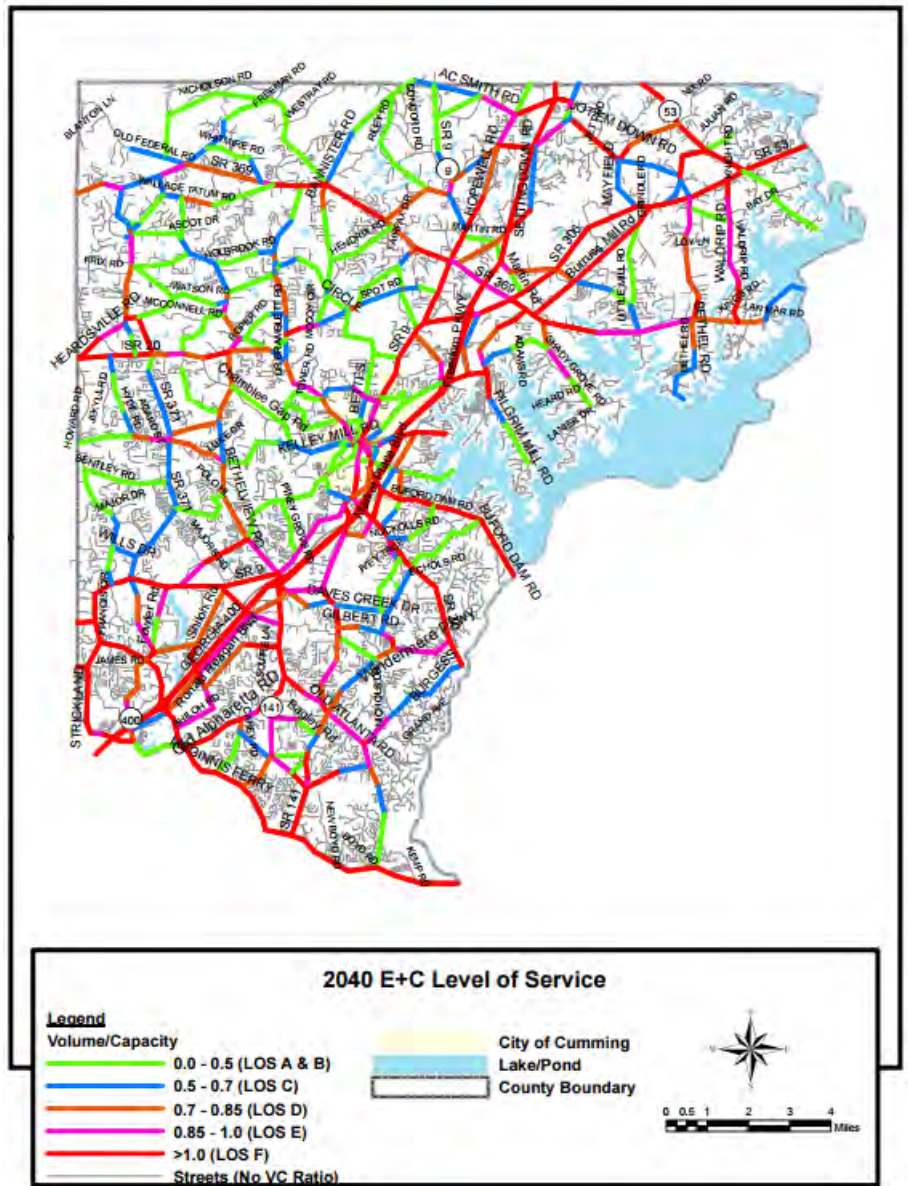
**TRAFFIC CONGESTION**

The 2011 CTP forecasted roadway congestion using the regional travel demand model for the years 2010 and 2040. Congestion in 2010 was present, but not overwhelming. It was concentrated along GA 400 near the Fulton County line, in the southeast quadrant of the County, and in the vicinity around the City of Cumming. However, due mainly to rapid projected population growth, the roadway network is projected to have significant amounts of congestion in 2040.

The areas of congestion expand in 2040 to include most of the freeways (GA 400), major arterials, and minor arterials. The congestion analysis from the 2011 CTP became the basis for a large set of transportation projects to be implemented through multiple funding sources.

An update to the CTP is scheduled to begin in 2016, during which an in-depth reevaluation of county transportation network will take place.

Figure A.42: Projected 2040 Traffic Congestion



Source: 2011 Forsyth County Comprehensive Transportation Plan



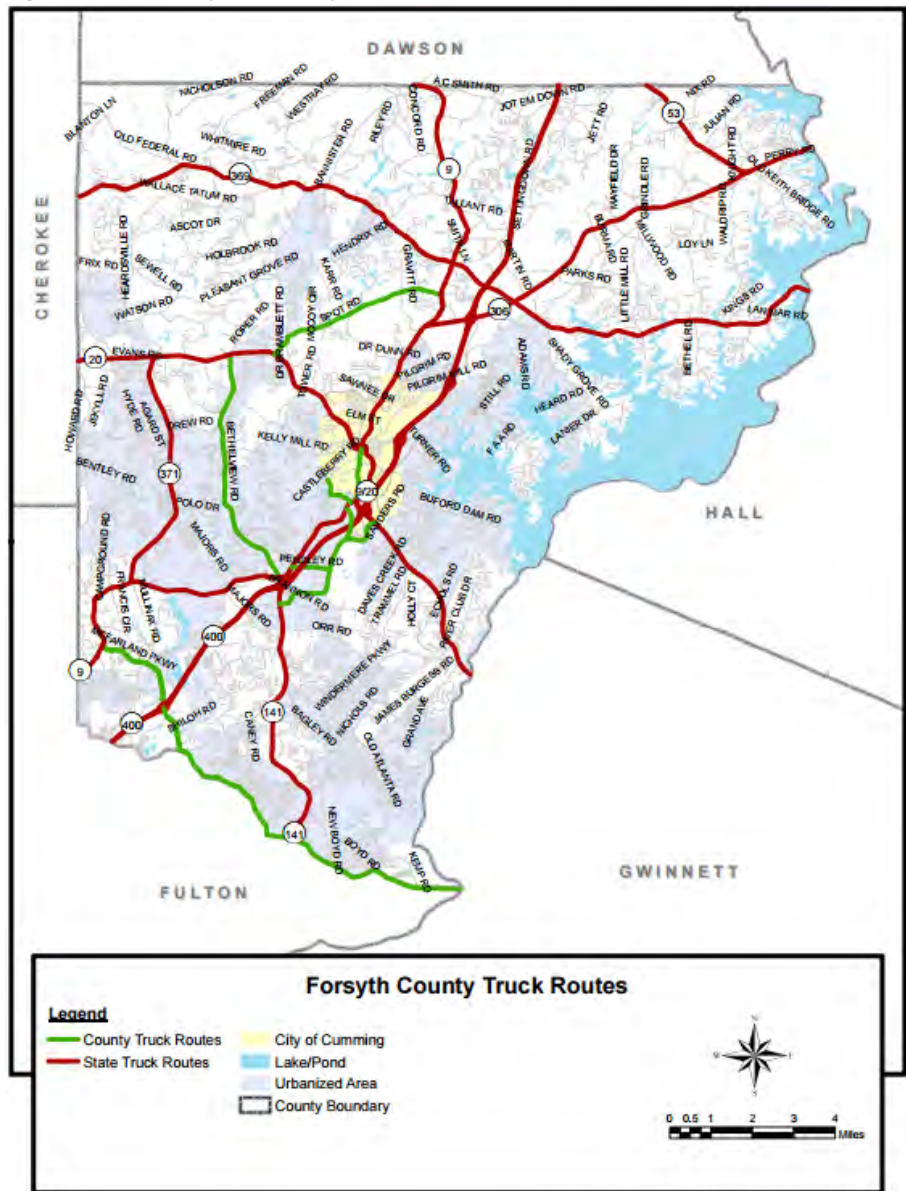
**FREIGHT**

Forsyth County has a well-developed network of roadways that can play a role in the distribution of goods. Truck routes were identified in the 2011 CTP. These routes include State Routes 9, 20, 53, 141, 306, 369, 371, and GA 400 as well as Bethelview Road, Spot Road, McFarland Parkway, Ronald Reagan Boulevard, N Old Atlanta Road, Veterans Memorial Boulevard, and Hutchison Road. As stated in the CTP on page 16, “these routes bear a close relationship to the economic geography, and are not only the routes that businesses developed around but also the routes for getting between businesses.”

Freight-generating land uses, such as industrial and commercial uses, correspond well to the identified truck routes representing an appropriate match between freight land use and freight transportation infrastructure. Moving forward it will be important to continue ensuring this compatibility.

There are no railroads in Forsyth County.

Figure A.43: Forsyth County Truck Routes



Source: 2011 Forsyth County CTP

## PARKING

Parking is needed at the beginning and end of every automobile trip. Typically, parking is required through land use planning and development codes. The appropriate amount and convenience of parking is of particular interest to businesses. However, parking can be at odds with visual aesthetics, walkability, environmental sustainability, and livability if not done sensitively. Development codes often require more parking than is typically needed, resulting in large paved lots with low utilization rates. Forsyth County should work to provide only the parking necessary for business activity. Strategies such as shared parking lots, parking decks, and street parking can lessen the environmental impact of stormwater runoff and increase the amount of land available for greenspace.



## FIXING AMERICA'S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION (FAST) ACT

A new federal transportation authorization bill was signed by President Obama on December 4, 2015. This new legislation, entitled the FAST Act, governs how the federal highway trust fund can be allocated for transportation purposes. It represents the first long-term bill since the previous authorization expired in 2009. The FAST Act contains several new provisions and areas of emphasis, including freight.

The FAST Act eliminates the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and replaces it with the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. Funds allocated through STBG are competitive in nature. Many of the projects in the Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways 2025 Plan are eligible for STBG funding.

The FAST Act benefits the implementation of transportation projects. The Highway Trust Fund remains solvent through the next five years. In a much-needed reversal of recent trends, funding authorization will grow each year between 2015 and 2020. This means that more money will be available to the Atlanta metropolitan region for transportation purposes. With the recent commitments of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and Transportation Bond, Forsyth County is well positioned to address its transportation needs.



## TRANSIT NETWORK

Forsyth County residents currently have transit options to meet their transportation needs. The County operates a demand response transit system, and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) Xpress operates two routes with connections to Forsyth County.

### FORSYTH DIAL-A-RIDE

Forsyth County operates a demand response transit service called Dial-A-Ride. The service is available for County residents 18 years or older. Residents under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Dial-A-Ride is available by appointment only, and there are no fixed routes. Appointments can be scheduled up to 30 days in advance. The cost is \$2.00 per person per trip. The Forsyth County Fleet Services Department operates Dial-A-Ride with five vans equipped with wheelchair services.

This type of demand response transit service is an important amenity for those without other transportation options. Seniors, residents without cars, and those unable to drive are often dependent on transit services for mobility.

### GRTA XPRESS ROUTES 400 AND 408

Xpress is a regional coach bus transit service operated by the GRTA. Xpress service focuses on morning and evening rush hour commuting trips from the suburban Atlanta region to large regional employment centers such as Perimeter, Midtown Atlanta, and downtown Atlanta. There are currently two Xpress routes operating in Forsyth County: Route 400 and Route 408. Given the distribution

of jobs of Forsyth County residents, Route 400 in particular provides a viable transportation alternative to the Perimeter, Midtown, and downtown Atlanta employment areas.

Xpress Route 400 includes a park-and-ride station in the City of Cumming. It runs along GA 400 with connections to the North Springs MARTA station and downtown Atlanta. In the morning three trips operate from Cumming to downtown Atlanta, and three trips operate from Cumming to North Springs. Reverse commutes operate between North Springs and Cumming only, with two trips in the morning and two trips in the afternoon. Route 400 is the more popular of the two Forsyth routes, averaging 266 daily passengers.

GRTA adopted a comprehensive operation analysis report entitled Direct Xpress in January 2016. This analysis recommended changing the operation of Route 400 from a stop at North Springs MARTA to a stop in the Perimeter area.

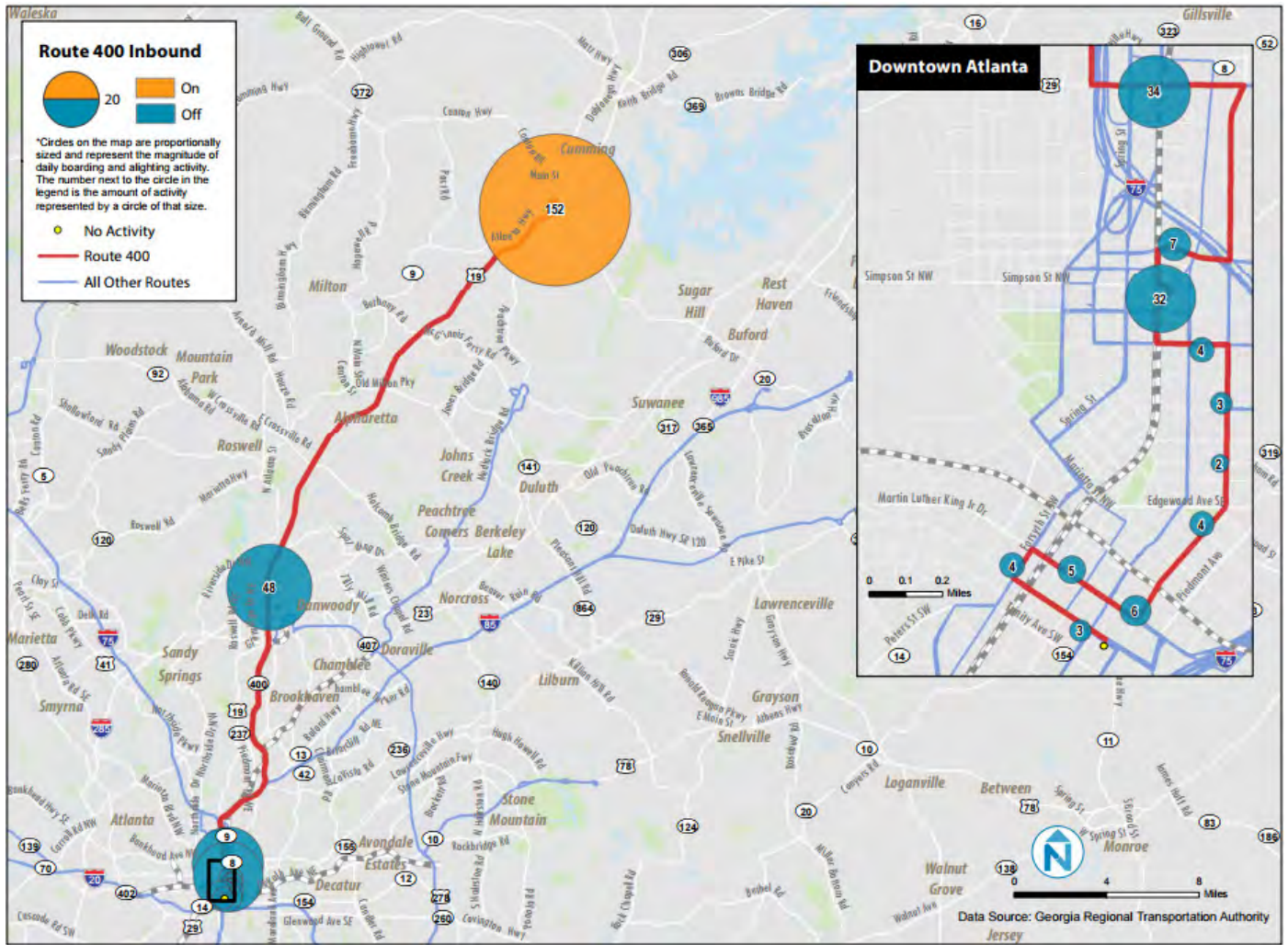
Xpress Route 408 operates between the Doraville MARTA Station and Emory Hospital in Johns Creek. In the morning rush hour, the route travels north. There are two bus stops in Forsyth County along Johns Creek Parkway near the Johns Creek Town center commercial development. In the evening, rush hour Route 408 operates southbound. There are four rush hour trips each in the morning and afternoon. Two reverse commute trips operate in both the morning and afternoon. Route 408 is the less popular of the two Forsyth routes averaging only 124 passengers per day. In fact, the route has the second lowest ridership numbers of all Xpress routes. Xpress Routes 400 and

Forsyth Dial-A-Ride Buses



Source: <http://www.forsythco.com/Departments-Offices/Fleet-Services>

Figure A.44: GRTA Xpress Route 408 Ridership



Source: GRTA Direct Xpress Report

408 are shown in Figure A.44.

**POTENTIAL TRANSIT EXPANSION**

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is undertaking the Georgia 400 Transit Initiative to consider expansion of their transit northward along the GA 400 corridor in north Fulton County. The proposed extension would terminate within one and one-half miles of the Forsyth County line by way of GA 400. The proposed alignment, which

would be served by either heavy rail or bus rapid transit (BRT), would extend the existing Red Line north from its northern terminus at North Springs Station to a proposed station at Windward Parkway in Alpharetta. In addition to the Windward Parkway Station, the proposed extension would have four new stations at Northridge, Holcomb Bridge, North Point Mall/Encore Parkway, and Old Milton Parkway. An Environmental Analysis for the project is underway, but funding has not yet been identified for the project’s design and construction. Forsyth County has served as a stakeholder for planning efforts for this project.



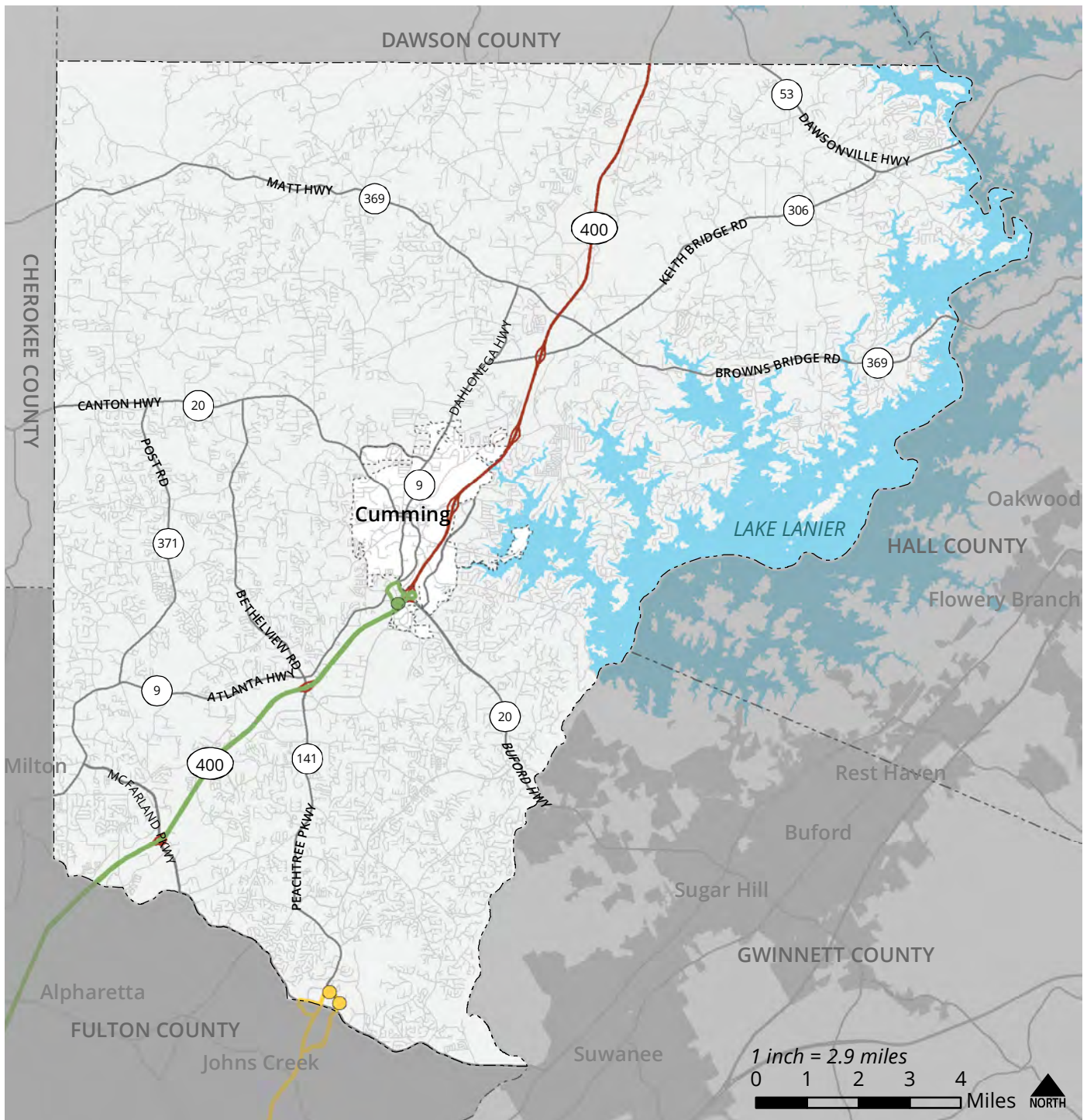


Figure A.45: Transit Network

- GRTA Route 400 ParknRide Lot
- GRTA Route 400
- GRTA Route 408 Bus Stop
- GRTA Route 408



**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION**

Active transportation includes any form of transportation powered by human activity. The most typical forms of active transportation include walking, running, and bicycling. Often these types transportation are lumped into an “alternative modes” category. Improvement projects have traditionally been justified in terms of congestion relief. By framing active transportation in terms of health, quality of life, and economic development, these types of projects can be better and more accurately justified compared to congestion reduction.

The biggest issue identified in the 2015 BTPW Plan update was identifying funding for active transportation projects. It was recommended that the County keep up with national, state, regional, and neighboring community trends. More funding is now available at the national and state level from the passage of new legislation including the federal FAST Act and the state Transportation Funding Act of 2015. In all, the 2015 BTPW Plan had six policy recommendations in addition to an extensive project list. The policy recommendations are included in Figure A.46.

The vision for active transportation in Forsyth County is set by the Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways (BTPW) 2025 Plan. The BTPW Plan was first adopted in 2002 with updates completed in 2008 and 2015. Figure A.47 shows the existing and planned active transportation network in Forsyth County.

Figure A.46: 2015 BTPW Plan Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendation	
1	Continue to coordinate with surrounding jurisdictions as they implement their own Bicycle and Pedestrian, Greenway and/or Trail Plans.
2	Continue to work with Board of Education to determine funding potentials based on GDOT’s Safe Routes to School Program.
3	Continue to amend the Comprehensive Plan as needed to incorporate the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update.
4	Continue to update future Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects in order to track progress, keep current with funding opportunities and to keep the public informed.
5	Consider Greenway Plan and maximize connections between recreational trails and bike/pedestrian facilities.
6	Create a program and appoint a champion to train and educate the citizens of the benefits of walking and biking; continue to coordinate with other jurisdictions to learn different methods of training and public outreach.

Source: Forsyth County is set by the Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways (BTPW) 2025 Plan



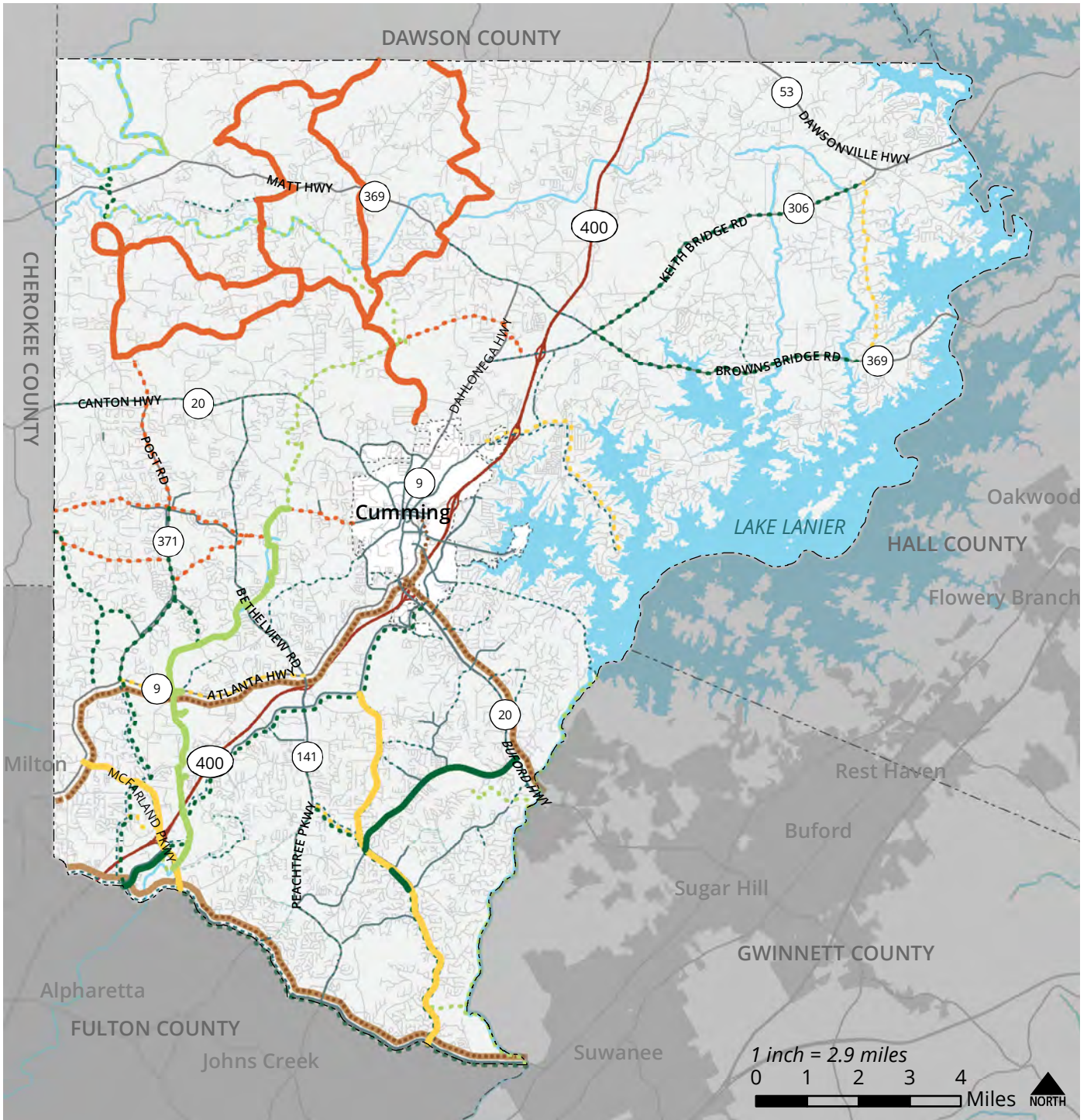


Figure A.47: Bike/Pedestrian Network

- Greenway-Existing/Under Construction
- - - Proposed Greenway
- Multi-Use Path-Existing/Under Construction
- - - Proposed Multi-Use Path
- Signed Shared Roadways
- - - Proposed Signed Shared Roadways
- - - Proposed Bicycle Friendly Shoulders
- Sidewalk-Existing/Under Construction
- - - Design Sidewalk
- - - Proposed Sidewalk
- - - ARC Bicycle Facility Recommendation
- ARC Bicycle Study Corridor

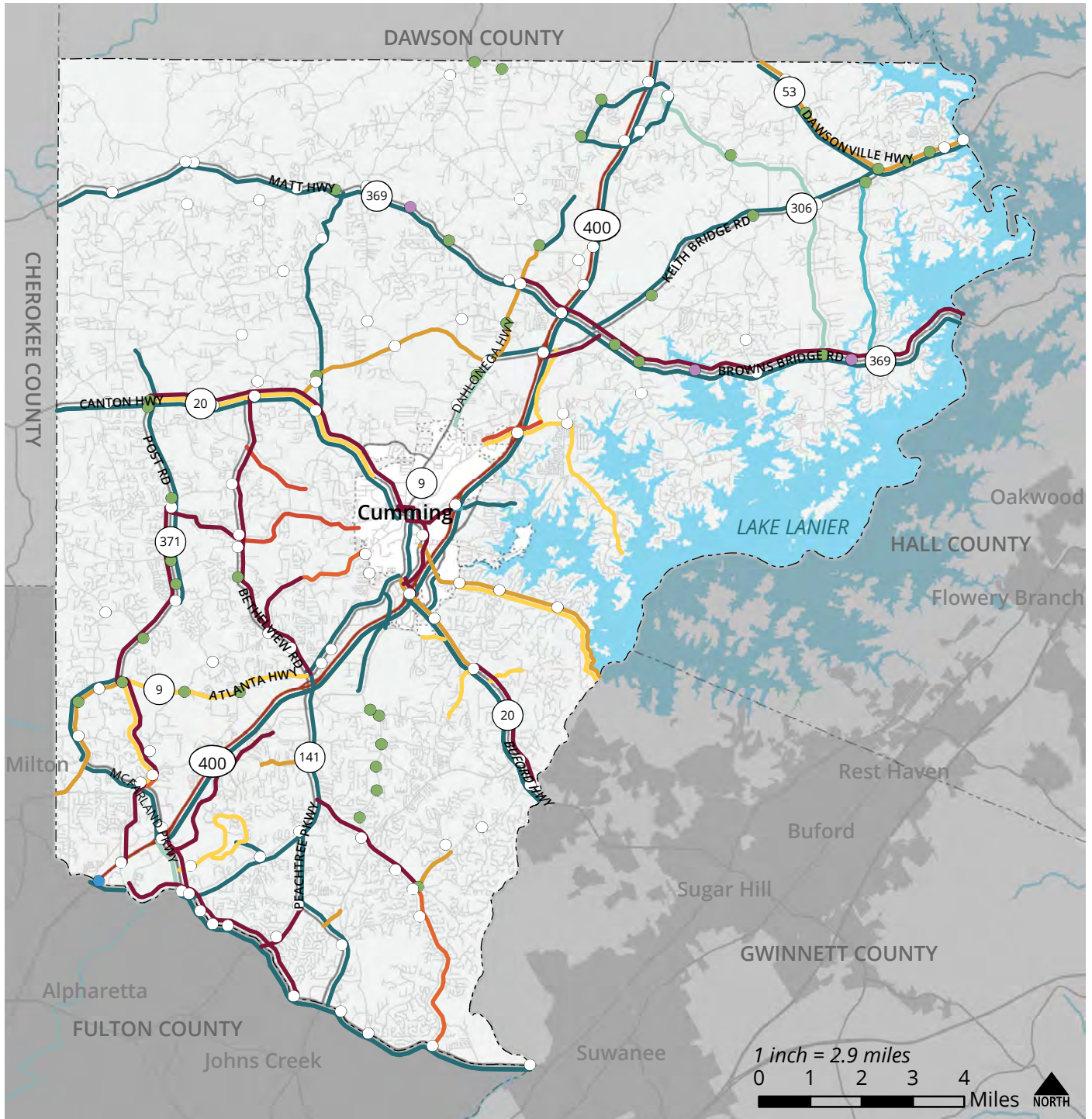


Figure A.48: Planned Transportation Projects (Forsyth County Comprehensive Transportation Plan)

- | Plan and Project Intersections: | Short Range Projects: | Medium Range Projects: | Long Range Projects: |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| ● Roadway Operations            | — Roadway Capacity    | — Roadway Capacity     | — Roadway Capacity   |
| ● Bridge                        | — Roadway Operations  | — Bike / Ped           | — Bike / Ped         |
| ● LCI Projects: New Projects    | — Other               |                        | — Other              |
| ○ Other                         |                       |                        |                      |



## PLANNED PROJECTS

Projects identified in the 2011 CTP are shown in Figure A.48. They were broken down into short-, mid-, and long-term implementation timeframes. This prioritized set of projects, along with the projects identified in the BTPWP Update, are the basis for the SPLOST and Transportation Bond programs.

## TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Land use has an impact on the transportation system, often times in a counterintuitive way. For example, higher-density development is often opposed because of the expected traffic impacts it can have. However, lower-density development can have similar negative impacts on the transportation system. Low densities mean that distances are greater between destinations, making the automobile the only viable travel option and increasing total vehicle miles traveled. Low-density single-family residential development dominates the land use of the County. From an active transportation perspective, this makes walking viable as a transportation alternative only in limited areas of the County, such as the City of Cumming. Active transportation, as is currently the County approach, should emphasize health and recreation through the building of trails and multiuse paths.

When planning for future growth, the availability of adequate transportation infrastructure should be considered. Likewise, transportation infrastructure should be planned in areas projected for future growth. The following high capacity roads were identified in the 2011 CTP as employment corridors. These roads are appropriate for more intense land uses and should be used as a guide to where such uses are appropriate for the future land use map. The Employment Corridors are:

- GA 400
- SR 9
- SR 20
- SR 141
- SR 369
- SR 306
- McFarland Pkwy
- Ronald Reagan Blvd

These corridors overlap with the freight network described previously. Future freight-generating land uses (industrial and commercial) should occur adjacent to the identified freight network.

Developing nodal, neighborhood commercial areas dispersed throughout the planned single-family housing areas can reduce the length of trips and the need for large road-widening projects. The County can also continue providing active transportation infrastructure such as the Big Creek Greenway in residential areas to improve residents' health and quality of life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Significant transportation issues facing Forsyth County currently include:

- Rapid population growth in the northern half of the County
- Long distances between destinations
- Congestion on major roads such as GA 400
- Built environment barriers to healthy activity

Some opportunities to improve transportation in the County include:

- Commitment to implementing programmed and planned projects
- Safe Routes to School-style projects to enable active transportation options for young people
- School-oriented development that provides a diversity of housing styles and transportation options within a one-mile radius of schools
- An ongoing commitment to funding, such as SPLOST and Transportation Bond projects
- Requirements for large developments to add to the functional roadway network by providing new connections





## A.6 LAND USE

### INTRODUCTION

The following land use section includes an overview of existing land uses, zoning, future land use from the 2012 Comprehensive Plan and a summary of other previous planning efforts and trends that impact local growth and development. Particular emphasis is placed on development that has occurred between 2010 and 2016.

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A review of existing land uses, with an emphasis on recent development, illustrates both the County's traditional development pattern and recent trends toward a more uniform development pattern with an abundance of single family housing and limited commercial development along major transportation corridors.

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### EXISTING LAND USE

During the last Comprehensive Plan Update (2012), a land use survey was conducted using aerial photography and field work using data from 2010. At that time, the largest land uses in the County were residential (37.5 percent) and agriculture (20 percent). The next most prevalent land use was undeveloped property, approximately 16 percent of the total acreage in the county. Parks/recreation/conservation made up the next largest use at 8.7 percent. The remaining land uses accounted for just over 17 percent of the acreage in the County, 8 percent of which were dedicated for industrial, institutional/public, commercial, or office uses. Commercial land uses are generally concentrated along major corridors including GA 400, McFarland Parkway, Canton Highway, and Browns Bridge Road, while industrial uses are most heavily concentrated in southwest Forsyth County along GA 400.

Figure A.49 illustrates land use data collected in 2010 as part of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan update and the changes that have occurred as of 2016. Figure A.50 shows updated 2016 existing land use distribution in Forsyth County.

## 2016 EXISTING LAND USE INVENTORY METHODOLOGY

The project team conducted a high-level review of existing land uses using aerial imagery and up-to-date residential permit data. Many of the land uses that were previously categorized in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan as Undeveloped and have since transitioned into other uses. To further distinguish between different types of residential product, additional research was performed for areas recently

transitioned into residential uses. Special emphasis was also given to land uses along major corridors, as those are the locations where the majority of Forsyth County’s non-residential land uses lie. Continued refinement of 2016 existing land use data is anticipated as the Comprehensive Plan process continues.

Figure A.49: Forsyth County Land Use , 2010 & 2016

Land Use	Acres 2010	Acres 2016*	Percent
Agriculture	29,068.82	28,719.91	-1.2%
Residential	54,541.01	58,367.93	7.0%
Commercial	2,874.67	2,928.57	1.9%
Office	257.99	213.60**	-17.2%
Industrial	5,386.16	5,360.07**	-0.5%
Institutional / Public	2,993.02	3,022.12	1.0%
Private Open Space	4,115.91	4,115.91	0.0%
Public Parks / Recreation	2,482.64	2,565.66	3.3%
Conservation	5,858.66	5,722.28	-2.3%
Right of Way	10,678.10	11,057.72	3.6%
Trans / Comms / Utilities	145.20	145.20	0.0%
Undeveloped	23,210.34	19,203.75	-17.3 %
City of Cumming	3,301.37	3,491.17	5.7 %

Source: 2010 data - Forsyth Comprehensive Plan (2012-2032); 2016 data - Kimley Horn (methodology described above)

\*These 2016 acreage numbers will be refined during the planning process.

\*\*Office and Industrial saw the largest losses from City of Cumming Annexations from 2010-2016

**Definitions:**

*Conservation - Land that is set aside with an easement and dedicated to be preserved*

*Private Open Space - Land that is privately owned, either by an individual or association with the intent to preserve as green space or an open space*

*Public Parks/Recreation - Land that is owned by a public governing body and is accessible as a park or recreational area.*



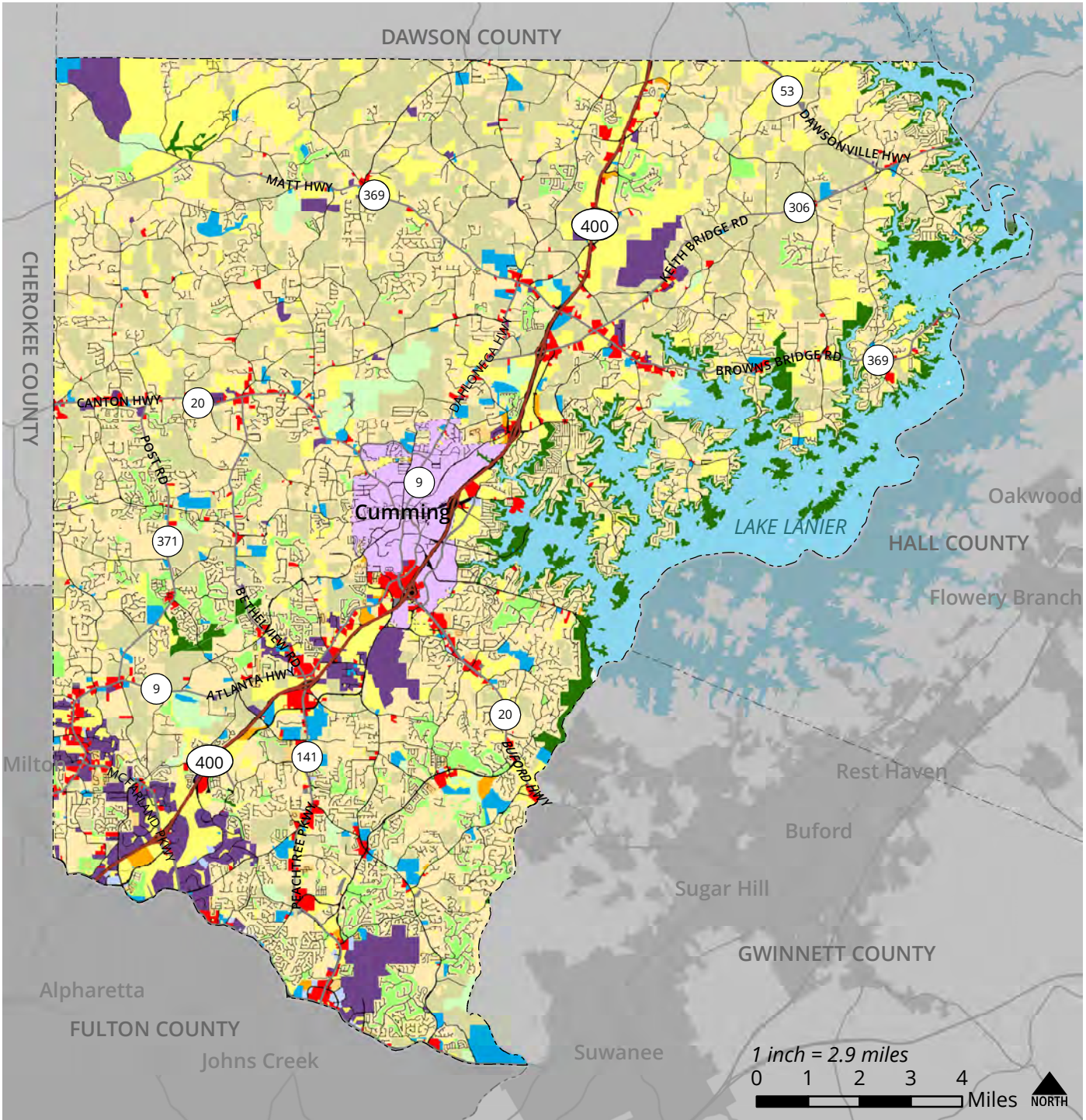


Figure A.50: Existing Land Use (2016 Update)

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span> Public Parks/Recreation        | <span style="color: #000000;">■</span> Right of Way           | <span style="color: #FFD700;">■</span> Detached Single Family |
| <span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span> Private Open Space             | <span style="color: #FFFF00;">■</span> Undeveloped            | <span style="color: #FFA500;">■</span> Multi-Family           |
| <span style="color: #008000;">■</span> Conservation                   | <span style="color: #C0C0C0;">■</span> Agriculture            | <span style="color: #FF0000;">■</span> Commercial             |
| <span style="color: #808080;">■</span> Transportation/Comms/Utilities | <span style="color: #00B0F0;">■</span> Institutional/Public   | <span style="color: #660066;">■</span> Industrial             |
| <span style="color: #DDA0DD;">■</span> City of Cumming                | <span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> Attached Single Family | <span style="color: #ADD8E6;">■</span> Office                 |





## EXISTING LAND USE (2016 UPDATE)

Since the development of the previous Comprehensive Plan, many of the larger undeveloped tracts of land have been developed into single-family residential developments, scattered throughout Forsyth County. This development trend towards a 'bedroom community' is further confirmed when looking closer at the significant number of residential developments that have been built between 2010 and present day. Out of the approximately 4,000 acres that have developed or redeveloped, over 3,700 acres have transitioned from undeveloped to detached single family uses. Just under 30 acres were transitioned to attached single family housing and another 122 acres into multi-family residential.

Forsyth County has witnessed limited commercial development since 2010, at just over 54 acres. The handful of parcels that have transitioned from undeveloped to commercial are located near the City of Cumming along major thoroughfares (e.g., GA 400, Buford Highway). Some of the non-residential growth is also attributed to industrial developments, accounting for just under 20 acres.

Forsyth County has also seen a slight loss in land due to annexations by the City of Cumming. Most of this loss was concentrated in office and industrial uses. The annexations totaled 189 acres.

After residential use, the largest rate of increase in land use is in public parks. As a result of the \$100 million Parks/Recreation and Green Space General Obligation Bond passed in 2008, the County has acquired and developed multiple new parks spaces. Much of this new park acreage is in north Forsyth, which was previously under-served in terms of parks facilities. These new facilities may influence future growth by attracting new residents to this part of the county, which has historically been less developed than areas south.



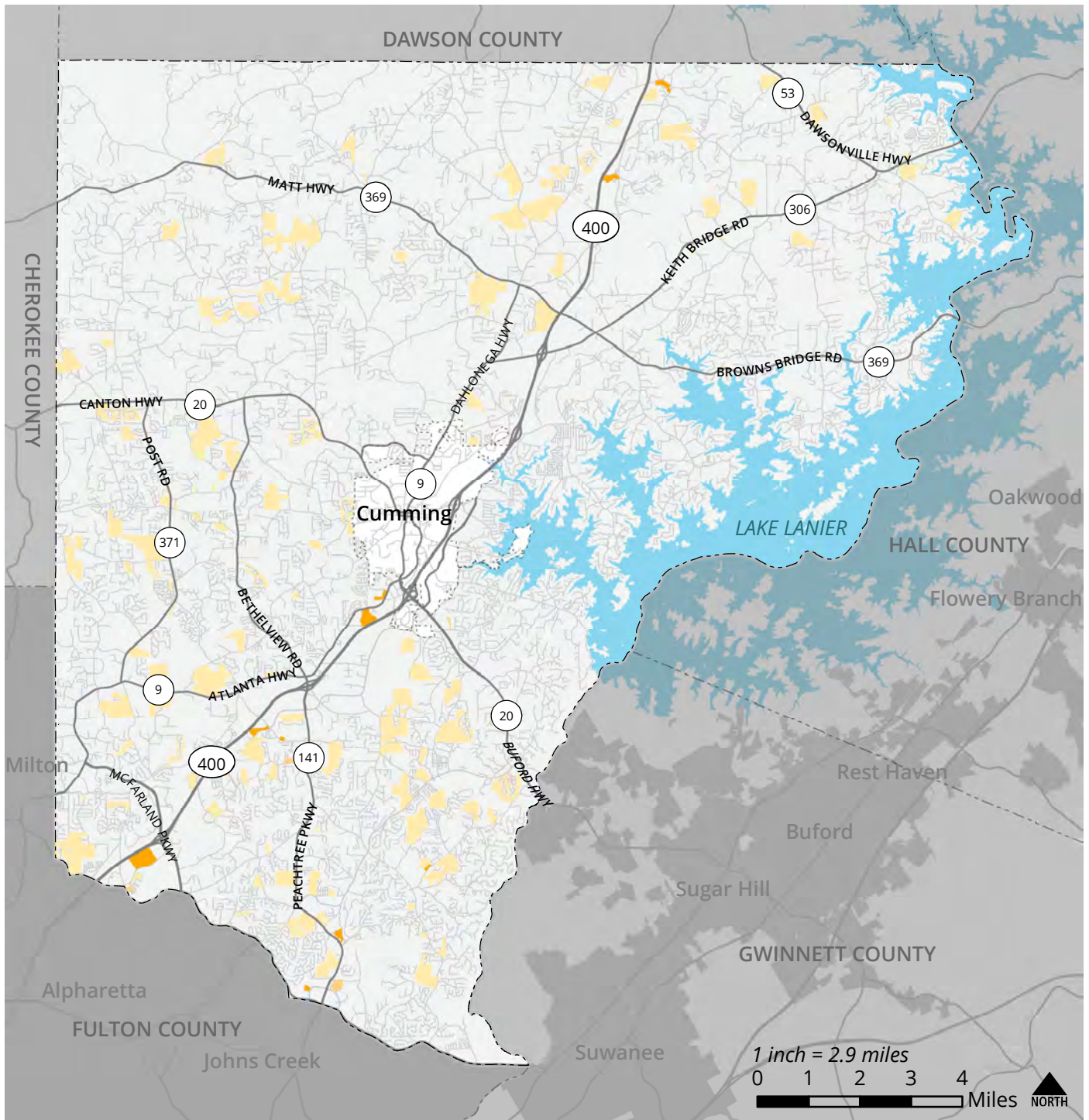


Figure A.52: Existing Land Use 2016 (Residential Land Use Changes Since 2010)

- Detached Single Family
- Attached Single Family
- Multi-Family



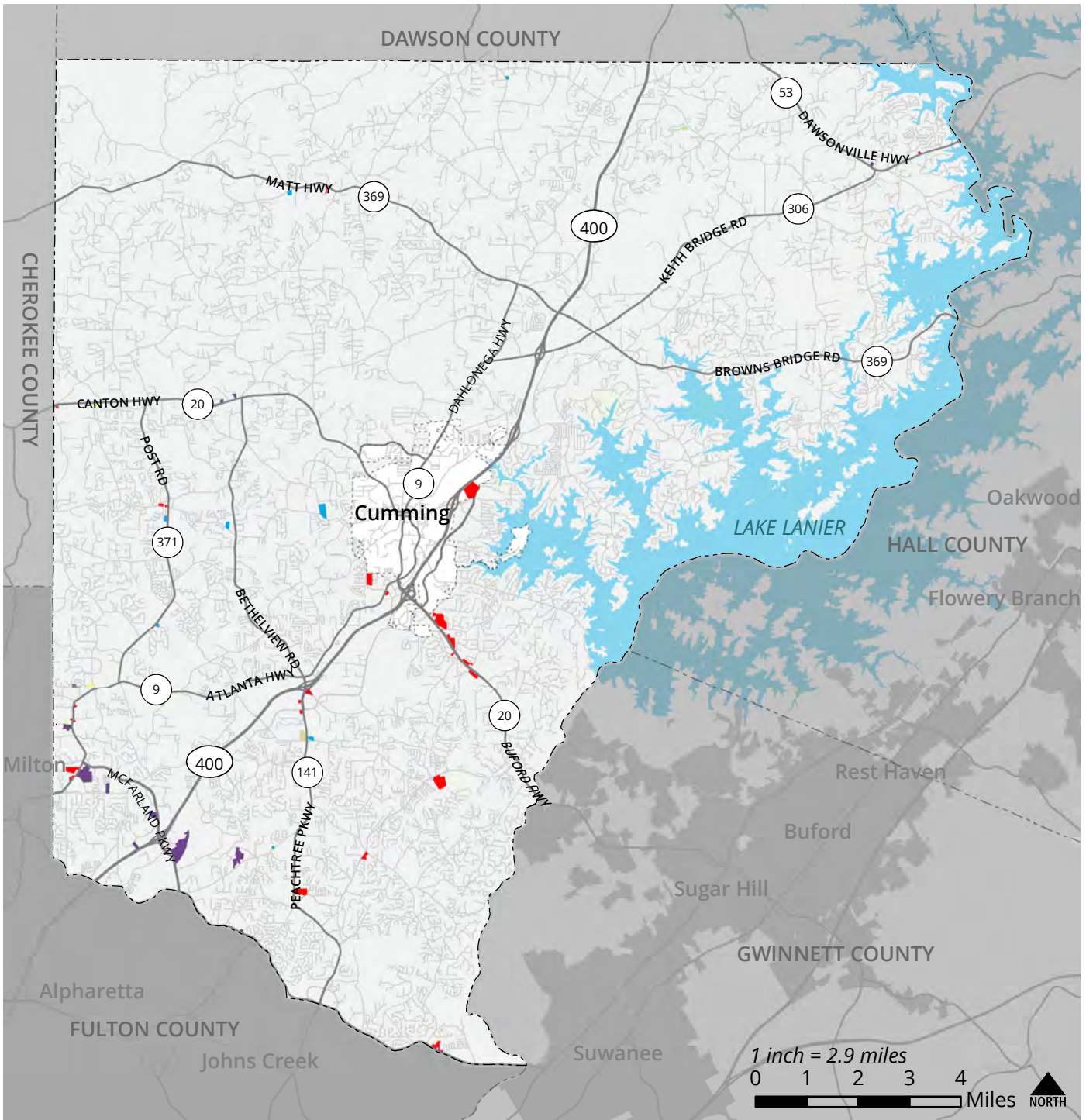


Figure A.53: Existing Land Use 2016 (Non-Residential Land Use Changes Since 2010)

- Agriculture
- Office
- Commercial
- Private Open Space
- Industrial
- Transportation/Comms/Utilities
- Institutional/Public
- Undeveloped

## EXISTING ZONING

Forsyth County's current Unified Development Code was established in 2000 and was most recently amended on March 3, 2016. This code represents Forsyth County's zoning regulations to address growth and development.

The majority of the county is zoned as Agricultural (A-1), which permits agriculture as a viable land use and component of the local economy until market conditions support conversion to a more intensive use. Agricultural districts do allow for single family residential development, but at a limited density of 1 unit per acre. Agricultural-Residential Districts serve a similar purpose as Agricultural Districts but have a lower density residential restriction of 1 unit per 2 acres. Parks and open space areas are also included within the Agriculture District designation and are not identified as a separate district in Forsyth County. Residential uses accounted for the next highest percentage of zoned districts, including single-family, multi-family, and lake-residential residential districts.

Forsyth County's code includes 16 different residential districts. All districts except for Mobile Home Districts allow for single-family detached dwellings. Only the R3, Res4, and Res6 districts allow for a mixture of dwelling-types. Multi-family units made up 26 percent of all units permitted in 2014 and 16 percent in 2015.

Zoning for commercial, retail, industrial, and institutional uses typically follow major thoroughfares in the county (i.e., GA 400, SR 20). The county zoning also zones for several commercial districts, including districts such as Urban Villages (UV) and Neighborhood Shopping (NS). The UV and NS districts have an additional layer of guidelines for design, given their nature as activity centers. These districts, like the other non-residential districts in the county, are extremely limited and are dispersed along portions of major corridors. UV and NS districts are meant to serve residential areas within a one-half mile to two-mile radius. Given the placement of these areas along major corridors, careful consideration will be given in this Comprehensive Plan update as to whether or not these areas are truly serving as neighborhood-level activity centers versus activity centers that cater to more regional traffic.



Figure A.54: Zoning Districts

	<b>Zoning Districts</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A1	Agricultural	55,558.08	43.02%
AG-RES	Agricultural Residential	334.81	0.26 %
CBD	Commercial Business	5,278.37	4.09 %
CITY	City of Cumming	3,731.42	2.89 %
CR1	Single Family Community Residential	8,563.50	6.63 %
HB	Highway Business	332.27	0.26 %
HC	Heavy Commercial	8.09	0.01 %
LR	Lake Residential	5,735.56	4.44 %
M1	Restricted Industrial	4,020.51	3.11 %
M2	Heavy Industrial	289.74	0.22 %
MINE	Mining Operation	1,370.35	1.06 %
MPD	Master Planned	1,585.79	1.23 %
NS	Neighborhood Shopping	274.91	0.21 %
OI	Office and Institutional	129.04	0.10 %
OR	Office Residential	32.04	0.02 %
OSR	Open Space Residential	571.81	0.44 %
PUD	Planned Unit Development	2,600.53	2.01 %
R1	Single Family Residential	1,761.98	1.36 %
R1R	Single Family Residential Restricted	4,468.78	3.46 %
R2	Single Family Residential	176.55	0.14 %
R2R	Single Family Residential Restricted	17,894.68	13.86 %
R3	Multi-Family Residential	1,434.36	1.11 %
Res1	Single Family Residential	112.10	0.09 %
Res2	Single Family Residential	2,633.74	2.04 %
Res3	Single Family Residential	7,150.41	5.54 %
Res4	Single Family Residential	1,409.39	1.09 %
Res6	Single Family Residential	1,677.17	1.30 %
UV	Urban Village	16.44	0.01 %
Total		129,152.42	100 %

Source: Forsyth Comprehensive Plan (2012-2032)

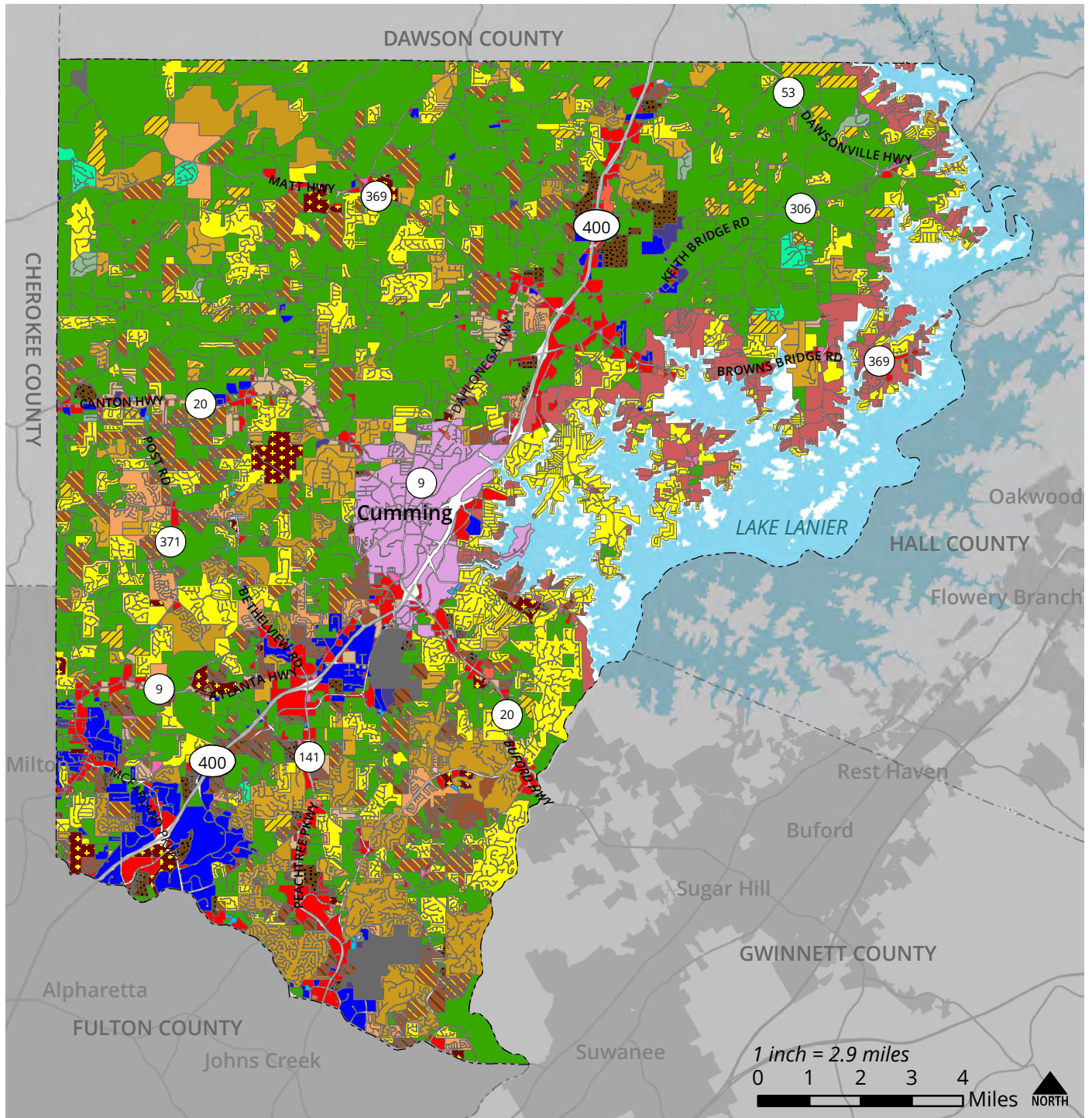


Figure A.55: Zoning March 2016 (Excluding Overlays)

<span style="color: green;">■</span> A1	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> R2R	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Res6	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> HB	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> M1
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> AG-RES	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Res2	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> MHP	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> HC	<span style="color: darkblue;">■</span> M2
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> OSR	<span style="color: gold;">■</span> CR1	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> MPD	<span style="color: red;">■</span> CBD	<span style="color: grey;">■</span> MINE
<span style="color: tan;">■</span> R1	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> R3	<span style="color: red;">■</span> LR	<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> BP	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> CITY
<span style="color: gold;">■</span> R1R	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Res3	<span style="color: tan;">■</span> PUD	<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> OR	
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Res1	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> R4	<span style="color: pink;">■</span> UV	<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> O&I	
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> R2	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Res4	<span style="color: pink;">■</span> NS	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> OCMS	



## OVERLAY DISTRICTS

The Unified Development Code also includes consideration for different overlay districts. The purpose of these districts is to conserve natural resources and/or establish minimum development standards to enhance overall character and promote quality design and architecture. Overlay districts function by placing another layer of regulations over the existing, underlying zoning district that can tighten or relax the standards of the underlying zoning district. Most often, overlay districts impact multiple zoning districts to provide some type of continuity in development standards in a particular geographical area.

Overlay districts in Forsyth County include:

- Protected Water Supply Watershed Overlay Districts
- Protected Groundwater Recharge Area Overlay Districts
- Etowah River Corridor Protection Districts
- Wetland Protection District Overlays
- Atlanta Highway-McFarland Pkwy- Mullinax Road Overlay District
- Castleberry-Bethelview Crossroads Overlay Zoning District
- Peachtree Parkway-Bethelview Road Overlay District
- Ronald Reagan/Union Hill Overlay District
- Campground-Castleberry-Kelly Mill-Pittman-Post-Shiloh Road Overlay District
- Buford Highway Overlay District

Figure A.56: Overlay Districts

Overlay Districts	Descriptions
Protected Water Supply Watershed Overlay District	This district regulates land uses for perennial stream corridors within a seven mile radius of government-owned public drinking water supplies, including minimum development buffers and setback areas. Exemptions include land uses established before the Water Supply Watershed Protection Plan and Forestry and agricultural activities given that their activities do not impair the quality of drinking water.
Protected Groundwater Recharge Area Overlay District	This overlay district offers rules for specific facilities including sanitary landfills and hazardous waste disposal plants. The guidelines also indicate minimum septic system requirements for residential units based on pollution susceptibility thresholds.
Etowah River Corridor Protection District	The Etowah River Corridor Protection District limits specific uses based on the Metropolitan River Protection Act and the Erosion and Sedimentation Act. This district allows the maintenance of a natural, vegetative buffer and includes regulations for nearby developments. For example, the district includes guidelines for nearby dwelling units to be in compliance of a one unit per 2 acre density.
Wetland Protection District	This overlay district disallows development permits that appear to contain wetlands until the Army Corp of Engineers determines jurisdictional wetlands exist on the site. The regulations also offers a list of acceptable and prohibited uses.
Atlanta Highway-McFarland Parkway-Mullinax Road Overlay District	The purpose of this district is to establish design and development guidelines to retain business and industrial development. This district affects parcels that fall within 1,000 feet of the Atlanta Highway centerline and those that fall 500 feet of McFarland Parkway or Mullinax Road.
Castleberry-Bethelview Crossroads Overlay District	This district establishes design and development standards for a phased approach for residential and commercial expansion. This district attempts to preserve the district's rural qualities, enhance commercial growth through design, and offer enhanced pedestrian mobility.
Peachtree Parkway-Bethelview Road Overlay District	This district provides standards for non-residential development, particularly towards commercial growth. This district aims towards creating a higher quality of life for residents with opportunities for employment, shopping, and recreation.
Buford Highway Overlay District	This district establishes minimum standards for landscaping, lighting, and signage that enhance the district's overall character. This district aims to foster business attraction and allow Buford highway to be a safer place for all types of traffic.

Source: Forsyth Comprehensive Plan (2012-2032)



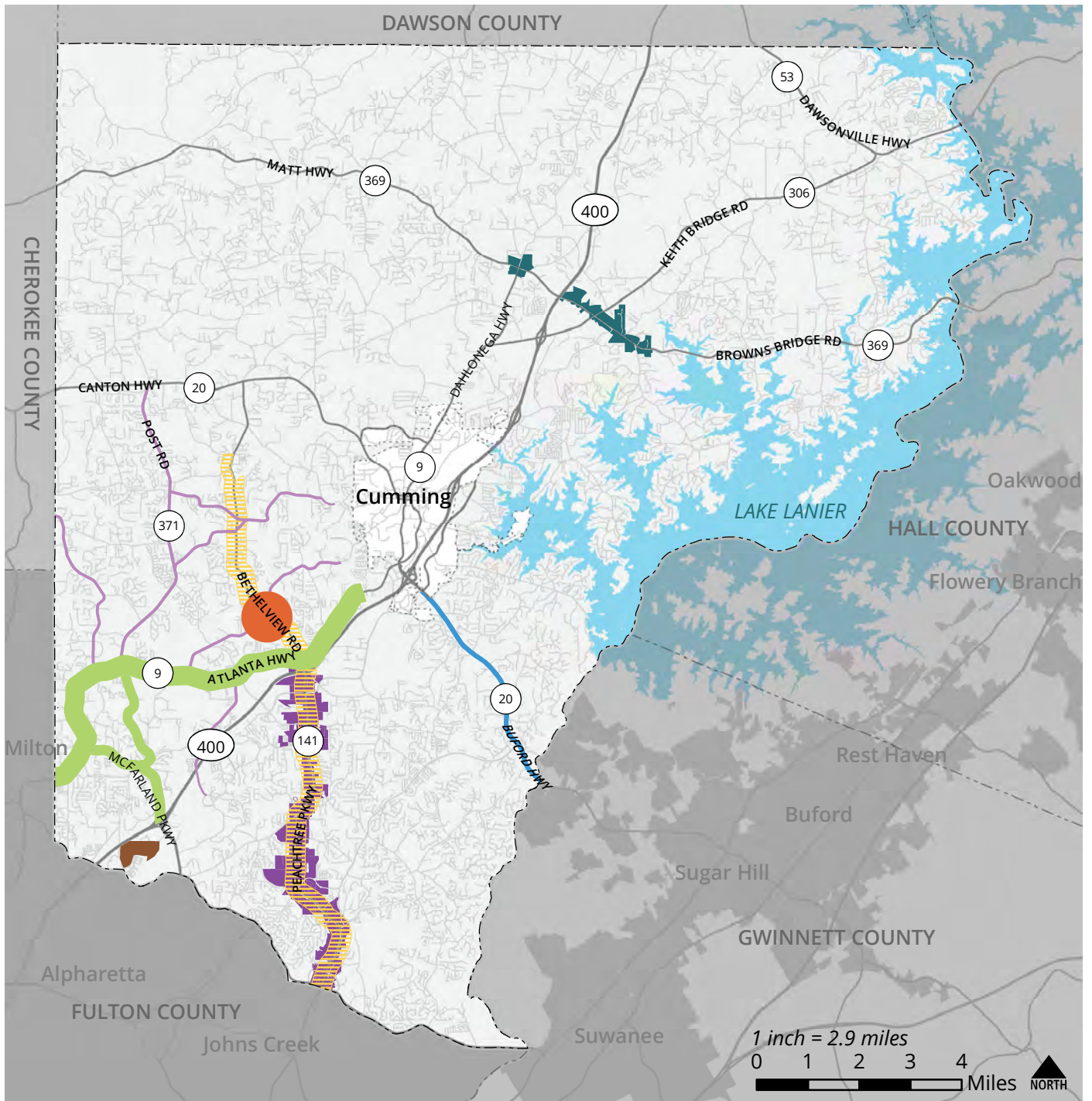


Figure A.57: Overlay Districts

- North 400 Opportunity Zone
- Atlanta Hwy - McFarland Pkwy - Mullinax Rd Overlay District
- Castleberry - Bethelview Overlay District
- Buford Hwy Overlay District
- Campground - Castleberry - Kelly Mill - Pittman - Post - Shiloh Rd Overlay District
- Peachtree Pkwy / Bethelview Rd Overlay District
- Peachtree Pkwy Overlay District Parcels
- Ronald Reagan - Union Hill Overlay District



## FUTURE LAND USE

For the Land Use component of the Forsyth Comprehensive Plan (2012-2032), the county identified character areas, which represent unique, recognizable characteristics that differ based on form, pattern, and development intensity. The intent and purpose of a character area map is to refine the general vision and plan for the detailed area, which include specific design standards and guidelines to guide the future growth of the community.

The largest character areas within the County are identified for residential land uses, most notably the Suburban Living character area (63 percent of the land area in the County). Strictly residential uses account for approximately 75 percent of the total acreage in the County. Recreational areas (4 percent), conservation areas (1 percent), and areas designated for travel (4 percent) account for another 9 percent, leaving approximately 15 percent of the area's total acreage to other land uses.

Commercial, business, and retail character areas are largely concentrated along major transportation thoroughfares like GA 400, SR 141, and SR 20. Each of the Development Corridors, which lie on the thoroughfares, incorporate small-scale activity nodes (e.g. Town Center or Development Corridor nodes) which are located throughout strategic roadway intersections in the county (e.g., intersection of SR 20 and SR 371).

Since 2010, the County has experienced additional development that is consistent with and builds upon the Suburban Living character area. There has been fairly limited growth within Employment Centers and the McFarland –Stoney Point LCI. However, There creating more non-residential environments along and at intersections of key thoroughfares has been a challenge.

Figure A.58: Character Areas

Character Area	Acres	Percent
Business and Retail Parkway Corridor	1,372.25	1 %
Conservation Area	1,670.79	1 %
Development Corridor	5,295.76	4 %
Employment Center	4,992.54	4 %
Estate Residential	155.74	0 %
Heavy Industrial	2,614.63	2 %
Lakeside Residential	11,505.84	8 %
Major Highway Corridor	738.95	1 %
McFarland-Stoney Point LCI	1,813.98	1 %
Neighborhood Center	767.52	1 %
Recreational Area	6,160.29	4 %
Regional Center	447.17	0 %
River Residential	4,710.54	3 %
Suburban Attached Living	667.93	0 %
Suburban Living	88,173.53	63 %
Thoroughfare	3,688.18	3 %
Town Center	1,672.74	1 %
Transitional Corridor	424.74	0 %
Village Living	3,850.09	3 %

Source: Forsyth Comprehensive Plan (2012-2032)

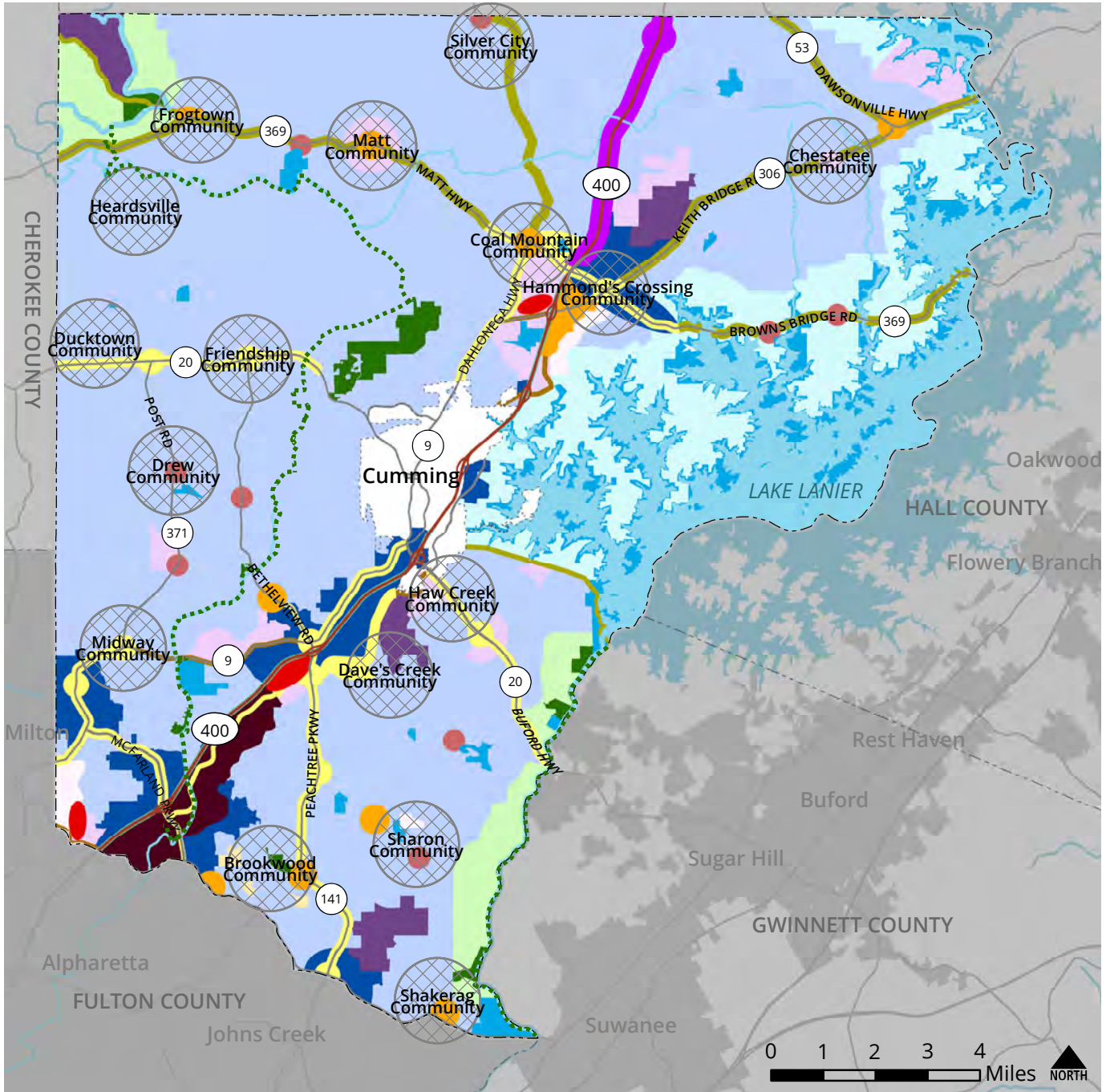


Figure A.59: Character Areas

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Development Corridor | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Business and Retail Pkwy Corridor | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Living     |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Neighborhood Center  | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> McFarland-Stoney Point LCI       | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:pink; border:1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Attached Living |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Town Center          | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Heavy Industrial                  | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightpurple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Village Living    |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span> Regional Center         | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Lakeside Residential           | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Transitional Corridor |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Employment Center      | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> River Residential             | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Recreation Area          |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:teal; border:1px solid black;"></span> Major Highway Corridor | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Estate Residential                | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Thoroughfare           |
|  |   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Conservation Area       |
|  |   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-top:1px dashed green;"></span> Conservation Area                          |
|  |   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px dashed black; border-radius:50%;"></span> Community Node              |

Source: GIS Department, Forsyth County Georgia



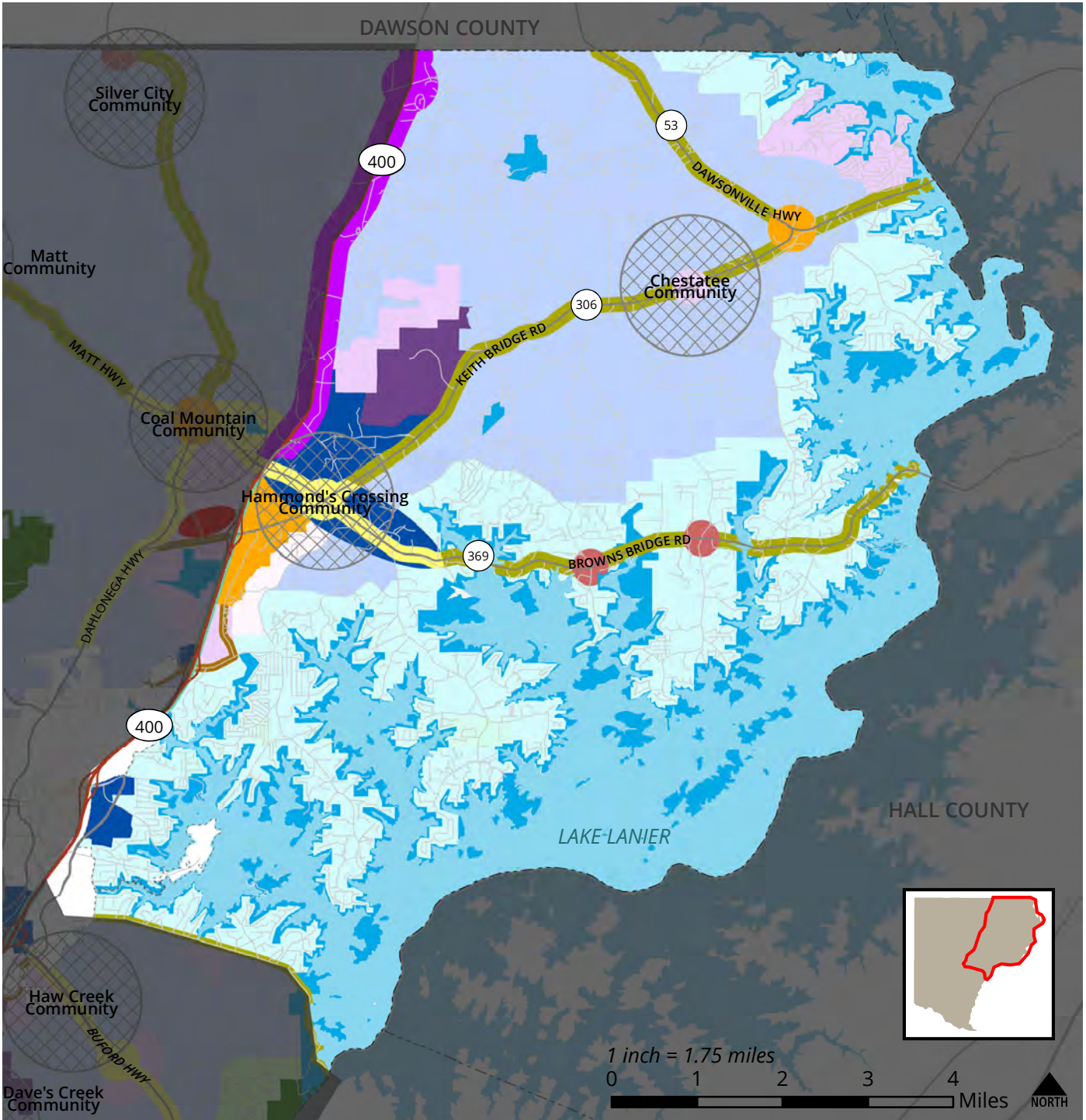


Figure A.60: Character Areas - NE Quadrant

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Development Corridor    | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Major Highway Corridor        | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> River Residential        | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Transitional Corridor         |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral; border:1px solid black;"></span> Neighborhood Center | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Business and Retail Pkwy Corridor | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Estate Residential     | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Recreation Area            |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Town Center             | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> McFarland-Stoney Point LCI       | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Living          | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Thoroughfare                  |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span> Regional Center            | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Heavy Industrial                  | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightpink; border:1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Attached Living | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Conservation Area              |
| <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Employment Center         | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:cyan; border:1px solid black;"></span> Lakeside Residential                | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lavender; border:1px solid black;"></span> Village Living            | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border-top:1px dashed green; border-bottom:1px dashed green;"></span> Conservation Area |
|   |   |   | <span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; border:1px dashed gray;"></span> Community Node   |

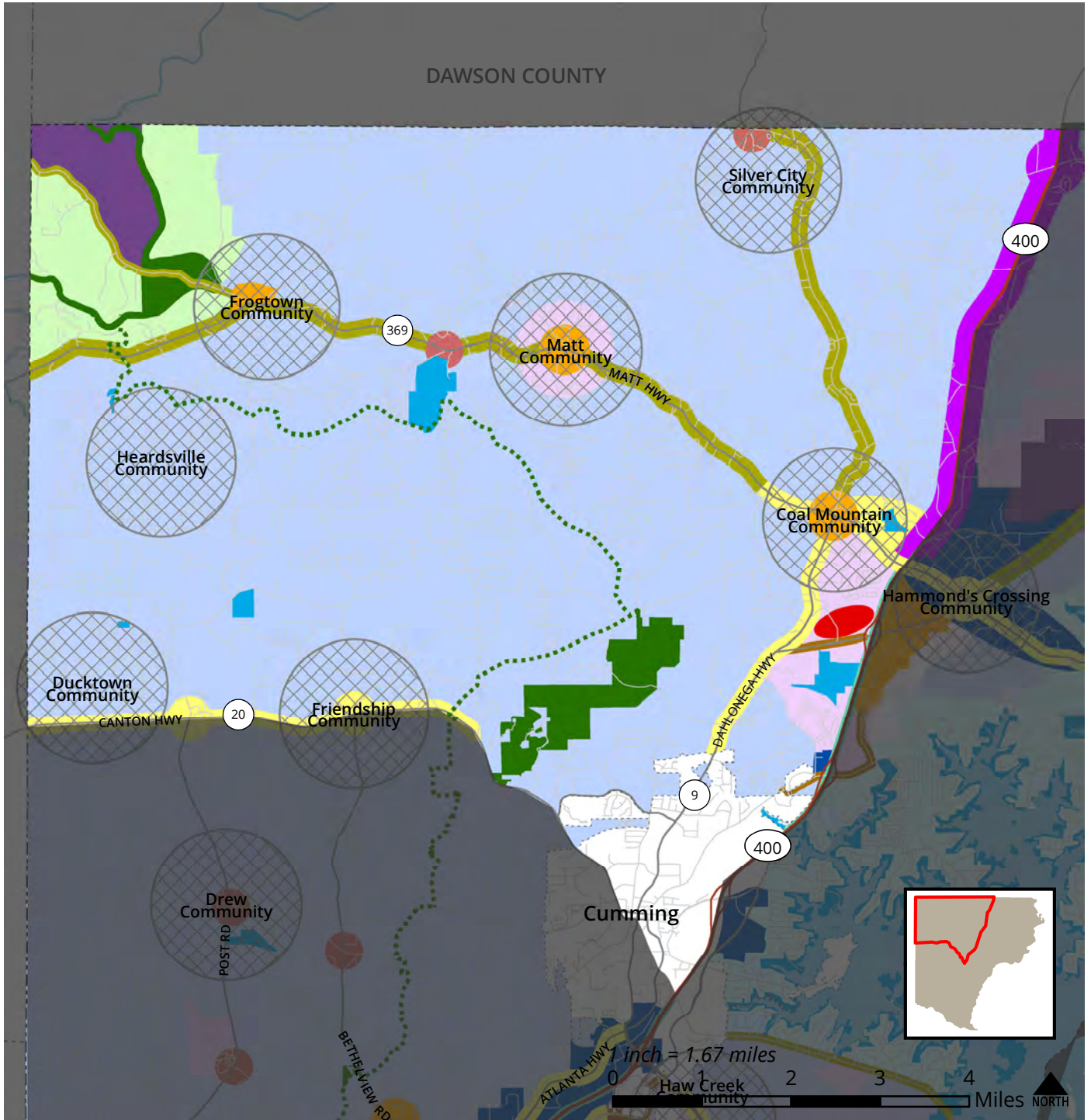
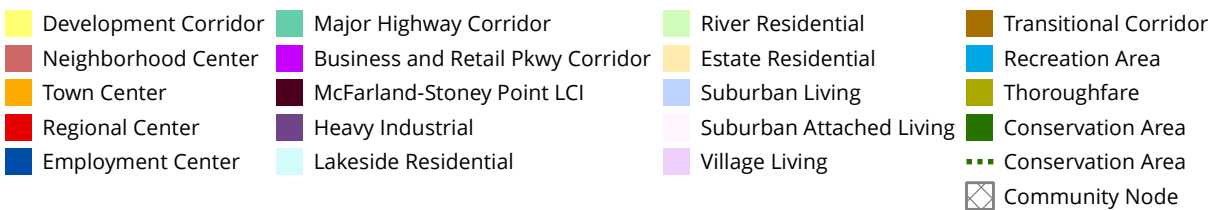


Figure A.61: Character Areas - NW Quadrant





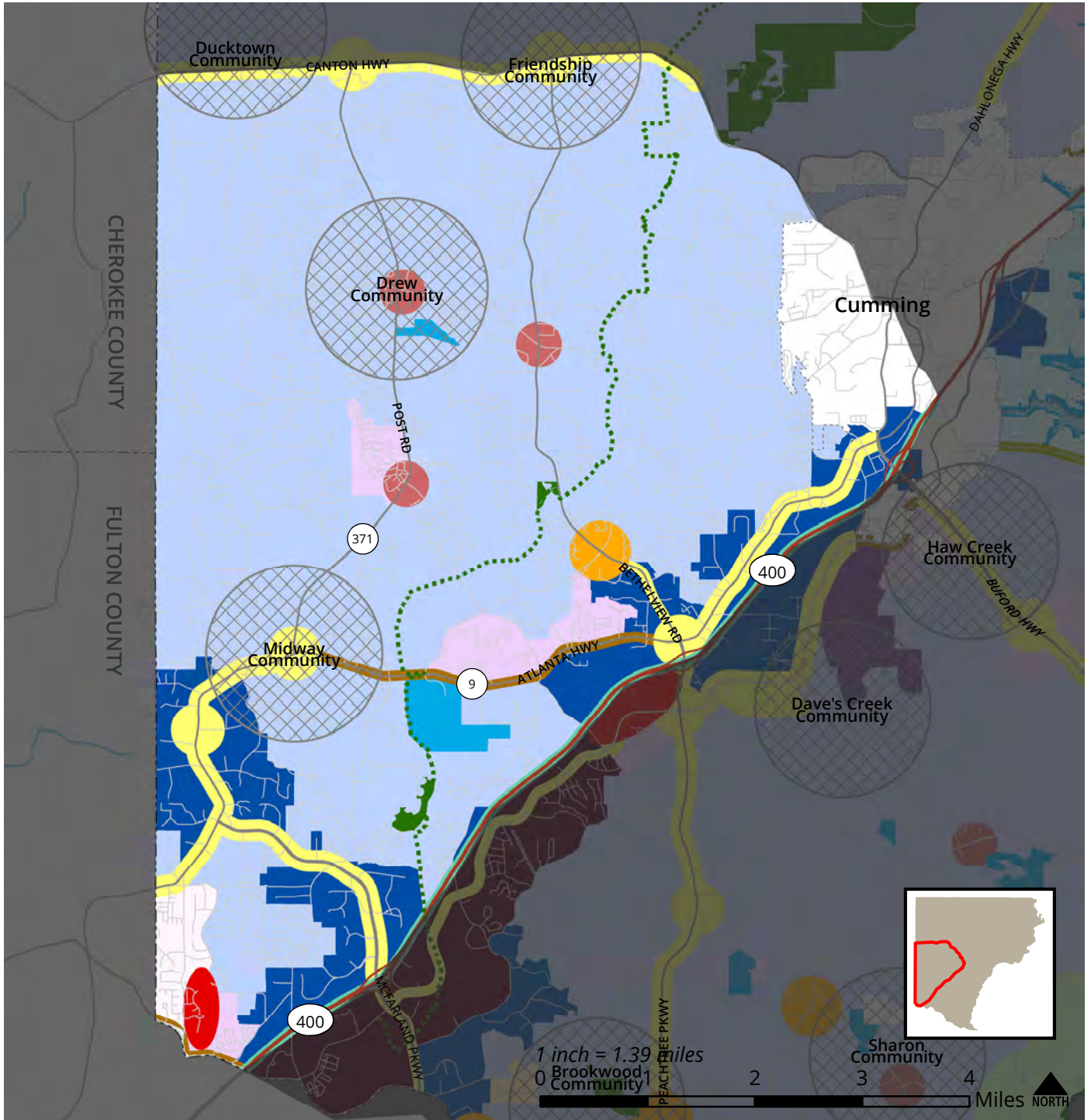


Figure A.63: Character Areas - SW Quadrant

- |                      |                                   |                          |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Development Corridor | Major Highway Corridor            | River Residential        | Transitional Corridor |
| Neighborhood Center  | Business and Retail Pkwy Corridor | Estate Residential       | Recreation Area       |
| Town Center          | McFarland-Stoney Point LCI        | Suburban Living          | Thoroughfare          |
| Regional Center      | Heavy Industrial                  | Suburban Attached Living | Conservation Area     |
| Employment Center    | Lakeside Residential              | Village Living           | Conservation Area     |
|                      |                                   |                          | Community Node        |



## EXISTING PLANS

### FORSYTH COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2012-2032)

Forsyth County is required by the State to undergo a full update of its Comprehensive Plan once every ten years. The Comprehensive Plan for the county was envisioned as the growth guide for Forsyth County, directing intensity, location, and phasing of development while maintaining general compatibility. The result was a future development map for Forsyth County based on different character areas (as detailed in the previous section).

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan considered a variety of game-changers that included existing land use patterns, blighted and/or transitional areas, environmentally-sensitive land, potential infill development, and local development policies. This led to the plan's identification of areas requiring special attention, including future greenway connections or extensions, areas with natural/cultural resources, areas in the path of rapid development, and areas in need of aesthetic treatments.

The following are a list of areas requiring special attention identified during that process:

- Intersections
  - Keith Bridge Road/Old Keith Bridge Road/Dawsonville Highway
  - Keith Bridge Road/Browns Bridge Road
  - Matt Highway/Bannister Road/John Burruss Road
- Corridors/Areas
  - Atlanta Highway from Fulton County line to Castleberry Road
  - Ronald Reagan Boulevard quarry redevelopment

*Areas where rapid development is likely to occur:*

- Corridors
  - Matt Highway/Browns Bridge Road from Cherokee County to Hall County
  - Old Atlanta Road (widening)
  - Sharon Road (operational improvements)
  - Ronald Reagan Boulevard

*Areas of significant natural and cultural resources:*

- Etowah River Greenway Project
- Chattahoochee River Greenway project
- Lake Lanier shoreline
- Big Creek Greenway multi-use trail

*Areas of opportunity:*

- McFarland-Stoney Point LCI
- Large, abandoned sites (e.g., quarry on Ronald Reagan Boulevard)
- Infill opportunities (e.g., areas north of City of Cumming)

Many of the identified "Areas Requiring Special Attention" have not experienced significant development that is in keeping with the vision set forth by the current comprehensive plan. As the Transportation Section of the Forsyth County Existing Conditions Assessment will detail, the corridors identified for redevelopment have not yet happened. This is largely due to the fact that these areas are waiting to be, in part, catalyzed by transportation improvements. For example, roadways widening projects on Old Atlanta Road and Atlanta Highway, are still on the docket waiting for implementation. Some places in the community have seen limited development, such as the McFarland-Stoney Point LCI, where some higher-density residential developments have come to fruition in recent years.



As a part of this Comprehensive Plan Update, the above areas listed above as “Areas Requiring Special Attention” will be looked at in more detail for consistency in keeping up with Forsyth’s vision for growth looking to the next 10-20 years. This will lead to an updated set of game-changers that will be identified as the visioning process continues.

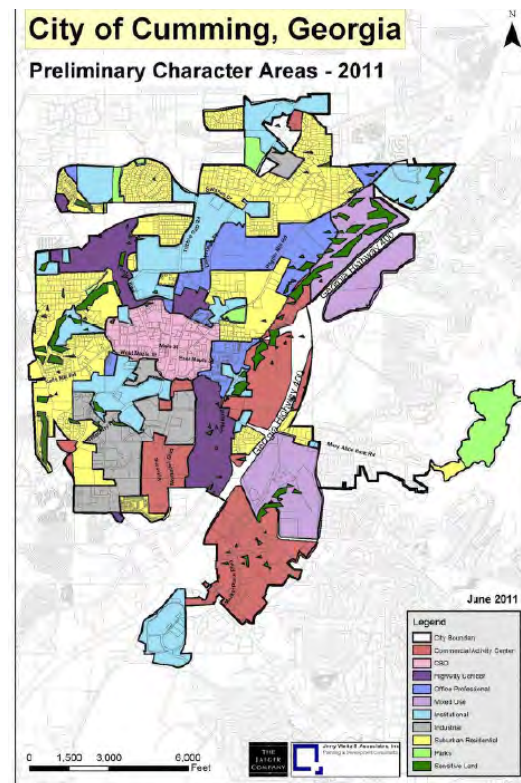
**CITY OF CUMMING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2011)**

The majority of existing land uses in Cumming were classified as Undeveloped (24.4 percent), Single-Family Residential (18.8 percent), and Commercial (11.9 percent). Fifteen (15) percent of the land area within Cumming was attributed to public right-of-ways. Significant initiatives that were identified through the Cumming Comprehensive Plan include the identification of areas to be considered for annexation and policy direction to reinforce Cumming’s role as the County’s major employment center. These general annexation areas included the portion of Forsyth County, east of GA 400 anchored by Market Place Boulevard and another area west of GA 400, including Lakeland Plaza and the surrounding southern parcels of land.

The Cumming Comprehensive Plan was prepared for a planning area that included the potential future city boundary of Cumming, which included the areas identified for annexation. The Future Land Use plan for Cumming includes the following character areas: Commercial/Activity Center; Central Business District; Highway Corridor; Office Professional; Mixed Use; Institutional; Industrial; Suburban Residential; Parks; and Sensitive Land. In the future land use plan, mixed-use and commercial uses are laid out along GA 400. The plan also offers transitional zones including office and institutional uses leading towards the downtown core of Cumming. Land uses in Cumming that border the city limits include residential and industrial on the north side of the City, generally residential on the west, and a mixture of uses on the south and east edges of the City.

Some of the annexations within the general areas were initiated in late 2011, such as the area along Ronald Reagan Boulevard between Haw Creek Road and North Old Atlanta Road, previously owned by Northside Hospital-Forsyth. As a part of the update for the Comprehensive Plan, the future annexation areas identified by the City of Cumming’s Comprehensive Plan will be looked at in more detail to ensure consistency with the county’s vision for development and growth.

Figure A.64: City of Cumming Character Areas



Source: City of Cumming Comprehensive Plan (2011)

Figure A.65: City of Cumming Land Use

Land Use	Acres	%
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, Communications, 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%
<b>Total (Cumming City Limits)</b>	<b>3,850.5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: City of Cumming Comprehensive Plan (2011)



### **MCFARLAND- STONEY POINT LCI (2006, UPDATES IN 2010)**

The Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plan identified projects and opportunities based on a substantial market analysis of the area and created a game plan that identified parties responsible for implementation of land use and transportation improvements identified in the plan. The study area itself is largely undeveloped (60 percent) and is anchored by the Big Creek floodplain. The vision for the area included four major elements: 1) The McFarland subarea will be a premier employment center for the County; 2) The site will have quality development and business opportunities; 3) Convenient access to commercial services will be located along major corridors; and 4) A network of greenways will run along the big Creek with passive parks and connected trails

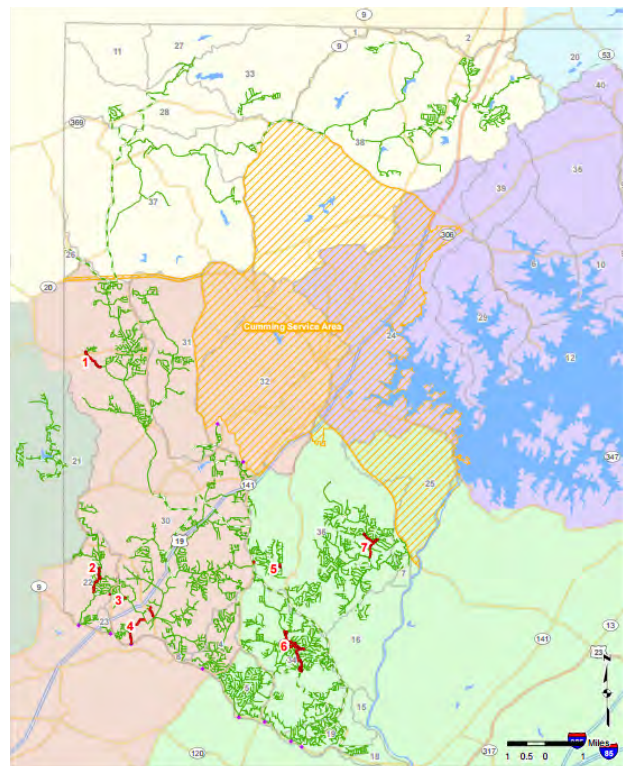
The scenario identified as the preferred strategy included a mixed-use development scenario that includes both residential and commercial uses. Based on the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, the area was slated for industrial, conservation, some general commercial, and residential uses. The future land uses that are recommended through this study include residential, neighborhood commercial, activity centers, and conservation. Rezoning of the area is recommended as well as inclusion of an overlay district focusing on urban design.

From 2006-2010, various accomplishments were reported, mostly for economic development initiatives. These accomplishments included initiatives such as creating a mixed use village destination through the introduction of the Master Planned District zoning district, starting construction of a Conference Center and leveraging Lanier Tech and Northside Hospital-Forsyth. Although a handful of transportation initiatives were completed, such as the construction of the first phase of the Ronald Reagan Boulevard Corridor extension, the majority have not been completed in 2016. In recent years, most of the development identified in the plan has not been built, largely due to the timing of the Great Recession of 2008. Various apartments have been built, including the Summit Crossing Apartments, along the north side of the study area near Majors Road and Ronald Reagan Boulevard. The pocket of low-density residential is in the process of being built. In terms of transportation initiatives, the State Department of Transportation has rekindled its efforts to create an interchange at GA 400 and McGinnis Ferry and to widen McGinnis Ferry Road from Bethany Bend to Gwinnett County which may lead to renewed interest in commercial development parcels in the area.

### **FORSYTH COUNTY SEWER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN UPDATE (2009)**

The recommendations for the update to the County's sewer system plan were based on four available water basins. The plan includes improvements based on a new wastewater treatment plant, Shakerag WRF. In the Chattahoochee basin, there are major proposed sewer extensions in the southeastern portion of the county. In the Big Creek Basin (southwest Forsyth County), contractual agreements for water and sewer are planned for transfer from Fulton County to Forsyth County. This will ultimately increase the number of sewer extensions in the southwestern portion of the county. The Etowah-River Creek Basin (northwest Forsyth County) includes relatively new sewer structures and does not have capacity-related improvement recommendations. Lastly, the Lake Lanier Basin (northeastern Forsyth) includes extension of sewer service into existing homes near the lake. This recommendation is related to future regulatory requirements that may force drinking water watersheds to be removed from individual home septic systems. In general, investment in extending sewer services in areas of future growth can be the first step towards attracting non-residential uses to a community. The high-level of investment in south Forsyth may lead to higher level development growth potential.

Figure A.66: Waste Water Collection System



Source: Forsyth County Sewer System Master Plan Update

## A.7 HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

Housing is a core building block of every community. The housing options available influence decisions made by individuals about where to spend the various phases of their life as well as the decisions of businesses and employers to invest in a given community or elsewhere. Housing also has a fundamental impact on how we carry out our day-to-day lives – influencing travel decisions, interactions with neighbors, and proximity to services and community amenities, like parks and schools.

Factors impacting a community's housing stock include:

- The zoning and development code of a community – including size and setback requirements, architectural standards.
- The regional market and how attractive one community is to invest in versus another.
- The age of housing and whether opportunities for greenspace development and/or housing redevelopment or renovation exist to meet a new housing product need in a community.

- Developer subdivision standards and architectural treatments.
- Changing preferences of the population – particularly as people enter and leave different stages of their lives.

Forsyth County has experienced a notable influx in population in recent years, in part because of its availability of developable land for new housing products and its proximity to major employment centers in north Fulton County, as well as the high quality of life, particularly as it relates to schools and parks. Because of the family-oriented market, conventional single family homes remain the most popular housing type in Forsyth County; an important consideration for future growth is the opportunity for introduction of a greater variety of housing products in targeted areas of the County. The analysis that follows further considers trends related to housing stock, costs, owner/renter balance, and market preferences.



## HOUSING MIX

According to estimates by the American Community Survey (ACS), Forsyth had roughly 71,000 housing units in 2014, a major shift from 1980, when there were only 10,321 total housing units – a marked increase in just 34 years of 724 percent.

## HOUSING UNITS BY NUMBER OF BEDROOMS

An important statistic to consider is how many bedrooms are contained within a community's housing portfolio. Housing product with multiple bedrooms may be appealing to families with children but much less appealing to young professionals or empty nesters (parents with adult children living outside the home). Roughly 86 percent of Forsyth's housing units have three or more bedrooms. When compared to neighboring counties, Forsyth has the largest percentage of three plus bedroom units when compared to overall housing supply. The estimates suggest that Forsyth County currently has an undersupply of one and two bedroom housing units, which to meeting the housing needs of young professionals and other non-family residents.

Figure A.67: Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms

	Forsyth Co.		Fulton Co.		Gwinnett Co.		Hall Co.		Cherokee Co.		Georgia	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Total units	71,039		448,924		298,624		69,491		85,503		4,151,387	
No bedroom	847	1.2%	12,395	2.8%	3,086	1.0%	751	1.1%	596	0.7%	55,210	1.3%
1 bedroom	1,237	1.7%	81,390	18.1%	18,939	6.3%	4,274	6.2%	4,530	5.3%	312,909	7.5%
2 bedrooms	7,740	10.9%	129,339	28.8%	47,575	15.9%	13,817	19.9%	12,488	14.6%	951,687	22.9%
3 bedrooms	26,195	36.9%	112,326	25.0%	110,482	37 %	31,290	45 %	35,238	41.2%	1,796,763	43.3%
4 bedrooms	21,317	30.0 %	70,017	15.6%	81,275	27.2 %	13,537	19.5 %	21,290	24.9%	762,498	18.4 %
5 + bedrooms	13,703	19.3 %	43,457	9.7 %	37,267	12.5 %	5,822	8.4 %	11,361	13.3%	272,320	6.6 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure A.68: Forsyth County Housing Trends by Type of Structure

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2014	% Change (1980-2014)
Single-family Units	7,830	13,439	31,921	53,872	64,534	724%
Multi-family Units	312	581	795	6,050	3,143	907%
Manufactured	2,179	3,736	3,771	3,434	3,362	54%
TOTAL UNITS	10,321	17,756	36,487	63,356	71,039	588%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Census Counts (1980-2010); 2010 Data from ACS 3-Year (2008-2010); 2014 Data from American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

### HOUSING TYPES

Increases have been experienced in all housing types. The most marked increase occurred in single family homes, although the quantity of multi-family units went from nearly non-existence in 1980 (312) to an abundance of 6,050 in 2010. ACS 2014 estimates show a major drop in multi-family units in 2014 – this is likely an estimating error.

Although this concentration of single family is not atypical of the Atlanta metropolitan area, the percentage of Forsyth’s housing stock that is single family (either detached or attached) is notably higher than that of nearby communities of Fulton, Gwinnett, and Hall Counties.

Single family housing units comprise the grand majority of Forsyth County’s housing stock. This is tied to the County’s long history as a largely rural community along with recent dramatic increases in population growth, growth that has primarily been accommodated by the construction of new single family homes on once largely undeveloped or agricultural lands.

Figure A.69: Housing Types by Units in Structure

	Forsyth Co.		Fulton Co.		Gwinnett Co.	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	71,039	100.0%	448,924	100.0%	298,624	100%
Single-family, detached	59,297	83.5%	215,389	48.0%	219,141	73.4%
Single-family, attached	5,237	7.4%	28,147	6.3%	15,001	5.0%
2 units	157	0.2%	6,441	1.4%	4,985	1.7%
3 or 4 units	619	0.9%	19,304	4.3%	5,997	2.0%
5 to 9 units	403	0.6%	36,784	8.2%	15,420	5.2%
10 to 19 units	450	0.6%	51,714	11.5%	20,086	6.7%
20 or more units	1,514	2.1%	88,775	19.8%	13,454	4.5%
Mobile home	3,362	4.7%	2,013	0.4%	4,183	1.4%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	357	0.1%	357	0.1%
	Hall Co.		Cherokee Co.		Georgia	
Total housing units	69,491	100.0%	85,503	100.0%	4,151,387	100.0%
Single-family, detached	50,225	72.3%	68,299	79.9%	2,756,266	66.4%
Single-family, attached	2,546	3.7%	3,301	3.9%	153,526	3.7%
2 units	876	1.3%	703	0.8%	92,233	2.2%
3 or 4 units	1,084	1.6%	899	1.1%	127,098	3.1%
5 to 9 units	2,148	3.1%	1,560	1.8%	207,869	5.0%
10 to 19 units	3,090	4.4%	3,081	3.6%	195,473	4.7%
20 or more units	2,803	4.0%	3,127	3.7%	235,597	5.7%
Mobile home	6,719	9.7%	4,533	5.3%	380,605	9.2%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2,720	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



## AGE OF HOUSING

An estimated 77 percent of Forsyth County's current housing stock was built in 1990 or later. This is a distinct characteristic of Forsyth County when compared to Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall and Cherokee counties. While these communities also experienced a major up-tick in new units during recent years, they have a larger distribution of units built in preceding decades. While there is a scattering of older housing units throughout Forsyth County, as indicated by Figure A.70, it is worth noting that northern portion of the County (north of the City of Cumming) includes a higher number of older homes on larger lots than the southern portion of the County. This speaks to the rural history of the County.

Figure A.70: Age of Housing Structures

	Forsyth Co.		Fulton Co.		Gwinnett Co.	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Total housing units	71,039	100.0 %	448,924	100.0 %	298,624	100.0 %
Built 2010 or later	3,865	5.4 %	11,162	2.5 %	6,352	2.1 %
Built 2000 to 2009	28,127	39.6 %	113,175	25.2 %	82,015	27.5 %
Built 1990 to 1999	22,756	32.0 %	82,691	18.4 %	90,972	30.5 %
Built 1980 to 1989	8,492	12.0 %	65,108	14.5 %	66,792	22.4 %
Built 1970 to 1979	3,009	4.2 %	49,571	11.0 %	34,683	11.6 %
Built 1960 to 1969	2,253	3.2 %	47,524	10.6 %	9,868	3.3 %
Built 1950 to 1959	1,104	1.6 %	34,406	7.7 %	4,914	1.6 %
Built 1940 to 1949	793	1.1 %	17,118	3.8 %	1,300	0.4 %
Built 1939 or earlier	640	0.9 %	28,169	6.3 %	1,728	0.6 %
	Hall Co.		Cherokee Co.		Georgia	
Total housing units	69,491	100.0 %	85,503	100.0 %	4,151,387	100.0 %
Built 2010 or later	694	1.0 %	2,249	2.6 %	83,829	2.0 %
Built 2000 to 2009	19,080	27.5 %	33,040	38.6 %	950,875	22.9 %
Built 1990 to 1999	17,716	25.5 %	21,603	25.3 %	885,297	21.3 %
Built 1980 to 1989	10,479	15.1 %	15,504	18.1 %	697,283	16.8 %
Built 1970 to 1979	8,696	12.5 %	7,899	9.2 %	585,054	14.1 %
Built 1960 to 1969	5,549	8.0 %	2,513	2.9 %	385,768	9.3 %
Built 1950 to 1959	3,310	4.8 %	760	0.9 %	257,391	6.2 %
Built 1940 to 1949	1,859	2.7 %	494	0.6 %	120,879	2.9 %
Built 1939 or earlier	2,108	3.0 %	1,441	1.7 %	185,011	4.5 %

Source: 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



### TENURE

The majority of housing units in Forsyth County are occupied by owners at 82.4 percent, with renters only making up 17.6 percent of the population. Since homeowners are typically less likely to move because of longer-term financial commitments, there is a more stable residential population in Forsyth County than all of the comparison geographies.

### HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Forsyth County has a very low housing vacancy rate (6.5 percent), a reflection of the high demand for housing in Forsyth County.

Figure A.72: Owner versus Renter Occupied Housing Units

	Forsyth Co.	Fulton Co.	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.	Cherokee Co.	Georgia
Occupied housing units	66,429	381,990	278,652	63,383	81,991	3,587,521
Owner-occupied	82.4 %	51.1 %	65.1 %	68.0 %	72.9 %	62.2 %
Renter-occupied	17.6 %	48.9 %	34.9 %	32.0 %	27.1 %	37.8 %

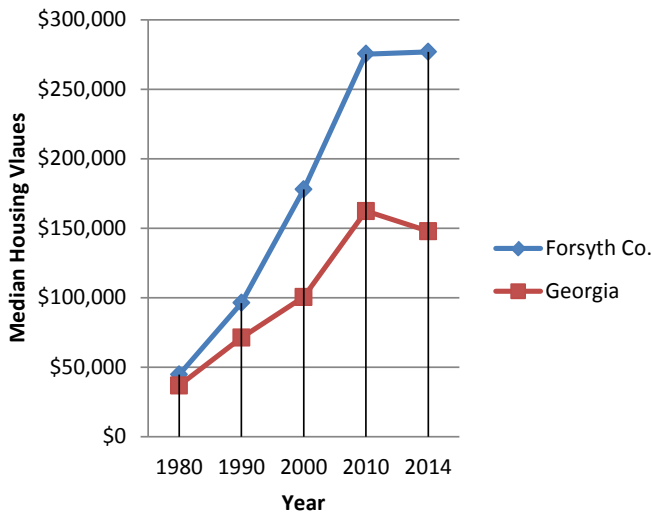
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure A.73: Housing Occupancy, 2014

	Forsyth Co.		Fulton Co.		Gwinnett Co.		Hall Co.		Cherokee Co.	
	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%	Estimate	%
Total housing units	71,039		448,924		298,624		69,491		85,503	
Occupied units	66,429	93.5 %	381,990	85.1 %	278,652	93.3 %	63,383	91.2 %	81,991	95.9 %
Vacant units	4,610	6.5 %	66,934	14.9 %	19,972	6.7 %	6,108	8.8 %	3,512	4.1 %

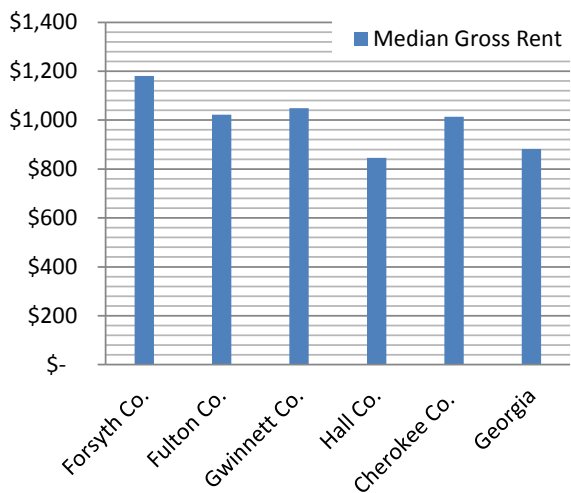
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure A.74: Median Values of Owner Occupied Housing, Forsyth County & Georgia



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure A.75: Estimated Median Gross Rent



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



## HOUSING VALUES & RENT

Roughly 70 percent of Forsyth’s housing stock is valued at \$200,000 or more. Furthermore, Forsyth County demonstrates the highest median housing value when compared to Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, and Cherokee Counties –with estimated median housing value of \$276,800. The next highest median household income is Fulton County at \$248,800. The 2014 ACS estimates Forsyth County’s median Gross Rent at \$1,181, which is the highest median gross rent price when compared to Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, and Cherokee Counties (Figure A.76 and Figure A.77).

## HOUSING COSTS AND COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

The cost of housing has an important impact on the people that are able to live in a community over time. Having a variety of housing price points can create a viable, diverse community, including workers who are

employed at the community’s variety of businesses, others who work nearby and/or are raising families, those who are retired, and others, to live there over time. Housing affordability may be the result of a variety of factors, including of overly restrictive codes, high land values, and other influencing factors that can price out people from a community.

Households are considered to be cost burdened when spending more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs, which are calculated by the U.S. Census from the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees. By this metric, an estimated 24 percent of owner-occupant households with a mortgage, 7 percent of owner-occupant households without a mortgage, and 41 percent of renters are cost burdened in Forsyth County (Figure A.77 and Figure A.78). While these numbers seem high, they are still the lowest of all comparison geographies.

Figure A.76: Estimated Median Gross Rent

	Forsyth Co.	Fulton Co.	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.	Cherokee Co.	Georgia
Median Gross Rent	\$1,181	\$1,022	\$1,049	\$846	\$1,014	\$882

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Figure A.77: Monthly Owner Costs as Percentage of Household Income

	Forsyth Co.	Fulton Co.	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.	Cherokee Co.	Georgia
Units with a mortgage	42,883	145,371	139,667	27,335	45,797	1,482,710
Less than 20.0 %	53.1%	45.3%	44.2%	40.7%	50.5%	45.3%
20.0 to 24.9 %	14.8%	14.1%	13.5%	17.7%	15.5%	14.9%
25.0 to 29.9 %	8.1%	9.7%	10.7%	11.0%	7.8%	10.2%
30.0 to 34.9 %	5.8%	7.0%	7.6%	7.1%	6.3%	7.0%
35.0 % or more	18.3%	23.9%	24.0%	23.4%	19.9%	22.6%
Units without a mortgage	11,504	49,042	40,274	15,213	13,633	726,024
Less than 10.0 %	56.1%	45.0%	47.9%	51.1%	56.0%	45.8%
10.0 to 14.9 %	19.8%	17.4%	16.2%	20.0%	17.1%	18.5%
15.0 to 19.9 %	7.2%	11.8%	14.3%	7.5%	16.0%	11.5%
20.0 to 24.9 %	6.7%	7.9%	5.3%	4.5%	2.3%	6.7%
25.0 to 29.9 %	3.0%	3.6%	2.6%	2.5%	0.9%	4.0%
30.0 to 34.9 %	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.0%	3.0%
35.0 % or more	4.6%	11.8%	10.8%	11.9%	5.8%	10.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



Figure A.78: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income

	Forsyth Co.	Fulton Co.	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.	Cherokee Co.	Georgia
Occupied units paying rent	11,045	174,999	93,895	19,102	20,993	1,235,929
Less than 15.0 %	14.1%	10.5%	7.0%	15.8%	9.9%	11.4%
15.0 to 19.9 %	18.7%	11.8%	13.7%	10.2%	17.5%	12.5%
20.0 to 24.9 %	13.7%	13.5%	15.3%	15.2%	21.5%	12.5%
25.0 to 29.9 %	12.4%	13.1%	8.4%	13.0%	8.3%	11.4%
30.0 to 34.9 %	8.9%	9.2%	10.7%	9.4%	7.9%	9.3%
35.0 % or more	32.2%	41.9%	45.0%	36.3%	34.9%	42.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

## HOUSING CONDITIONS

The widely accepted measure for over-crowded housing units is more than 1 person per room, with overcrowded units measured as those with more than 1.5 persons per room. Forsyth County and comparison communities have very limited overcrowded housing situations. See Figure A.79.

## JOBS-HOUSING BALANCE

The ratio of Jobs to Households in an area speaks to the ability of residents to find work close to home. A higher ratio suggests that residents may have more employment opportunities near where they live, while a lower ratio suggests that residents may have to commute farther for work. At the same time, areas

that are too high in the number of jobs available or too low in the number of households may lack activity during the evenings (the former) or during the day (the latter). In general the ratio speaks to an area's ability to support its own economic growth.

Based on 2013 estimates from ESRI, there were 72,504 jobs in Forsyth County and 63,885 households, for a Jobs: Households ratio of 1.13. This is significantly higher than the ratio in Cherokee County (0.74) but below Gwinnett (1.25) and Fulton (1.63). These comparisons are consistent with Forsyth's role in the region and its less urbanized character relative to its neighbors to the south. A more sustainable ratio of jobs and housing could be achieved through the availability of more jobs in Forsyth County that match the skills of the local labor force.

Figure A.79: Occupants per Room, Occupied Housing Units

	Forsyth Co.	Fulton Co.	Gwinnett Co.	Hall Co.	Cherokee Co.	Georgia
1.00 or less	98.9%	98.2%	96.6%	96.6%	98.2%	97.6%
1.01 to 1.50	0.8%	1.4%	2.7%	2.8%	1.4%	1.9%
1.51 or more	0.3%	0.3%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

## RECENT HOUSING SALES & BUILDING PERMITS

According to recent Zillow data, there were 1,782 homes for sale in Forsyth County in April 2016. In the past six months, there have been 2,709 home sales in the County. Based on this sales pace there are less than four months of inventory currently on the market. This suggests a healthy market leaning toward a seller’s market, with upward pressure on pricing.

From 2010 to 2015 there were 14,043 building permits for new residential units issued in Forsyth County, inclusive of the City of Cumming (U.S. Census Bureau Building Permit Survey for New Residential Construction). This is twice the rate of permitting as Cherokee County and just below the 15,185 permits issued over the same period in Gwinnett, a county four times larger than Forsyth.

## MARKET TRENDS & CHANGING HOUSING PREFERENCES

Most, if not all, of the major national homebuilders are actively marketing communities in Forsyth County. Of 63 new home communities marketed on the web site newhomesource.com, 62 are single-family home communities and only one is marketing townhomes. Particularly in South Forsyth, lot widths tend to be narrowing as land values put pressure on builders to increase density.

While single family housing is likely to remain the most popular product type in Forsyth County, a number of trends support the need for additional options. First, as family households age into empty nesters, demand for smaller, low- or no-maintenance homes will increase. According to national research conducted by the AARP, 87 percent of adults over age 65 would like to age in place – in their current home or community. In Forsyth County, the ability to age in place may be dictated by the housing product available and its connectivity to social groups, amenities, and services. Older households may begin to seek age-targeted flats and townhomes, single-story or master-down detached homes, as well as age restricted or continuing care communities. These residents value proximity to healthcare, suggesting that areas accessible to Northside Hospital-Forsyth may be sought after for this type of product.

Even as younger households show a greater preference for urban living, the appeal of a great suburban community like Forsyth should remain strong. That said, even as they move to the suburbs, those younger households are likely to prefer more compact, walkable developments. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to recreation areas and shopping can help to ensure that Forsyth maintains its appeal for the next generation of home buyers.

Housing diversity should also include rental apartments, especially in and near job centers in central and south Forsyth. Only about 18 percent of households in Forsyth County are renters, compared to 36 percent nationwide.

Builder demand for lots in Forsyth County presents challenges that are not uncommon among fast-growing communities. For example, Loudoun County, Virginia is, like Forsyth County, regularly among the top-10 fastest growing counties in the United States. Located 35 miles outside of Washington, DC, Loudoun County is also one of the wealthiest counties in the country with residents feeding into the tech corridor near Dulles airport. In the early 2000s Loudoun County denied a developer’s petition to rezone 4,125 acres to allow 15,000 units. Thereafter, a new owner created Willowsford, with 2,195 units under by-right zoning and 50 percent of the property preserved in a conservancy. Lot sizes are conventional suburban widths (65 to 85 feet on average) but clustering homesites in pods has helped to maintain the surrounding rural character at a gross density of 0.55 units per acre.



## CONCLUSIONS

A large percentage of Forsyth County's housing stock can be characterized as newer (post 1990), high-quality housing stock that supports a family-oriented and relatively wealthy community. Most housing has been built since 1990 and has multiple bedrooms. While rents and housing values of owner occupied units are high when compared to neighboring counties, there do not appear to be unique housing affordability issues specific to Forsyth County when compared to other nearby counties. The County has seen an up-tick in multi-family housing units in recent years, but the numbers are still minimal when compared to the high concentration of single family homes.



It is projected that Forsyth County will continue to experience major population growth in upcoming years. As that occurs, the following opportunities should be considered as new housing is built:

1. Encouraging the development of more one and two bedroom housing units to support young professionals and singles desiring to live in Forsyth County.
2. Consider opportunities for new housing products in more diverse settings than either the traditional rural single family home or high end suburban subdivision. New opportunities for housing can help meet likely increased demand for older adults, desiring to age in place, and younger workers, who may not desire the traditional products offered in Forsyth.
3. The way new housing is built and concentrated throughout the community will continue to place notable pressure on the community's infrastructure and services. It will be important to continue to closely collaborate with other County departments and the Forsyth County School Board to ensure facilities can accommodate the new influx of housing products and corresponding population.
4. Facilitate the development of a variety of housing price points in order to ensure that the County's workers can reside in Forsyth County if they so choose.
5. Forsyth County still has a large amount of rural or undeveloped land that could house a variety of new housing products. Visioning should consider where and to what intensity community members would support new housing needs to be met in the County .

# **APPENDIX B. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DOCUMENTATION**

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# APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DOCUMENTATION

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## **B.1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

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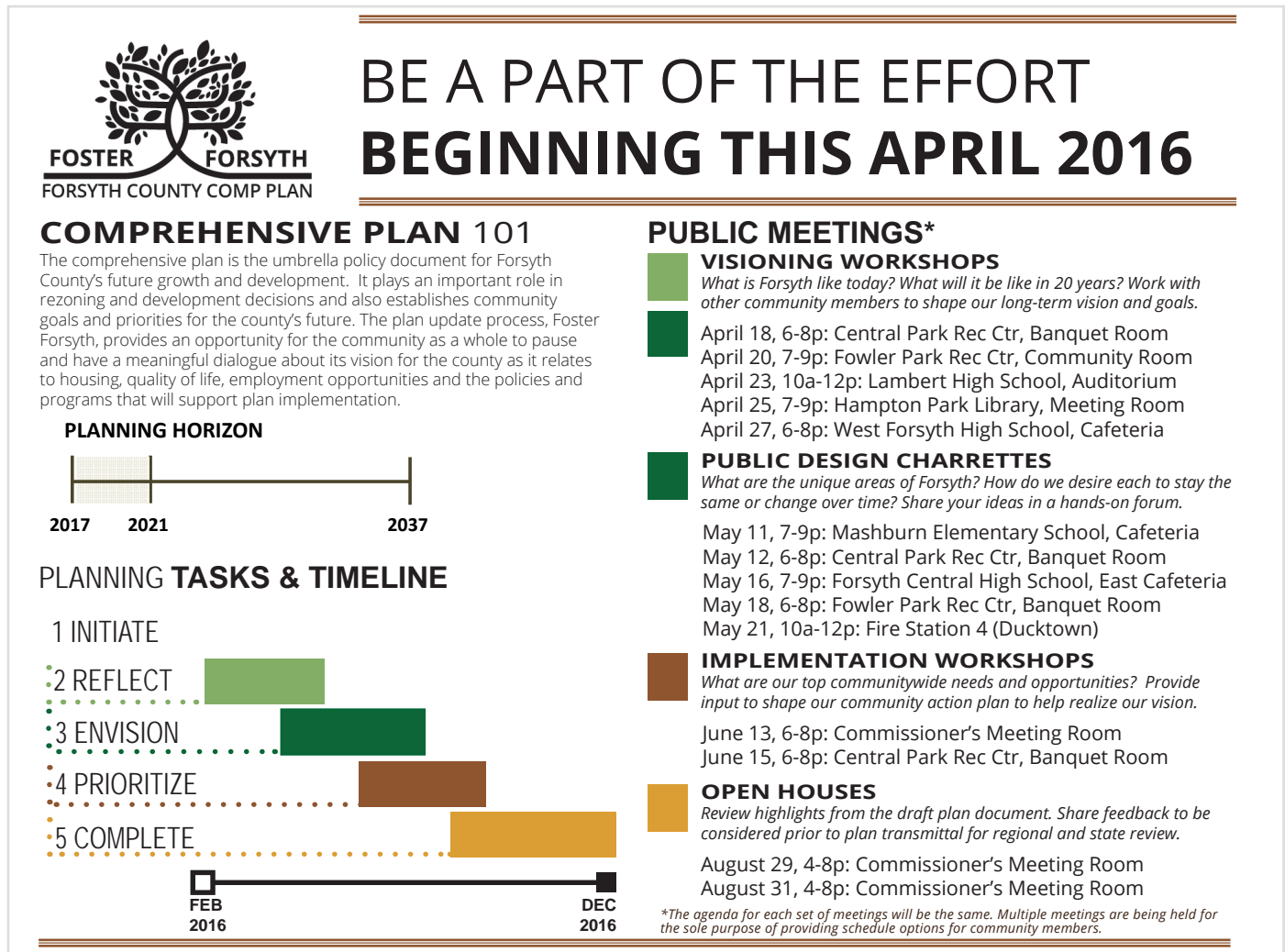
## SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT PROCESS\*

The an inclusive and informative public engagement program formed the backbone of the *Comprehensive Plan* update process. This public engagement plan details the myriad ways the public participated in the planning process. The *Comprehensive Plan* update relied on the participation of stakeholder committees, residents, businesses, property owners, community groups, and County staff and leadership throughout the planning process, as described on the pages that follow.

While the *Comprehensive Plan* was developed, the project website, FosterForsyth.com, was available for members of the public looking for information about upcoming events, materials from past meetings, and draft plan documents. Figure B.1 highlights public meetings, which served as key aspect of the plan's update, tying together the different planning states in a strategic fashion.

\*The public engagement plan is written in past tense to maintain consistent verb tense. Activities that are anticipated but have not yet happened are noted with an asterisk.

Figure B.1: Foster Forsyth Schedule Handout



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### COMMUNICATIONS

A variety of communications channels were leveraged during the planning process, including the County's monthly newsletter and cable station video and announcements, press releases, the County's Facebook account, billboards along GA 400, and an outreach list with regular email blasts, along with other tools. The project website, FosterForsyth.com, served as the central information portal for exchanging information about the *Comprehensive Plan* update. Regular updates to the website throughout the planning process provided current and timely information. Additionally, the *Comprehensive Plan* update process was branded as *Foster Forsyth* to facilitate consistent messaging and project recognition throughout the process.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS

From inception to adoption, five public hearings were held. These hearings occurred at the beginning and end of the project and twice at key milestones during the planning process, as follows:

#### **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS KICK-OFF HEARINGS: MARCH 17 & APRIL 7, 2016**

The *Comprehensive Plan* update was presented to the Board of Commissioners at two public hearings to kick-off the planning process. There was a brief presentation that highlighted the planning process, the key components of the plan update, and this Public Engagement Plan.

#### **PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING: SEPTEMBER 27, 2016\***

Before the *Comprehensive Plan* was transmitted to the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for review, the plan was brought before the Planning Commission for review and comment.

#### **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TRANSMITTAL HEARING: DECEMBER 1, 2016\***

At this hearing, the community was briefed on the contents of the plan and provided an opportunity to make final suggestions, additions, or revisions. Once public comments from this hearing were addressed, the plan was transmitted.

#### **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ADOPTION HEARING: MARCH 2, 2017\* (TENTATIVE)**

Once comments from the GMRC and DCA were addressed, the final plan was presented at one final County Board of Commissioners hearing to facilitate its adoption. The presentation highlighted additional comments or edits made as a result of regional and state review.

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews were held at the beginning of the planning process, primarily during April 2016. The planning team interviewed 15 County leaders and key stakeholders to better understand County issues. Interviews were completed early in the process so that input from these encounters could be incorporated into subsequent public involvement activities.

## STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEES

The *Comprehensive Plan* update process was guided by two committees, a Visioning Committee and a Steering Committee. These committees were established at the plan's outset. Committee meetings were open to the public, but did not include public comment periods.

### VISION COMMITTEE

What kind of place does Forsyth County want to be? The Vision Committee, comprised of nine members, helped address this question by helping establish a vision statement and goals for the County, based on input collected from the broader public during the visioning phase, and in collaboration with the planning team. This committee played a central role in setting the vision, so its efforts were concentrated early in the planning process.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee, in contrast, met throughout the planning process. True to its name, this committee steered the *Comprehensive Plan* update along the legally-proscribed path to a final product. The Steering Committee played an ongoing and strategic role in the development of plan elements, building on the work from the visioning process. The Steering Committee, comprised of nine members, oversaw and participated in the development of the plan as outlined in Georgia Department of Community Affairs' minimum standards.

### COMMITTEE MEETING DATES

- Wednesday, February 17: Joint Committee Welcome Meeting
- Monday, April 11: 6-8PM, Joint Committee Kick-off Meeting
- Monday, May 2: 6-8PM, Joint Committee Meeting 2
- Wednesday, May 25: 6-8PM, Joint Committee Meeting 3
- Thursday, July 14: 6-8PM, Joint Committee Meeting 4
- Tuesday, August 2: 6-8PM, Final Steering Committee Meeting

## PUBLIC WORKSHOPS & MEETINGS

### APRIL VISIONING WORKSHOPS

The Visioning Workshops helped set the framework for updating the County's overall vision statement, policies, and goals. Five workshops were held at locations throughout the County to allow for ease of participation by all community members. The same material was presented at each workshop, and each workshop addressed the needs and opportunities that face all of Forsyth County. Workshops were interactive in nature and included a group presentation, followed by small group discussions. The five Visioning Workshops were held on the following dates, at the locations indicated:

- Monday, April 18: 6-8PM, Central Park Rec Center, Banquet Room
- Wednesday, April 20: 7-9PM, Fowler Park Rec Center, Community Room
- Saturday, April 23: 10AM-12PM, Lambert High School Auditorium
- Monday, April 25: 7-9PM, Hampton Park Library, Meeting Room
- Wednesday, April 27: 6-8PM, West Forsyth High School, Cafeteria
- Online Version of Workshop (April 28 to May 5)

### MAY DESIGN WORKSHOPS

A set of three design workshops were held to gather community input on character area definitions and boundaries throughout the County. Like the Visioning Workshops, the Design Workshops were held at locations throughout the County for the convenience of attendees. The same material was presented and discussed at each workshop. The workshops were interactive in nature with participants working collaboratively with the planning team to identify appropriate land uses as well as future development character. Although the Design Workshops focused on refining the land use element of the plan, topics related to other key elements, including transportation, housing and economic development were integral to the conversation.



The five Design Workshops were held on the following dates at the locations indicated:

- Wednesday, May 11: 7-9PM, Mashburn Elementary School Cafeteria
- Thursday, May 12: 6-8PM, Central Park Rec Center, Banquet Room
- Monday, May 16: 7-9PM, Forsyth Central High School, East Cafeteria
- Wednesday, May 18: 6-8PM, Fowler Park Rec Center, Community Room
- Saturday, May 21: 10AM-12PM, Fire Station 4 (Ducktown)
- Online Version of Workshop (May 21 to May 28)

### **IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOPS**

To create a smooth transition from visioning, two Implementation Workshops were held to solidify the priorities for the County's future and begin to establish key action areas for the five-year work program. The workshops began to sketch out an action plan that both identified strategies for implementation as well as policies for each plan element. Both of the Implementation Workshops were held from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Dates and venues were as follows:

- Monday, June 13: Commissioners' Meeting Room
- Wednesday, June 15: Central Park Banquet Room

### **DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSES**

Two interactive open houses were held prior to public hearings to allow the public to review and provide feedback on key highlights from the plan document and its recommendations. Both of the open houses were held from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Dates and venues were as follows:

- Monday, 8/29/2016: Commissioners' Meeting Room
- Wednesday, 8/31/2016: Commissioners' Meeting Room

## **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

A web-based survey extended the reach of the *Comprehensive Plan* engagement program, allowing the planning team to hear from a greater number of Forsyth community members, giving those who may have been unable to attend meetings, such as families, a meaningful and impactful way to be involved. The survey collected input on the community's vision and priorities for its future. The Community Survey, hosted by Survey Monkey, was available between April 28 through May 22, 2016.

## **COMMUNITY EVENT KIOSKS**

To create more opportunities to interact with residents, planning team members staffed informational Comprehensive Plan kiosks at four community events. These booths featured information about the planning process and provided on-the-spot input opportunities that broadened the reach of the plan and to provided insight from those who may not otherwise engage with the planning process.

## **MEETING IN A BOX**

The Meeting in a Box activity provided Forsyth County residents with an option to host their own mini workshops as part of community group meetings. Each box contained an explanation of the comprehensive planning process, information about future involvement opportunities, a set of discussion questions, directions for a mapping exercise, a large format map, stickers, and comment forms. The kits were made available for pick up at the Forsyth County Department of Planning and Community Development between June 1, 2016 and June 22, 2016.

## **ONLINE MAPPING TOOL**

Between mid-April and mid-June 2016, community members had the opportunity to provide input via an online mapping tool available at the project website, [fosterforsyth.com](http://fosterforsyth.com). A total of 160 comments were posted via the online mapping tool. Although there were several participants that provided more than one comment, it is estimated that 109 different people participated.

## **B.2 PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARIES**

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## VISIONING WORKSHOP SUMMARY

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### PURPOSE

Community members were invited to shape the update to the Forsyth County *Comprehensive Plan* by participating in the first set of public input sessions, the Visioning Workshops, held in April 2016. Residents, businesses, property owners, and community groups were encouraged to participate and help shape Forsyth County's future.

The Visioning Workshops were educational and interactive. Each workshop began with a presentation, from which community members learned about recent County trends in demographics, housing, economic development, and land use. The project team then facilitated small group discussions about the County's future direction and priorities using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

A version of the Visioning Workshop was posted online as a means of gathering input from those who were unable to attend the workshop in person. The online workshop presented the same materials and topics of discussion that were featured at the in-person Visioning Workshops.

### DATES, TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Five in-person Vision Workshops were held across the County between April 18 and April 27, 2016:

- Monday, April 18, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.: Central Park Recreation Center Banquet Room
- Wednesday, April 20, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.: Fowler Park Recreation Center Community Room
- Saturday, April 23, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.: Lambert High School Auditorium
- Monday, April 25, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.: Hampton Library Meeting Room
- Wednesday, April 27, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.: West Forsyth High School Cafeteria

Each meeting had the same agenda and lasted two hours.

The online visioning workshop was posted to the Foster Forsyth website on April 28, the day after the last in-person workshop, and closed on May 5. Participants were asked to spend approximately 30 minutes interacting with the site and materials.



## OVERALL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES

Overall, the Visioning Workshops attracted 135 attendees to the five in-person meetings. Some residents attended more than one meeting. The online Vision Workshop attracted 38 participants during the week it was online.

## AGENDA FOR MEETINGS

The agenda for each Visioning Workshop followed the same format. Individual activities are described in greater detail below.

### 0:00: SIGN-IN AND ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

As attendees arrived, they were greeted, asked to participate in preliminary input activities, and invited to review a series of boards illustrating existing trends and changes in Forsyth County.

### 0:15: VISIONING OUR FUTURE PRESENTATION

The project team and County staff welcomed attendees. The project team then gave a presentation that reviewed the Comprehensive Planning process, findings from the *Existing Conditions Report*, and the goals for the workshop.

### 0:45: SMALL GROUP VISIONING DISCUSSIONS

Attendees broke into small groups for a SWOT analysis, which was used to identify priorities for the County.

### 1:50 REGROUP & NEXT STEPS

The groups presented their priorities to the assembly of attendees.

### 2:00 ADJOURN

## SUMMARY OF WELCOME ACTIVITIES

After attendees signed in to the meeting, they were directed to three posters, each of which asked the attendee to finish a sentence by writing in a blank space. The questions were oriented to develop an understanding of what matters to community members about Forsyth County today and in the future. Input was collected to help shape development of the overarching vision statement for the plan. The responses written on each of these posters are summarized here.

### VISION BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

**“In 2037 I won’t want to live anywhere but Forsyth County because...”**

A total of 60 responses were received. This question was only asked at the in-person Visioning Workshops. Responses indicated that attendees valued the County’s quality of life, low taxes, rural atmosphere, and green space, and looked forward to having

more walkable places and cultural and social opportunities. Respondents also feared that traffic, unrestrained growth, income inequality, and crime could threaten Forsyth County's ability to be a great place for families and seniors.

**“Our County’s biggest hurdles to overcome in the next five years are...”**

A total of 115 responses were received from in-person and online Visioning Workshop participants. Responses indicated that attendees felt the biggest issues facing the County were a loss of rural character, traffic, unplanned growth, lack of roadway infrastructure, overcrowded schools, and a lack of cultural opportunities and events.

**“The number one thing I love about Forsyth County is...”**

A total of 101 responses were received from in-person and online Visioning Workshop participants. Responses indicated that meeting attendees value Forsyth County's schools, low crime, community feeling, low taxes, location, medical facilities, and green and rural spaces.

## SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

Amanda Hatton, the consulting team project manager, gave a presentation that reviewed the Comprehensive Planning process, findings from the *Existing Conditions Report*, and the goals for the Visioning Workshop. She stated that the County was updating the Comprehensive Plan to address increasing development interest and the large influx of new residents, and presented the framework, timeline, and key elements of the planning process. The role of the community in this process, and the breadth of public involvement planned for the *Foster Forsyth* effort, was a major element of the presentation.

Ms. Hatton then presented key findings from the *Existing Conditions Report* (full report available online for public review beginning May 2, 2016), including information about shifting demographics, the County's wealth of community resources, and opportunities for changes in land use, housing, transportation, and economic development.

Demographically, the County is experiencing a high rate of population growth, an increasing proportion of minority residents, and a relatively high median family income compared to the region and nation. The County is attracting residents in part because of its well-distributed community facilities, particularly its schools and parks.

Eric Bosman, the consultant team's land use lead, presented information related to existing land use inventory and policy. There is an opportunity to differentiate among places within the County, vary the housing types offered, and re-evaluate the location and character of shopping areas. Home prices are higher than those in surrounding areas. Although single-family homes are the most prevalent housing product in the County, there has been an increase in multi-family housing recently.

Residents are well-educated and unemployment is low (3.9 percent). However, the local labor market is not well-matched with the labor pool, as 69 percent of local employees



commute from outside the County and 71 percent of employed local residents worked elsewhere. The largest industries are professional and technical services, retail, and manufacturing. The transportation network is strained from these commuting patterns, the long trips necessitated by the suburban and rural development pattern, and ongoing population growth.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Hatton invited the audience to participate in workshops in later phases of the planning process. She then opened the meeting for questions and comments.

*In lieu of a facilitated presentation, participants in the Online Visioning Workshop were given the opportunity to review highlights from the presentation or the entire presentation at their own leisure.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

After the presentation, the project team took questions from attendees. These questions and the project team's answers follow:

Q: Water consumption is a major issue, and seeing as the continued debate with the adjacent two states is not getting resolved anytime soon, are there any plans to address this? Could the quarry, in the future, have any use in storing water to address this issue?

A: Yes, the planning team is considering this issue area, although it is not a focus of the plan. The City has a Water Master Plan that is adjusted based on the future land use plan. The state also requires that each comprehensive plan include an element addressing the locality's compatibility with the regional water plan.

Q. How are these documents used by the Planning Department and by the Board of Commissioners? Will they be used, or is this a waste of everyone's time?

A: The goal of this document is to guide decision making by the Board of Commissioners (BOC) once they have adopted it. The BOC initiated the update to the plan proactively, so it is expected that the BOC will follow it.

Q. Are the population projections consistent with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)? Why not use the ARC projections if they are higher than the current projections?

A: We looked at projections from a number of sources and have come to this number preliminarily. The County has concerns about ARC's numbers, which is why they are not being used for this plan. As the process moves forward, this projection will be adjusted to reflect the community's vision.

Q. Do we have the income numbers of inbound and outbound commuters?

A. No, that would be interesting data if we can get it, but we do not have it.

Q: Does this commuting pattern indicate that we are lacking something like jobs, or jobs with higher salaries, or affordable housing?

A: The commuting pattern may indicate that there either are not enough jobs or not enough jobs of the right type for the residents of the County.

Q: The state requires a plan; does the state give less grant money if the last plan wasn't followed?

A: They do look at that, but the state doesn't have oversight, just coordination.

Q: What type of funds?

A: Grants, loans, and money from the ARC as well as state. These funds are allocated on an annual basis. The action plan in particular affects budget allocation.

Q: This is the third meeting. Were there more or less attendees at others?

A: There were roughly 40 attendees at the second meeting, and 20 at the first. We are working to get the word out about meetings.

Q: You mentioned in the presentation that in 2010 about 80 percent of the County was residential, 10 percent was commercial and 10 percent was recreation. Is this comparable to the rest of the GA 400 corridor?

A: The amount of commercial is lower, but may be more comparable to Johns Creek. It is hard to compare the County to cities.

Q: Do we break down race/demographics by district?

A: No, we did not. We looked at race and demographics primarily County-wide.

Q: What year will the projected population (386,621) occur?

A: The Comprehensive Plan has a 20-year planning horizon, so 2037.

Q: What is the long-range transportation project shown near here on the map on the transportation slide?

A: That particular project I don't know the specifics of, but it is likely a roadway widening project. If it is in long range, it may not even be funded at this time and is likely twenty years out.

Q: Is there a survey on the website?

A: It is not live yet, but a link to the survey will be posted when it goes live.

Q: What are the public involvement opportunities on Saturday?

A: Those are one of our community event kiosks. Members of our project team, along with resident volunteers from the Vision and Steering Committees, will be going to



- Health care
- Quality of life, good place to live for families and seniors, and good people

## WEAKNESSES

- Traffic
- Infrastructure being outpaced by rapid development:
  - Lack of roadway infrastructure to handle growing traffic
  - Overcrowded schools
- Lack of public transportation and transportation options for walking and biking
- Tree loss and weak ordinance for tree replacement
- Loss of agricultural land and greenspace
- Affordable housing and workforce housing
- Water supply concerns
- Lack of jobs and a mismatch between available jobs and the residential population's education and skill level
- Lack of entertainment and cultural options
- High-density housing
- Lack of quality development and architectural guidelines to deliver the desired look and feel of development
- Need for civic identity, for gathering places and town centers, and mixed use centers
- Need for gateways and beautification on corridors like Highway 9
- Lack of trust in the planning process and in Commission to implement the plan
- Monotonous land use and "sameness" in development across the County, lack of sense of place
- Lack in the variety of housing
- Lopsided tax digest

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop a high tech cluster in Forsyth County:
  - Work with school system and institutions of higher education to support businesses and high paying jobs
  - Recruit top teaching talent
  - Perhaps start a technical high school
  - Bring in high-speed internet
  - Leverage the highly educated residential population
- Create more communities to differentiate among places in the county
  - Create nodes of development rather than sprawling development
  - Create destinations and hubs
  - Develop a city center with activities for young people; could be a community center day and night, and offer cultural or entertainment venues
- Maximize Lake Lanier as a recreation destination by increasing opportunities for recreation beyond private boat use
- Build connectivity and civic space through redevelopment

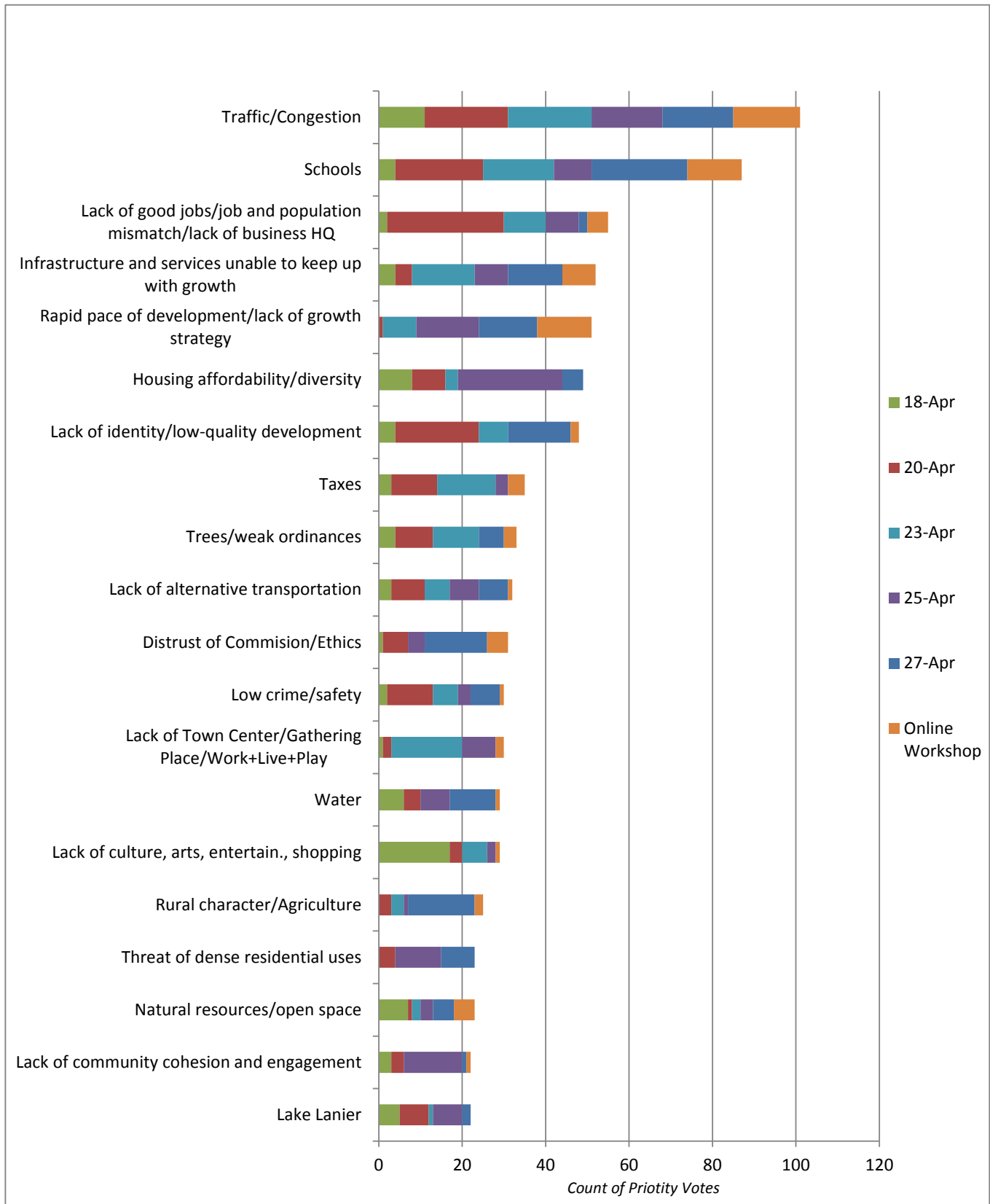
- Align housing costs with incomes in the County and broaden housing options for workers
- Become more attractive to businesses
- Improve the transportation system ahead of development
  - Infrastructure could keep pace with growth
  - Multi-modal transportation options such as walking and biking could be supported
- Heighten development standards and impose increased impact fees to address infrastructure needs, build schools, and discourage low-quality development
- Embrace increasing diversity
- Retain a rural feel through the inclusion of lower-density housing and conserving land for green space and parks
- Improve the tree ordinance to retain more tree cover, and not allow clear cutting for new development
- Redevelop office space and other areas
- Slow growth

## THREATS

- Water resources
- Traffic could overshadow the benefits of living in Forsyth County
- Crime, including drugs, could increase
- Density
- Decline in the quality of schools from overcrowding
- MARTA and mass transit
- This *Comprehensive Plan* may not be implemented by the Commission; Commission membership could change and throw out this plan
- County debt could have negative consequences and taxes could go up
- Growth could continue unchecked and outpace infrastructure (roads and sewer) and services.
- City of Cumming's control over water and sewer
- Growth could have a negative impact on quality of life and home prices
- Further tree loss, loss of rural land and feel
- Low-quality development threatens home prices
- Lack of affordable housing for young people and the failure to attract Millennials could mean an aging County
- Imbalance in land uses could negatively affect tax digest and cause increased taxes
- Residential development could take land that would be better suited for commercial development or schools
- Lack of businesses and jobs
- Multi-family housing could have a negative impact
- Lack of community cohesion, lack of buy-in for the plan, and splintered communities—fed by social media
- Political decisions made for short-term benefits could trump long term vision
- Loss of large lot residential through smaller lot subdivision development



## PRIORITIES SORTED BY MEETING DATE





## CONCLUSION

When small group members finished voting, their dots were tallied to determine the top priorities for the County. Then the large group reconvened and the results of small group exercise were shared, either by a member of the project team or by a member of the small group that was reporting. Sharing the top priorities allowed attendees to determine those priorities that were held in common across the small groups, and those issues that they had perhaps overlooked. Ms. Hatton then shared the last slide of her presentation, which reported the outcomes of this exercise from previous workshops.





## SUMMARY OF DESIGN WORKSHOPS

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### PURPOSE

Forsyth County community members were encouraged to help shape Forsyth's future by providing input at one of the Foster Forsyth Design Workshops. A series of five design workshops were held between May 11 and May 21 on and at various days, times, and locations to provide attendance opportunities to as many community members as possible.

The design workshop series was interactive in nature. While a brief presentation was given to provide context and planning process information, individual and group activities were facilitated throughout the meeting. Individual activities encouraged attendees to provide feedback on the draft vision statement and developments that they like in Forsyth County. Group activities provided an opportunity to determine appropriate areas for various types of growth in Forsyth County.

A modified version of the Design Workshop was posted online as a means of gathering input from those who were unable to attend the workshop in person. The online workshop presented the same materials and topics of discussion that were featured at the in-person Design Workshops.

### DATES, TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Five in-person Design Workshops were held across the County between May 11 and May 21, 2016:

- Wednesday, May 11, 7 to 9 pm: Mashburn Elementary School Cafeteria
- Thursday, May 12, 6 to 8 pm: Central Park Rec Center, Banquet Room
- Monday, May 16, 7 to 9 pm: Forsyth Central High School, East Cafeteria
- Wednesday, May 18, 6 to 8 pm: Fowler Park Rec Center, Community Room
- Saturday, May 21, 10 am to 12 pm: Fire Station 4 (Ducktown)

The Virtual Design Workshop was posted to the Foster Forsyth website on the afternoon of May 21, following the last in-person workshop that morning and closed on May 28. Participants were asked to spend between 30 and 45 minutes interacting with the site and materials.

## OVERALL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES

Overall, the Design Workshops attracted 94 attendees to the five in-person meetings. Some residents attended more than one meeting. The Virtual Design Workshop attracted 33 participants during the time it was online.

## AGENDA FOR MEETINGS

The agenda for each Design Workshop followed the same format. Individual activities are described in greater detail below.

### 0:00: SIGN-IN AND COMMUNITY GOALS REVIEW

Upon arrival, community members were greeted, asked to participate in community input activities, and encouraged to provide feedback on draft, long-term vision statement and developments.

### 0:10: PLANNING FOR A PROSPEROUS AND BALANCED FUTURE

The project team and County staff welcomed attendees. The project team then gave a presentation that reviewed the goals of the meeting as well as how decisions made today impact the future of Forsyth County.

### 0:30: DEFINING DEVELOPMENT WE WANT

Attendees broke into small groups for an activity determining what Forsyth should look like. This activity focused on type, feel, and location.

### 1:00: GUIDING OUR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Small groups were guided through a land use exercise involving poker chips in order to determine where Forsyth should grow.

### 1:45: REVIEW/WRAP-UP

### 2:00: ADJOURN

## SUMMARY OF ARRIVAL ACTIVITIES

After attendees signed in to the meeting, they were asked to provide information on two boards asking participants to mark where they live on a map and when they moved to Forsyth County on a timeline. Community members were then asked to participate in a couple of feedback activities. One activity encouraged attendees to mark developments that they love in Forsyth on a large map board. The other feedback activity gave participants an opportunity to provide input on the draft vision statement. Each activity was led by a Foster Forsyth planning team member in order to provide instructional guidance as well as further information on each topic.



## WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

A total of 108 responses were received: 77 in person and 31 online. Results showed that many residents from the southern half of Forsyth County attended meetings both in person as well as online. The densest cluster of responses was from community members who live near Canton Highway at the border of Forsyth County and Cherokee County. The northeast quadrant of the County was marked by only seven community members online and in person.

## WHEN DID YOU MOVE TO FORSYTH COUNTY?

A total of 66 responses were received in person for this activity:

- 42 out of 66 community members moved to Forsyth County after 1995. This is nearly two-thirds of respondents.
- Only 7 community members marked moving to Forsyth County before 1985.

## FORSYTH DEVELOPMENTS WE LIKE

Purpose: To decide which developments within Forsyth County should serve as models and/or precedents for future County growth and development.

Materials: One large, wall-mounted map with post-it notes and pens, or online comment form.

Summary: As individuals, community members utilized the map to point out which developments in the county they appreciate.

Results: Community members pointed out Vickery and The Collection at Forsyth as their favorite developments in the County. These two developments were followed up with multiple selections of Westbrook, Grand Cascades, Windermere, Polo Fields, Post Road Library, Creekstone Communities, and Laurel Springs.

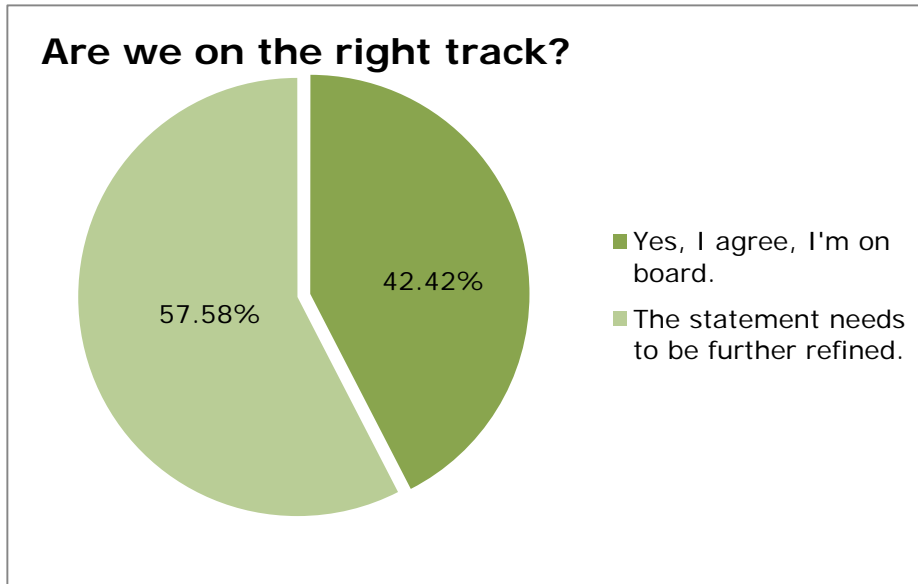
## DRAFT VISION STATEMENT INPUT

Community members were asked to provide input on the draft overarching vision statement for the County's future. The draft statement was based on input collected to date, direction provided by the Vision Committee, and refinements made by the planning team to create a fluid statement. Community members were able to provide input in a few ways:

1. Vote using one of two colored dots to indicate whether they thought the draft vision accurately reflected the draft vision or needed more work.
2. Provide input on key phrases in the vision statement and what those phrases meant to them, specifically the terms "quality of life" and "community of choice."
3. Record on comment forms words that they liked or disliked or words they would like added.

**DRAFT VISION STATEMENT**

*Forsyth County will continue to be a community of choice by promoting responsible use of its natural assets while furthering a balanced built environment that strengthens our quality of life.*



A total of 66 community members voted on the vision statement: 36 of these responses were received in person, and 30 were submitted online. Together, 58 percent responded that the vision statement needs to be further refined. The other 42 percent agreed that they were on board with the draft vision statement.

**Key Themes Repeated for “quality of life”**

- Safe, less crime (15 mentions)
- Natural, green, open space (12)
- Less traffic, no commute (12)
- Balanced/appropriate development (11)
- Quality schools (10)
- Recreational spaces/parks (9)
- Quality housing (7)
- Good community of people (6)
- Needs met (6)
- “Live, work, play” (5)
- Clean air/environment (5)
- Cultural opportunities (5)
- Affordability (4)
- Trustworthy decision making (3)
- Rural (3)



## Key Themes Repeated for “community of choice”

- Preferred place of living (25 mentions)
- Community envisioning input and representation (8)
- Attractive amenities (7)
- Quality & diversity of housing stock (6)
- Larger lots, low-density, allow for more open, natural green space (6)
- Quality schools (5)
- Affordable housing (2)
- Ease of travel/little commute (2)

## SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

Amanda Hatton, the consulting team project manager, gave a presentation that reviewed the comprehensive planning process to date. The presentation began with highlights of the Foster Forsyth planning process, what we’ve heard to date, how that is impacting the planning process, and the purpose of design workshops. This was followed by an explanation of what the *Comprehensive Plan* is and is not. This portion of the presentation focused on reminding community members that the *Comprehensive Plan* is a guide for local decision-making that does not require mandatory conformity. It does not make alter the Unified Development Code, although the *Comprehensive Plan* may make recommendations for improving the UDC as a part of the implementation strategy. The reasons for updating the Forsyth County *Comprehensive Plan* ahead of schedule were also noted. A schedule of community engagement activities was then reviewed in greater depth with a slide showing locations and dates of each event.

After the refresher and overview portion of the presentation, Ms. Hatton introduced the focus of the meeting: future land use. The County’s current existing land use, future development, and zoning maps were shown during this introduction.

The topic of planning for growth was broken down into five primary considerations: current land use, anticipated growth, infrastructure investments (roads, water, and sewer), implications of planning and development decisions on County budget and services, and community goals, concerns, and vision.

The implications accompanying the County budget were explained at more length. Amanda explained that the process of weighing impacts of a County budget varies. She mentioned that land use, density, and property values all influence property taxes and what benefits are received from those taxes. The fact that there is no “rule of thumb” for fiscal impact was emphasized before mentioning that conventional wisdom says that residential is a net-drain on County resources and that higher density projects serve the same number of people in a smaller area, lowering capital costs per unit. Another consideration mentioned to attendees was the difference in fiscal impacts for homes based on factors other than size.

Ms. Hatton then explained a bar graph comparing the percentage of tax revenue derived from residential properties in Forsyth County to eight surrounding counties and municipalities. Forsyth County derives 70 percent of its tax revenue base from residential properties. This is higher than all surrounding areas except Milton. This explanation was followed by mentioning the risks associated with relying too heavily on residential taxes.

After reviewing results from stakeholder interviews, the Community Survey, and the Visioning Workshops, Amanda introduced Eric Bosman to discuss small group land use activities. The conclusion of this presentation made contact information available to attendees before opening the floor to questions and comments.

*In lieu of a facilitated presentation, participants in the Online Design Workshop were given the opportunity to review highlights from the presentation or the entire presentation, at their own leisure.*

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

After the presentation, the project team took questions and comments from attendees. These questions and comments along the project team's responses follow.

Q: The last slide showed a bar graph comparing Forsyth County with Alpharetta. Maybe this is comparing apples to oranges, but shouldn't we only be comparing Forsyth County to other counties?

A: Yes, we included mostly counties on that graph for that reason. We included two cities because attendees in past meetings expressed they consider Forsyth similar to some of the North Fulton municipalities.

Q: To what degree does the existing infrastructure impact the way we plan future growth?

A: While that is a consideration, decisions about growth should not be limited by it necessarily. Existing infrastructure should be taken into account, which is why it was presented. Two schools of thought about the relationship of growth and infrastructure can be used: the first is that growth should only occur where it can be served by existing infrastructure. The other is that growth will require investment in infrastructure and that it is an investment some are willing to make.

Q: Clarification about the survey. Is there something that people can do online like we are doing tonight?

A: Yes, there is something that community members can do online. Not everything translates from the workshop to online, but there will be a 30 minute online interactive design workshop. There was one for the visioning workshops, will be one for the design workshops, and will be one for the other workshops. It will only be up for a week, so encourage your neighbors to participate when it opens.



Q: Where can I find the survey?

A: You can find the survey at fosterforsyth.com

Q: Is there a way on the website to add your email to the distribution list.

A: On the website you will see a banner with current information. Right under that there is a "What's Next" box. The sign-up for the distribution list is right next to that. Click on it, add your email address, and you should see a message letting you know that you have been added to the outreach list.

Q: What is considered a town center?

A: "The Collection" is a good example; it is a mix of different uses within a larger master plan.

Q: Is the information Amanda presented tonight available?

A: It will be part of the online design workshop, and after that, it will be available on the website.

Q: What percentage of the County's developed area is residential?

A: We have the percentage of residential, but to answer that we would need to do a new calculation that removes undeveloped land. We will get back to you on that. *NOTE: The planning team reviewed data after the meeting and identified that 47.5 percent of the County's developed land is residential.*

Q: One slide said that one of the priorities is affordable housing. Who said that?

A: The slide showed cumulative results from the visioning meetings, where the issue of affordable housing was brought up multiple times by different people. For example, people mentioned that teachers can't afford to live here.

Q: Who said that? Teachers? Millennials?

A: In one case yes, it was a teacher who mentioned it. Another person who mentioned it was representing the Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, some business owners in the stakeholder meetings mentioned it was a challenge.

Q: What housing are they looking for?

A: The exact type of housing was not discussed as part of these meetings, as the conversation was high-level.

Comment from attendee: In the meeting last time, someone mentioned that their kids could not afford to come back to Forsyth to live.

Comment: Turnout at the meetings has been low. It's hard to say that everyone has been represented.



Response: There are two aspects to public input: quantity and quality of input. Of course, we want as many people as possible to participate. Multiple people have mentioned that there are limited price points for housing in Forsyth. We have heard it frequently enough that we are confident in saying that it is a challenge here.

Comment: The bold items on the slide are the result of the visioning meeting voting exercise. It does not necessarily mean that people want it, but what they felt was important or was a priority for them.

Q: What about the stakeholder interviews? What were the outcomes from those?

A: We interviewed a broad range of stakeholders and the results will be posted on the website.

Q: What response did the stakeholders have to housing?

A: It was not something that came up as frequently in the stakeholder interviews. The slide that we showed was of the results from the visioning workshop.

Comment: I think we're going to see a lot of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) with those results. People say we need it, but they don't want it near them.

A: That's very possible, and tonight's exercises should hear that out.

Comment: You mentioned a projection of over 400,000 people and I'm disappointed to hear that stopping growth is off the table. That's a non-starter for me.

A: Growth is coming and stopping it is not an option at this point. But we can direct where it goes, how it looks, and how it impacts the community.

Comment: It's the pace of growth that I'm worried about.

A: Yes, the pace is a challenge, but the reality is that residential growth is privately funded on private land with private dollars. It can move faster than public money. We want to be proactive about how growth comes and not get run over by it. We cannot go into this with a strategy to stop growth because your tax base can't afford it. We need to be more strategic, and it is not just housing.

Comment: In this process we're missing the multi-family already in the pipeline. People don't know about it.

A: It is being considered, but we legally cannot undo anything that's already been approved. If people don't know about it, tonight is a good opportunity to share that knowledge.

Q: What kind of housing did people want in northwest Forsyth?

A: It depends on the market demand and property rights.



Q. In these exercises how will we account for people not knowing all parts of the County?

A: Public input is one piece of this process; the plan is also going to take existing conditions and other data into consideration. If we get things wrong, tell us and hold us accountable.

Comment: I am concerned that the population estimate shown would require nearly 80,000 new units. (160,000 vehicles at 2 per unit)

Comment: I am thinking that the County should control projections by rebalancing population and employment numbers rather than adding all new population.

Comment: There is a desire for policies to control/direct growth.

Comment: There is some distrust by residents in realtors and their relationships with current commissioners.

Comment: Zoning and regulations are making rural homestead development and additions very difficult while large developments get expedient approval and more leniency.

Comment: The plan needs to dive into the economic value of the plan.

## DEFINING DEVELOPMENT WE WANT (SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY)

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER MAP

*Purpose:* To provide edits to the Community Character Map to be finalized by the Steering Committee.

*Materials:* One large Community Character Map per group.

*Summary:* As groups the community started this series of exercises with a review of the Community Character Map created by the Foster Forsyth Steering Committee. This map contained 10 unique character areas that spread across the County.

- McFarland
- Sharon Springs/Gateway
- South GA400
- The Village
- Campground/Drew
- North GA400
- Northwest Forsyth
- Chestatee/Jot Em Down
- Lakefront
- Cumming

*Result:* As a result of this meeting the community suggested some very minor tweaks to the character areas. The biggest change came in the area around the southern portion of Lake Lanier. The majority of the groups felt there needed to be more detailed focused along Highway 20 south of Lake Lanier. Two suggested approaches were given: 1) create a new Character Area along Highway 20 or 2) divide the Lakefront into two subareas. Other suggested changes that would result in character area changes included grouping the Shiloh Road area across GA400 in the McFarland character area, expanding The Village northward to Kelly Mill Road, and expanding Sawnee Mountain northward. Attendees also offered some name changes to Lakefront, Sharon Springs/Gateway, and Campground/Drew.

## IMAGERY BOARDS

*Purpose:* To determine the architectural quality and scale that is the right fit for Forsyth County.

*Materials:* Four imagery boards containing 15 sample images each: one board for business/industry, one board for town center/commercial images, and two boards for residential images.

*Summary:* Individuals placed dots on the character images they felt were most appropriate for Forsyth County. The exercise was structured as to identify which architectural types and scales the community felt were most appropriate to Forsyth County. Each participant was given 10 dots and instructed to divide them among the three categories.

*Results:*

### Town Center and Commercial

Participants preferred activity centers that were more walkable and had a green space component to them. Most votes landed on brick construction that was lower in scale and traditionally designed. Community members also placed a large number of votes on mixed-use developments.

### Business and Industry

Most dots were placed on images that were more traditional in architectural design. In regards to scale, a majority of the votes were placed on small-scale, community serving businesses or on large scale business parks that would serve as large employment centers (mostly along Georgia 400). Of the votes for small-scale, community serving majority of them landed on mixed-use business centers with a residential component.

### Residential

Large lot single-family properties received the most votes. Participants were willing to trade architectural quality for having larger lots. Dots placed on small lot single-family focused mainly around those lots with established trees and larger front yards. Cluster lot and cottage courtyard lot layouts received the most votes of the medium density development styles.



Participants noted the provision of open space while placing these votes. The smaller scale, rear-loaded townhomes received the largest number votes amongst multi-family products.

## **GUIDING OUR GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT (SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY)**

### **Individual Growth Maps**

*Purpose:* To receive clear direction on where to direct growth strategies for Forsyth County.

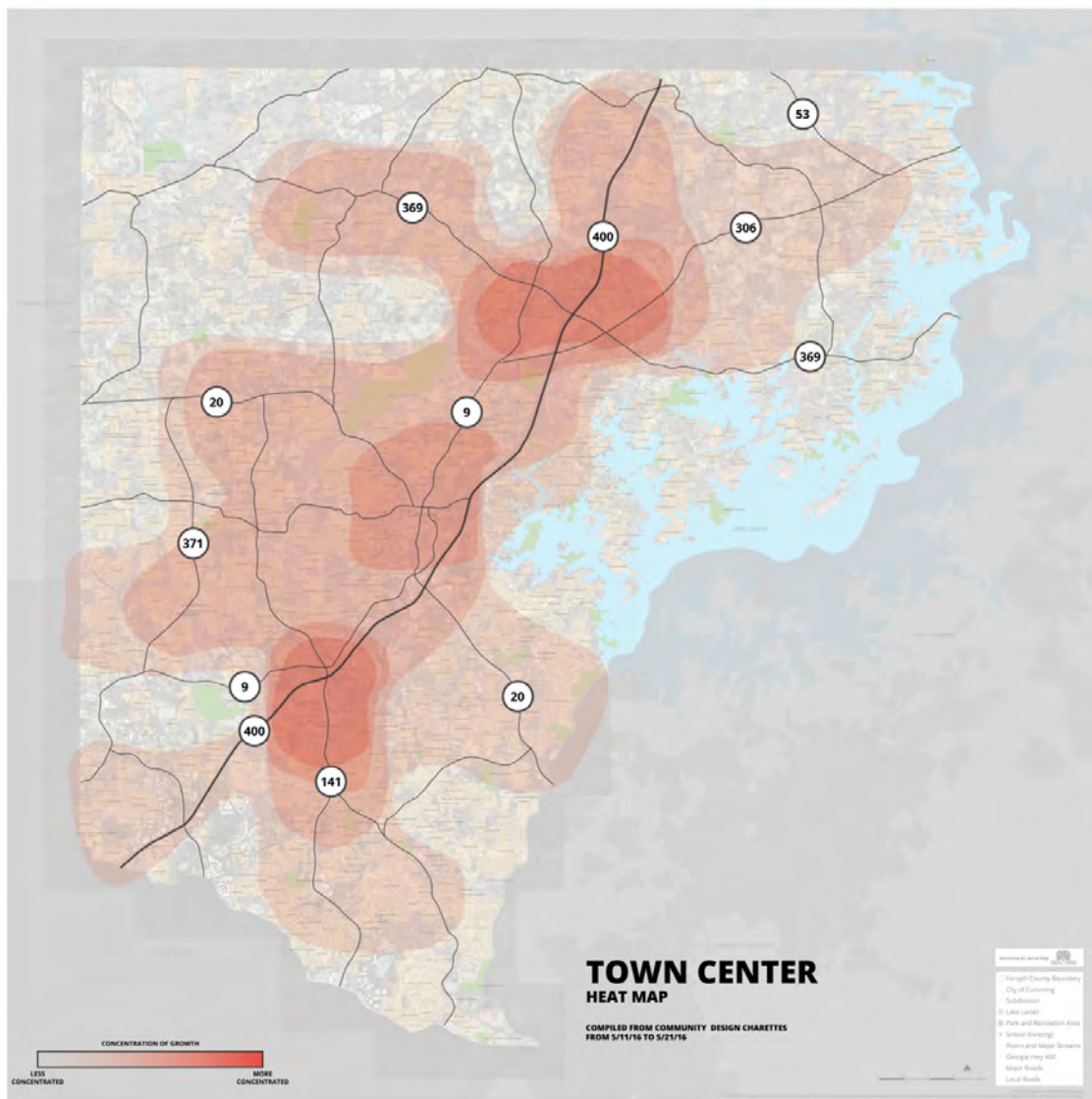
*Materials:* One individual map per participant or online exercise.

*Summary:* Participants used their individual maps to color in grid squares they felt were the most appropriate for new development of each type of growth. There were five grid squares for residential, three for business and industry, and two for town center/commercial.

*Result:* All results were tabulated into three different heat maps.

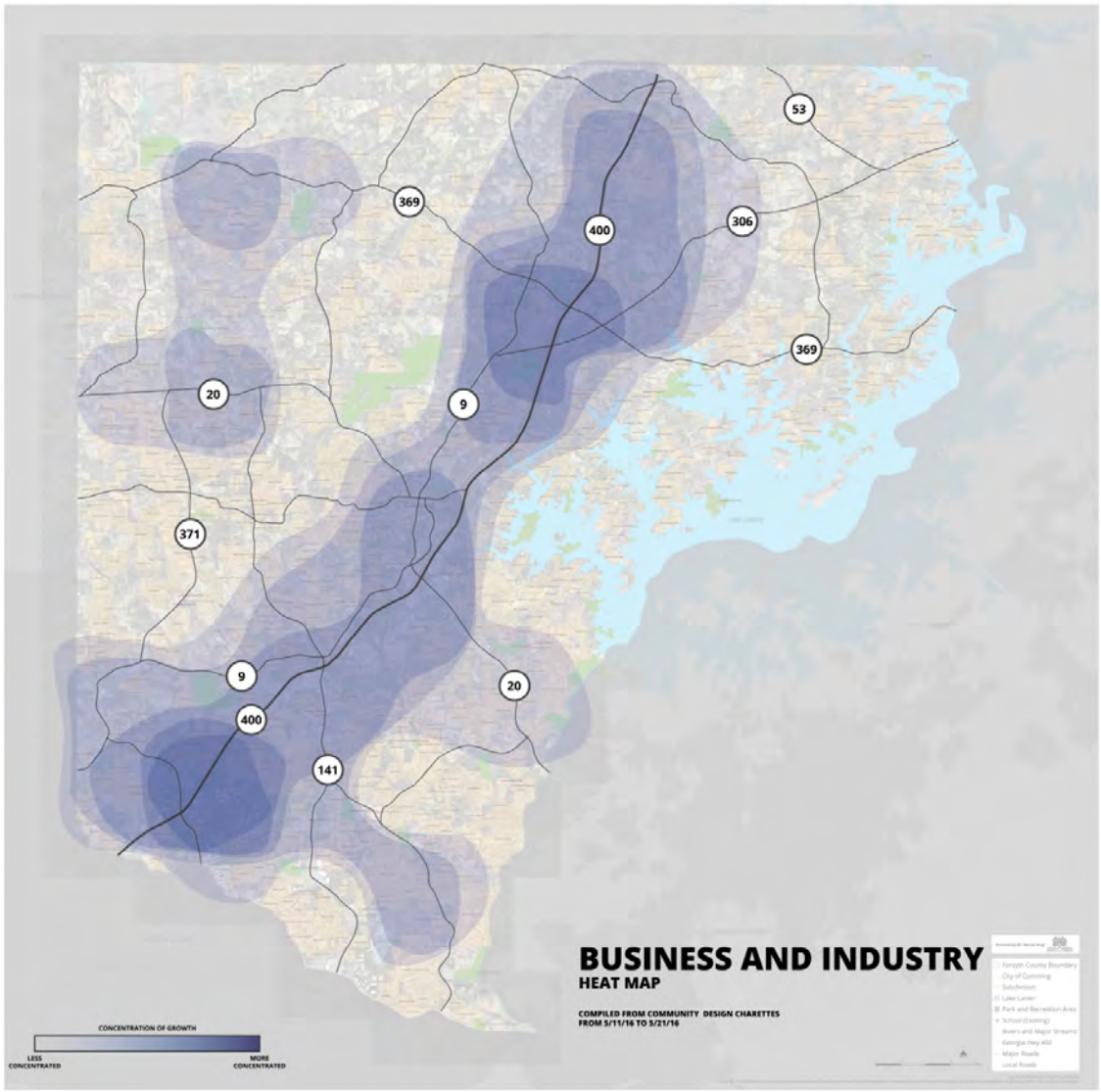
Town Center/Commercial

Community members felt that Town Center/Commercial development was most appropriate along Georgia 400 in the southern portion of the County at Highway 141 (placed near to or building upon The Collection) or in the Hammond’s Crossing area in the north. The City of Cumming also received much attention by participants as a location as a place in the County that should act as more of a Town Center. Residents felt the City could develop more of a downtown feel that draws the community in for a variety of reasons. Community members felt strongly about placing development in the City even when the planning team pointed out that the City of Cumming did not fall into the jurisdiction of Foster Forsyth. In addition, participants directed some commercial growth along Highway 20, Highway 369, and Kelly Mill Road in the Campground and Village character areas. Online results mirrored most of the table results with a heavy focus on Georgia 400 on both the northern and southern ends.



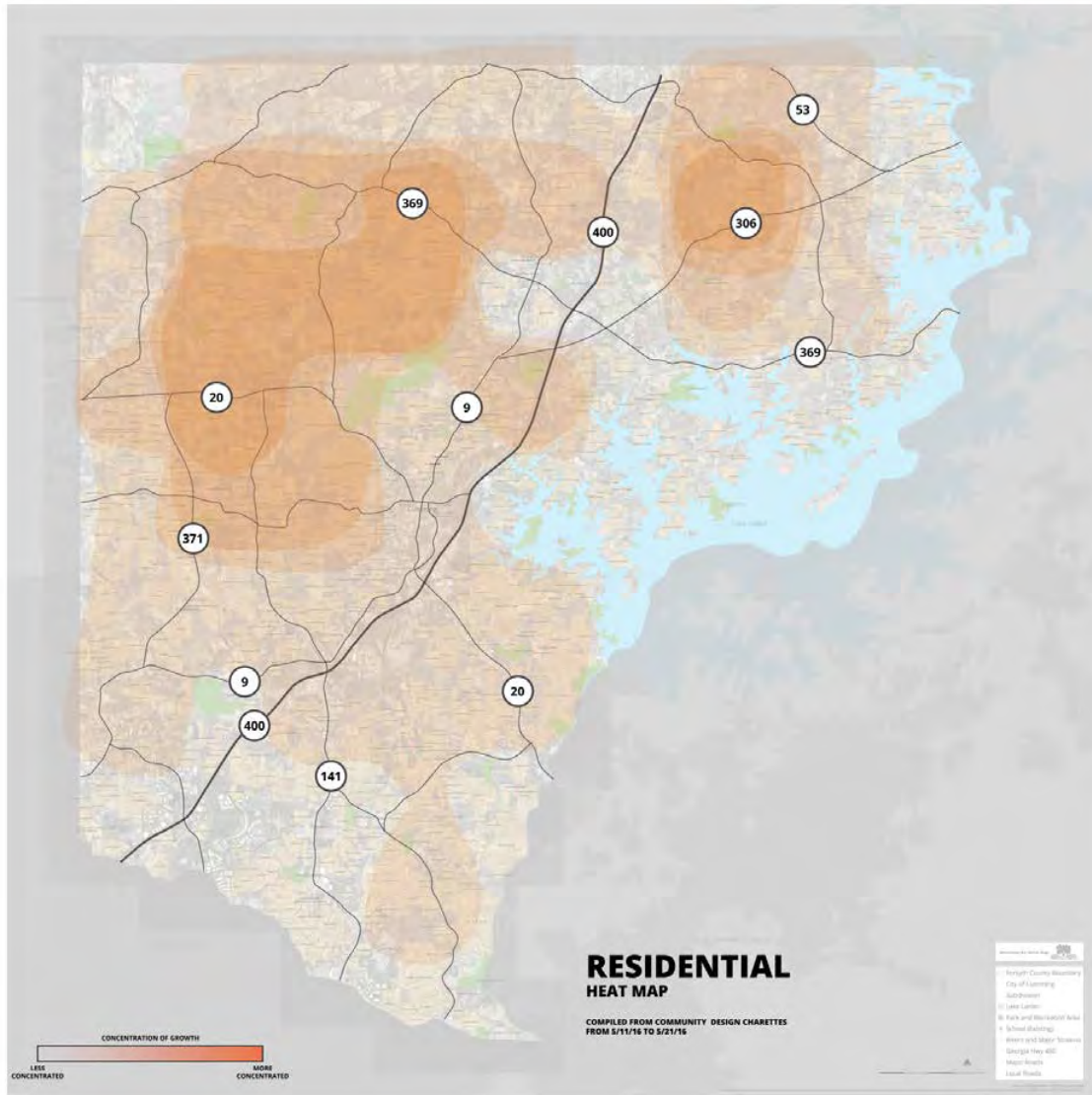
Business and Industry

Most participants clustered business and industry around Georgia 400 in the south near Shiloh Road and in the north at the crossings of Highway 306 and Highway 369. Other clustered business development occurred in the center of the City of Cumming and along Highway 20. Online results were more heavily focused in the McFarland character area off of Georgia 400 and Shiloh Road. The remainder of votes concentrated along the northern portion of Georgia 400.



**Residential**

The majority of maps spread residential development out across the entire county. The community members placed the majority of the residential development in the rural portions of the County in this exercise. Most of this development landed in northwest Forsyth and the Chestatee area. Online results were incredibly similar to the table exercises with dispersed residential development spread across the whole rural portion of the County.



## Chip Exercise

*Purpose:* To receive clear direction on where to direct growth strategies for Forsyth County and compare the results to the individual maps.

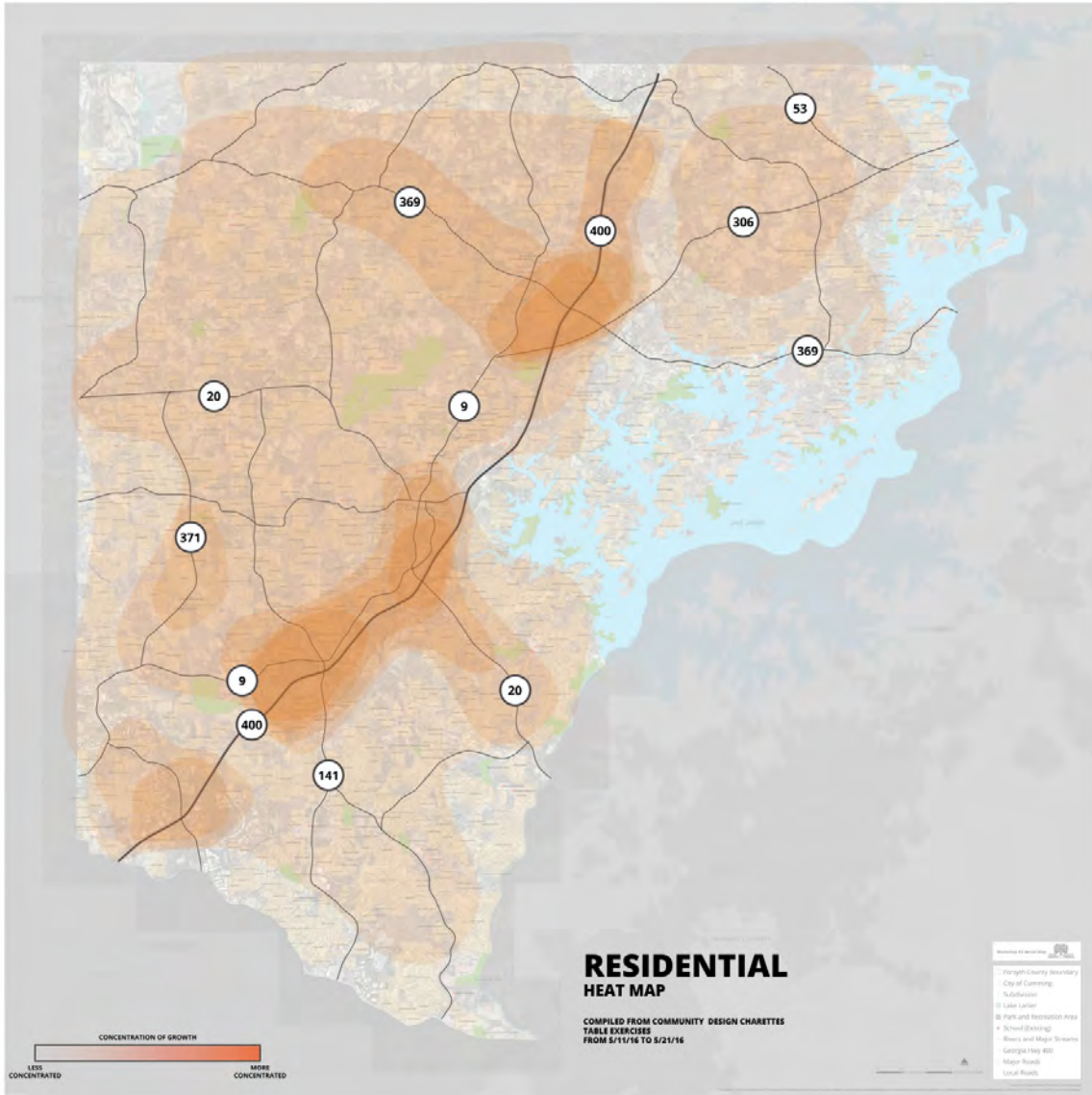
*Materials:* One large aerial map with 30 residential chips, 8 business and industry chips, and 5 town center/commercial chips.

*Summary:* The community members gathered in groups of five to twelve people per table. Working together they placed chips across the county to identify the correct location for future development.

*Result:* As a whole, the chips for business and industry and town center/commercial matched the results from the individual exercise. Most development clustered in the nodes adjacent to Georgia 400. When working together, the community placed residential in a more concentrated fashion. The majority of the residential development was placed along Georgia 400 at the nodes around Highway 369, Highway 141, and Highway 20. Participants also located more residential heading towards Matt and Frogtown on Highway 369 and along 171 near Vickery Village. The Chestatee area also received some interest for residential redevelopment by the community.

*A second heat map for residential is shown on the following page to illustrate how the group chip activity results varied from the overall individual growth map feedback.*





## WRAP-UP AND ADJOURNMENT

After concluding small group activities, attendees gathered to review the results of each group. Foster Forsyth team members from each group presented a summary of the discussion and information gathered during activities. After reviewing small group conclusions, the meeting was concluded with information about other involvement activities and contact information. Attendees were then thanked for attending the workshop and encouraged to invite friends and family to get involved in Foster Forsyth activities.





## **SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOPS**

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### **PURPOSE**

Community members previously provided input to help inform the County's Comprehensive Plan update, at the April 2016 Visioning Workshops and May 2016 Design Workshops, as well as through other forms, such as surveys and interactive tools. The insight community members provided to date on issues related to economic development, housing, transportation, and land use was distilled into a set of draft community priorities and more detailed character area visions and policy statements, which were vetted at the Implementation Workshops in June. The workshops updated residents on the outcomes of the planning process to date and provided interactive opportunities to ask questions, provide written feedback, and engage in group discussions. Participants' evaluation of the presented material is being used to help refine the direction of the content and create an initial draft of the Comprehensive Plan, which will be reviewed by the public in August.

### **DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATIONS**

Two in-person Implementation Workshops were held to gather community feedback:

- Monday, June 13, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.: Forsyth County Administration Building, Commissioners' Meeting Room
- Wednesday, June 15, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.: Central Park Recreation Center, Banquet Room

Each meeting had the same agenda and lasted two hours. Following the in-person workshops, a modified, online version of the workshop was made available on the website from June 16 to June 23, giving residents who could not attend an in-person meeting the opportunity to respond to the same material, in a modified online format.

### **OVERALL NUMBER OF ATTENDEES**

There were a total of 90 participants at the two in-person meetings as well as 160 participants in the Virtual Implementation Workshop following the in-person workshops.

## AGENDA FOR MEETINGS

The agenda for both meetings is detailed below.

### 6:00 SIGN-IN & INPUT ACTIVITY (ALL)

Upon arrival, attendees participated in input activities, voting for their preferred vision statement and indicating their degree of support for the set of draft goals for the Comprehensive Plan.

### 6:10 ACHIEVING OUR VISION (PROJECT TEAM)

The project team and County staff gave welcoming remarks and an overview of the Comprehensive Planning process, the goals for the workshop, recent survey highlights, the results of the design workshop, and a framework for understanding levels of development intensity and the defined character areas.

### 6:25 GUIDING OUR GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT PART II (ALL, FACILITATED BY PROJECT TEAM)

Participants circulated through a series of boards explaining and depicting the 11 defined character areas, evaluating them for accuracy and clarity by placing a sticker along a development intensity scale to indicate the type of development they felt was appropriate and adding specific comments with sticky notes.

### 7:05 FOCUSING OUR EFFORTS (ALL, FACILITATED BY PROJECT TEAM)

Attendees were divided into smaller discussion groups, facilitated by project team members, to vet a list of economic development, housing, and transportation priorities, as identified throughout the planning process to date. Groups then had an opportunity to complete a mapping activity to clarify their preferred vision, drawing proposed transportation improvements and attaching icons representing various housing and active transportation developments.

### 7:55 REVIEW/WRAP-UP

### 8:00 ADJOURN

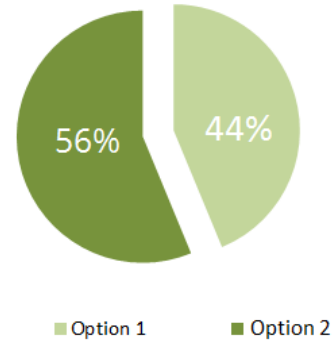


## SUMMARY OF WELCOME ACTIVITIES

Attendees signed into the meeting and were directed to a series of posters soliciting their feedback on two draft vision statements:

- *Option 1:* Forsyth County will continue to be a community of choice by promoting responsible use of our natural assets while advancing a thoughtful growth management strategy that strengthens and sustains quality of life for all generations.
- *Option 2:* Forsyth County will be a community of choice by advancing a balanced growth management strategy that strengthens our quality of life, respects our natural assets, and accommodates the needs of all generations.

**Preferred Vision Statement**



Meeting attendees voted strongly in favor of Option 2 (74 percent). Virtual Implementation Workshop participants were presented with the same choices, and the majority voted in favor of Option 1 by a slight margin (55 percent). Overall, participants voted in favor of Option 1 (56 percent).

They also gave their input on a set of overarching goals by placing stickers to indicate the level of importance they assigned to each one, using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being of low importance and 10 being of high importance. The overarching goals presented were:

### **A) ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

*As new growth and development occurs, maintain rural character while establishing a high standard for quality design in private developments, streetscapes, and other initiatives.*

### **B) EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT FURTHERS OUR VISION FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

*Ensure water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure plans and programmed investments further our community's future development vision and keeps pace with community needs.*

### **C) ATTRACT PROFESSIONAL JOBS**

*Facilitate job opportunities that create a better match between the County's workforce and nearby employment opportunities. By attracting more employers to the County, the tax base will become better balanced and more sustainable.*

#### D) INVEST IN OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

*Continue to invest in quality schools, parks, and access to amenities, as well as protect natural and cultural resources.*

#### E) GROW COMMUNITY TOWN CENTERS

*Support the development of town centers of activities of varying scales as identified by the Character Area Map. Typically, a town center will serve multiple purposes, such as a place for shopping, entertainment, community gatherings, and recreation. Depending on the location and scale, town centers may also contain residential units, professional offices, and other places of employment.*

#### F) IMPROVE MOBILITY

*Make getting around Forsyth County easier by improving existing roadways, adding opportunities for walking and bicycling, and advancing opportunities for transit and new transportation technologies to serve the long-term transportation needs of residents and businesses.*

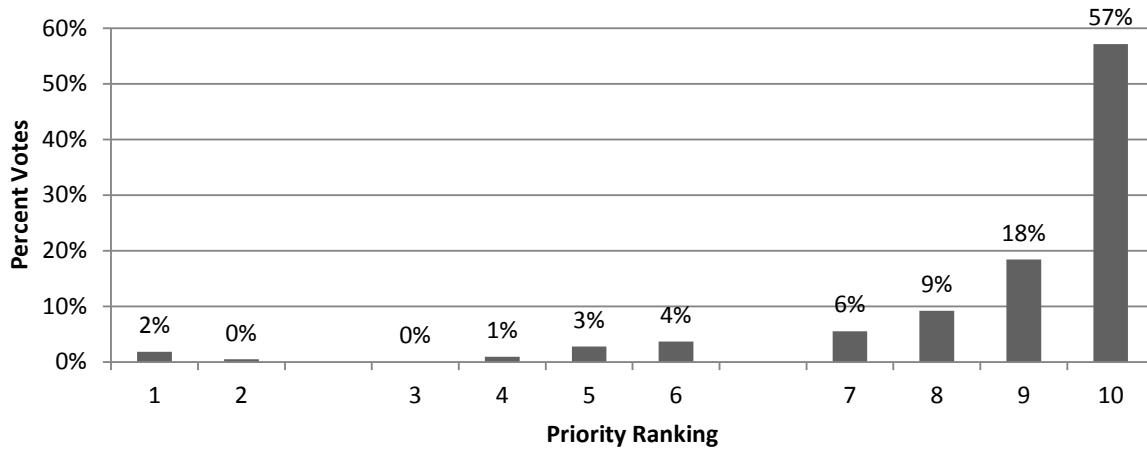
Virtual Implementation Workshop participants were presented with the same activity. The average number of both in-person and virtual workshop respondents for each priority was 217. The full breakdown of the results is shown in the graphs below. Participants largely reaffirmed the stated overarching goals for the Comprehensive Plan, with 80 percent or more ranking four of the six goals to be of high importance, as indicated by a score of 8, 9, or 10. These included:

- A) Enhance community character (85 percent);
- B) Expand infrastructure that furthers our vision for growth and development (83 percent);
- E) Invest in our quality of life (85 percent); and
- F) Improve mobility (81 percent).

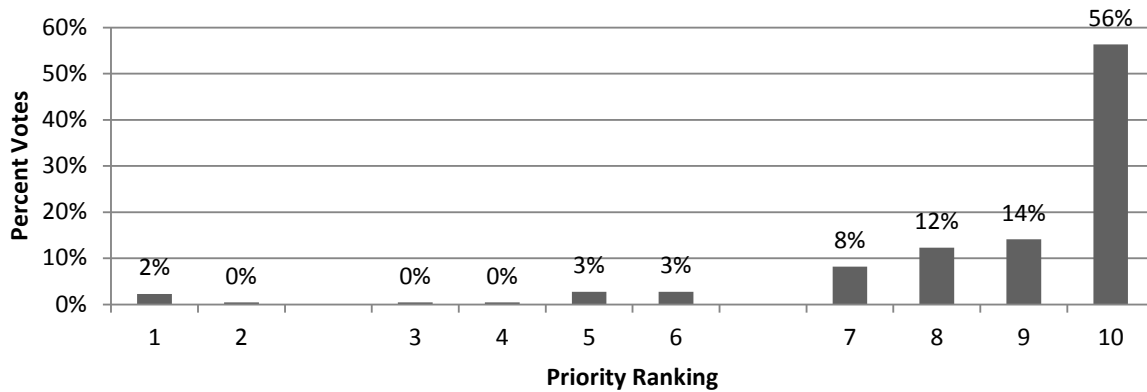
Two goals saw greater variability in perceived importance: C) Attract professional jobs, and D) Grow community town centers. Participants largely found the attraction of professional jobs to be favorable, with most ranking it to be of high importance (68 percent), a noteworthy number of participants judging the goal to be of medium importance (25 percent, as indicated by a score of 4, 5, 6, or 7) and a few finding it to be of low importance (6 percent, as indicated by a score of 1, 2, or 3). Participants were nearly equally divided amongst those who found the development of town centers to be of high importance (33 percent), medium importance (32 percent), and low importance (35 percent).



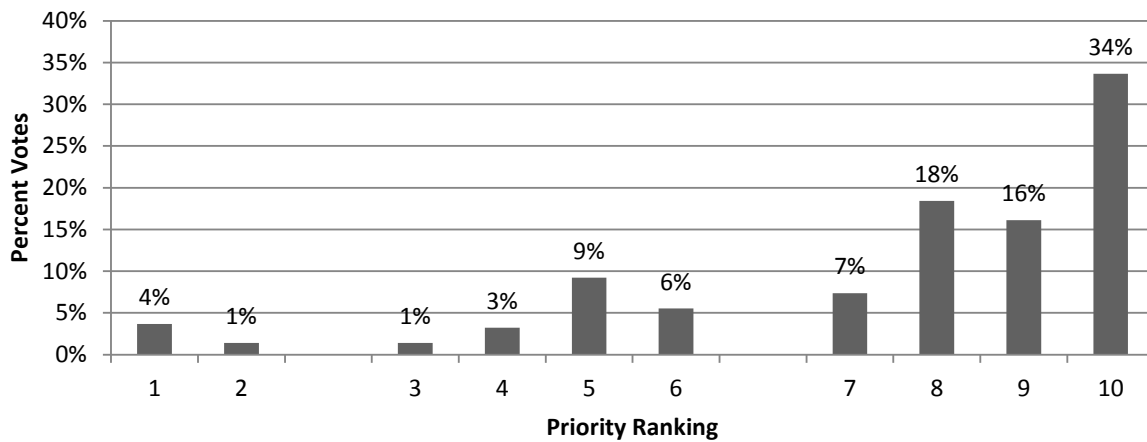
### A. Enhance Community Character

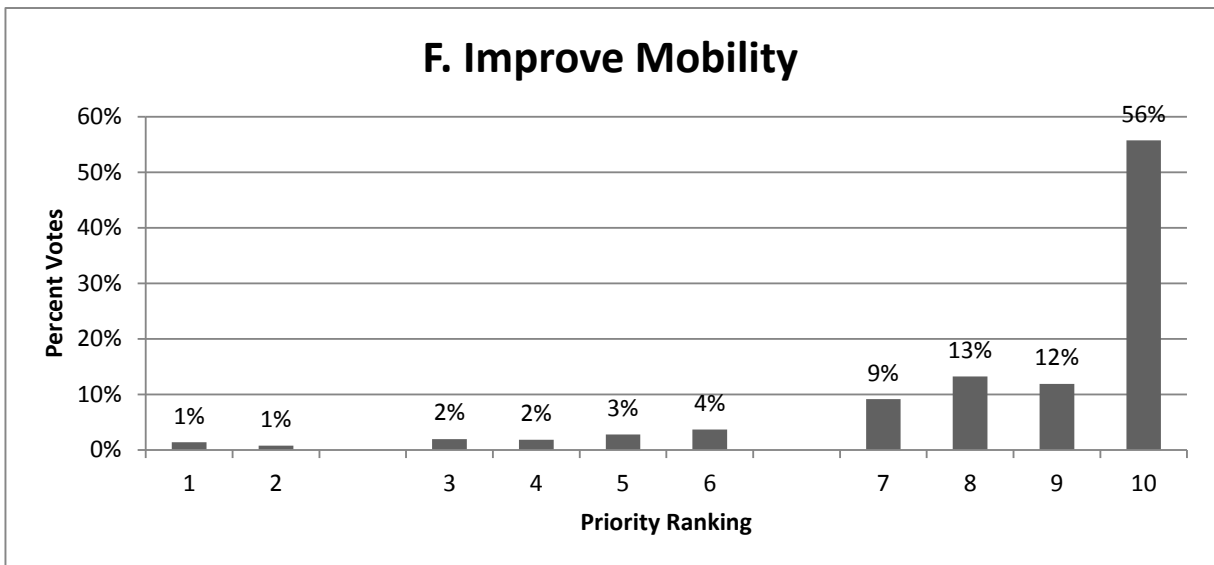
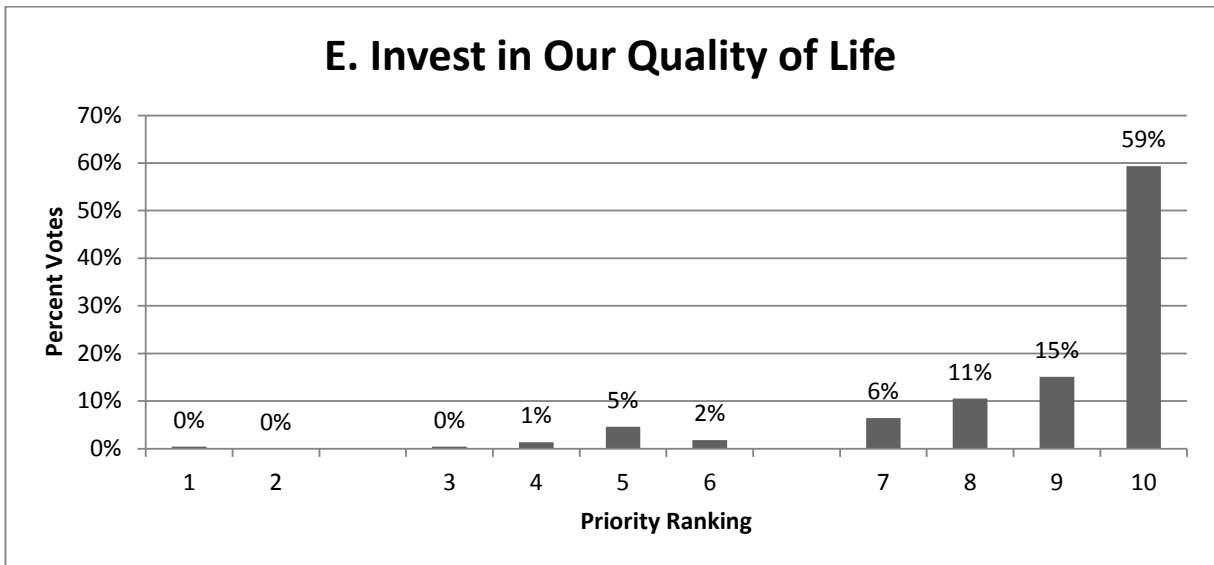
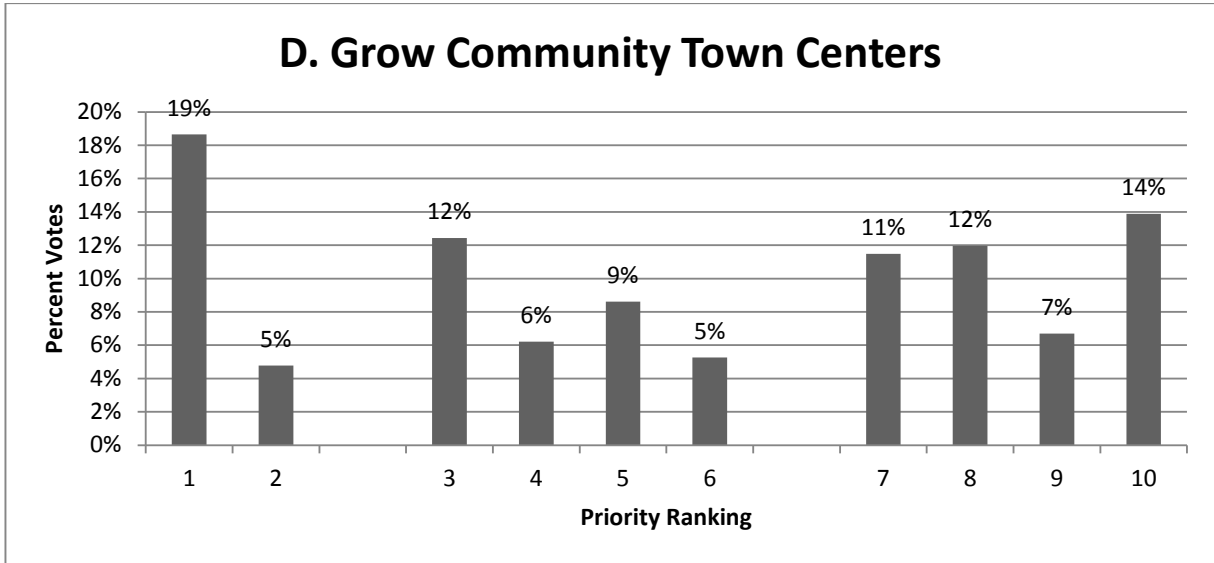


### B. Expand Infrastructure that Furthers Our Vision for Growth and Development



### C. Attract Professional Jobs





## GUIDING OUR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PART II

### IN-PERSON DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY BOARDS

*Purpose:* To determine the intensity of residential, town center/commercial, and business/industry development in each character area in Forsyth County.

*Materials:* Eleven intensity boards containing categories for business/industry, town center/commercial, and residential development.

*Summary:* The exercise was structured to help community members visualize the level of development intensity of each of the selected images. Based on the results of the design-based table exercises and individual maps collected at the Design Workshops as well as guidance from the Steering Committee, the planning team created baseline development intensity "sliders" to present to the community. Essentially, these sliders were scales that corresponded to the projected intensity of development. Implementation Workshop participants placed dots at the intensity level they felt was most appropriate for each character area; each participant was given one dot to use for every development category in each character area (three per board).

*Results:* The following data represents how the public's response was concurrent with or differed from the planning team's baseline intensity sliders (either Increase, No Change, or Decrease).

#### ***Town Center and Commercial***

*Increase:* McFarland, Haw Creek, Chestatee/Jot Em Down, and Sawnee Mountain

*No Change:* South GA 400, Lanier, Campground, and Northwest Forsyth

*Decrease:* South Forsyth, The Village, and North GA 400

While several areas increased or decreased slightly, the only considerable deviation was the increased intensity in Haw Creek. The increase in Sawnee Mountain also was slightly above the average change in comparison to other character areas.

#### ***Business and Industry***

*Increase:* Haw Creek, Lanier, Campground, Chestatee/Jot Em Down, and Sawnee Mountain

*No Change:* South GA 400 and Northwest Forsyth

*Decrease:* McFarland, South Forsyth, The Village, and North GA 400

Although several areas slightly increased or decreased in intensity, the only considerable deviation was the increase in Haw Creek and Chestatee/Jot Em Down.



**Residential**

Increase: Haw Creek, Lanier, Campground, Chestatee/Jot Em Down, and Sawnee Mountain

No Change: Northwest Forsyth

Decrease: McFarland, South Forsyth, The Village, South GA 400, and North GA 400

While several areas increased or decreased slightly, considerable deviations were only found in the decreased intensities in South Forsyth, South GA 400, and North GA 400 paired with the increased intensity in Haw Creek and Chestatee/Jot Em Down.

**CHARACTER AREA INPUT FROM ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOPS**

The method in which data was collected online differed slightly than the in-person workshops. Each character area board had two questions asking participants to decide where they agreed and disagreed with the intensities placed on the sliders. These results were quantified along with the results received at the in-person workshops.

**Residential Development**

The majority of responses indicated a general intolerance for residential intensities higher than two to three units an acre. There was a strong contingent of participants who wanted little to no residential development in the McFarland and South Forsyth character areas. The majority felt that any new residential should be placed generally north of Highway 20 at a density of 2 units and acre or less.

**Business and Industry Development**

Generally, across the board, the presented business and industry development intensities were received well with the caveat that they should not include new residential development to support them.

**Town Center and Commercial Development**

The online participants did not form a consistent middle ground on commercial development. One large group of participants agreed with the intensities of commercial development as long as the residential density was lowered, while the other group felt there was no need for additional commercial development.



## SUMMARY OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Participants broke into three smaller groups for a discussion of the identified priorities for economic development, housing, and transportation. Project team members facilitated the discussion and documented comments on chart paper. The input received from this session will be used to refine the priorities for the Comprehensive Plan and focus topics for policy recommendations. The draft priorities were numbered for the sole purpose of creating ease of reference):

### **Economic Development Priorities**

1. Decrease the County's dependence on residential taxes by attracting more businesses.
2. Increase the amount of cultural arts and entertainment opportunities in the County.
3. Leverage and expand the fiber optics network.
4. Establish a more formal role for economic development as a part of the County's administration.
5. Facilitate the clustering of tech businesses in the southern portion of the County.
6. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to increase and enhance opportunities for visitors to enjoy Forsyth County.
7. Enhance and improve local shopping opportunities.
8. Encourage the development of town centers as nodes of economic activity.

### **Housing Priorities**

1. Allow for and support development of workforce housing to accommodate school teachers, police officers, hospital workers, entry-level professional workers etc.
2. Allow for and encourage housing that facilitates aging in place.
3. Update the residential zoning districts in the Unified Development Code to reflect the vision for future housing identified in the *Comprehensive Plan*.
4. Pursue diversification of number of bedrooms per housing unit in new developments to support a multi-generational community.
5. Establish high standards for the design of new housing developments.
6. Ensure that new housing developments pay their "fair share" of associated infrastructure costs.

### **Transportation Priorities**

1. Increase road capacity to address current needs and anticipated growth.
2. Improve east-west connectivity.
3. Expand alternatives to GA400 for north-south connectivity.
4. Add active transportation improvements in appropriate locations.
5. Provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicles for traveling to and from jobs both by County residents and workers.
6. Increase multi-modal connectivity within town centers where jobs and commercial uses are concentrated.
7. Maintain road quality through ongoing maintenance activities.

8. Ensure that transportation investments are implemented in a way that maximizes benefits to the community, such as the incorporation of streetscape design and improved aesthetics.
9. Create value by encouraging development that reduces dependence on frequent car trips.

There was also an opportunity to give feedback on issues not directly related to the content of the Comprehensive Plan, but which had come up repeatedly throughout the public involvement process and will be documented in the plan. These issues were termed Quality of Life, and the identified priorities were:

### **Quality of Life**

1. Preserve Forsyth County's cost of living.
2. Enhance and expand the park system.
3. Create joint use opportunities among the schools, parks, and other institutional uses.
4. Create greater unity between northern and southern portions of Forsyth County.
5. Accommodate needs and preferences of new residents as they move to the County, including an increased diversity of ethnicities.
6. Protect and provide access to our County's unique natural assets, including Lake Lanier, Sawnee Mountain, Chattahoochee and Etowah Rivers, etc.
7. Ensure that every new initiative in the County contributes positively to developing a strong sense of place.

After the discussion, participants were invited to take part in a mapping activity to tie their comments to specific locations in the County. They were asked to focus on issues related to housing types and active transportation, topics that had not been resolved in previous meetings and warranted additional discussion. They placed icons and drew on the map to indicate appropriate locations for mixed-use with housing (the exact type of housing was unspecified), townhomes, multi-family housing, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and multiuse trails. The participant input from all discussion groups is combined and illustrated in Figure 1 below.



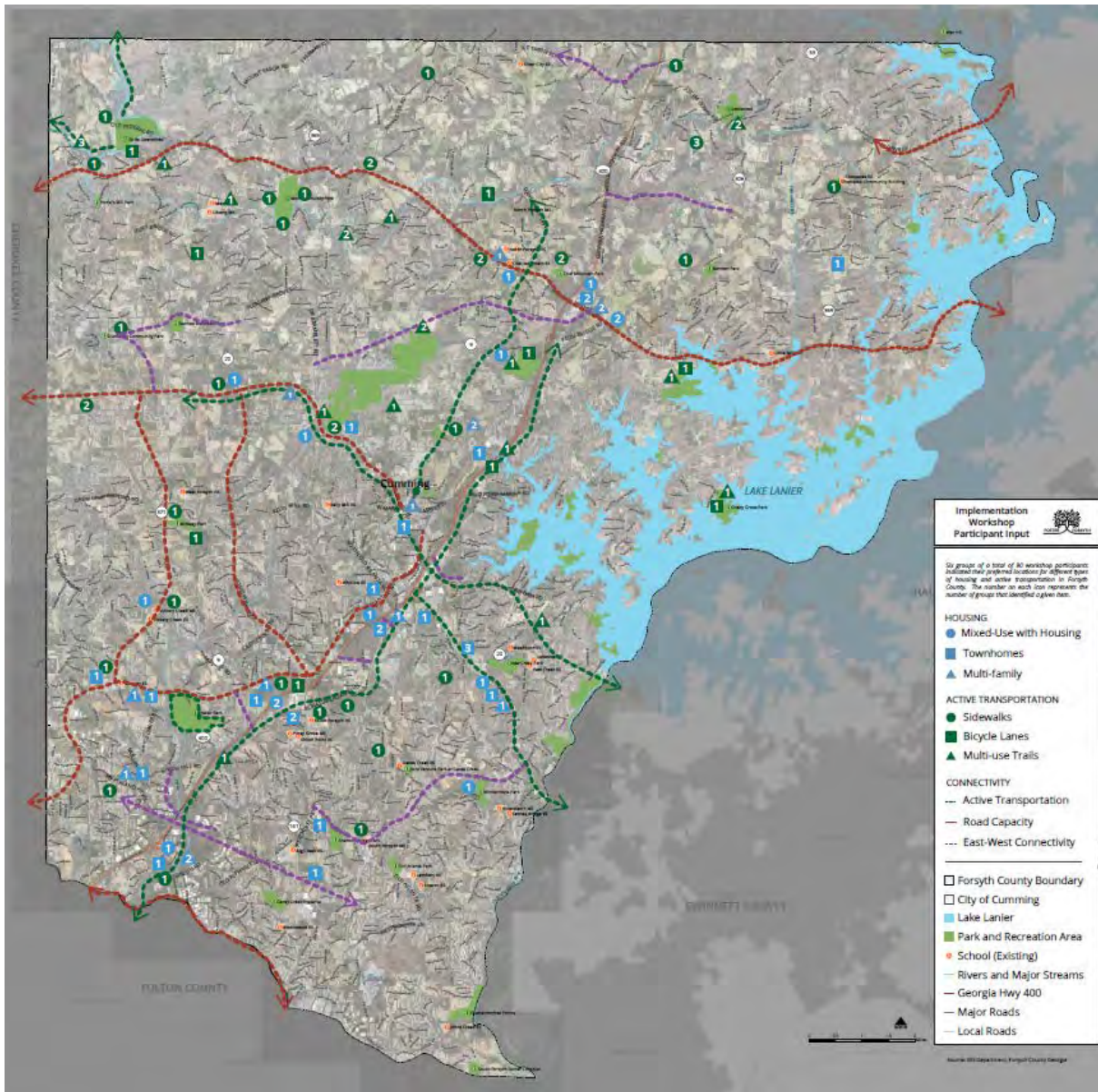


Figure 1. Mapping activity participant input

## MEETING CONCLUSION

Participants were dismissed and comment forms were collected at the end of the discussion group sessions. Project team members and County staff remained to discuss additional questions from participants.

## ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

Following the in-person Implementation Workshops, an online version with comparable material was made available through the Foster Forsyth website. Participants were briefed on the meeting content, and then gave their feedback on the same topics that were discussed in person. They indicated their preferred vision statements and ranked the importance of the economic development, housing, and transportation priorities; online results were calculated in conjunction with in-person votes. (*See Welcome Activities section above*). Next participants gave feedback on character areas; input is summarized on page 9. Finally, participants reviewed the drafted priorities and indicated if there were any priorities they would add to the list or any they would recommend modifying or removing from the proposed set. Prevalent themes from participant comments are listed below:

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### ADD/AFFIRM

- Emphasize high-paying jobs, not retail industry
- Continue to encourage a limited amount of industrial use
- Focus on infill and reducing vacancies before constructing new development
- Promote responsible growth
- Require impact fees to finance new residential and commercial development
- Favor low-density development
- Attract and support the tech industry
- Promote the County as a destination for large, youth sporting events
- Expand dining opportunities
- Discourage strip commercial development
- Support local stores over chain retailers
- Encourage local food sourcing, such as farmers markets or mini-farms
- Consider SPLOST funding as an alternative to generating revenue by attracting businesses

#### REMOVE/MODIFY

- Do not limit the tech cluster to the southern portion of the County
- Do not recommend an independent Department of Economic Development for the County; the Cumming-Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce already provides economic development services

### HOUSING

#### ADD/AFFIRM

- Maintain rural living choices
- Prohibit clear cutting and embrace the natural topography
- Slow the development of residential subdivisions
- Embrace aging in place
- Maintain areas with predominantly large lot, single-family homes



- Improve transparency of Board decisions and limit ties between commissioners and developers

#### **REMOVE/MODIFY**

- Prioritize low-density, single-family residential
- Minimize multi-family development
- Do not prioritize workforce housing
- Preference for affordable, single-family homes rather than apartments
- Require residential impact fees to pay for schools and transportation improvements
- Exercise greater scrutiny when considering variance requests
- Establish standards for design quality
- Consider establishing an urban growth boundary or another mechanism to protect natural areas

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

##### **ADD/AFFIRM**

- Reduce congestion throughout, especially on Highway 9
- Increase emphasis on sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails connecting to recreational areas and town centers
- Expand the Big Creek Greenway
- Complete projects underway before beginning new ones
- Identify a funding structure for recommended improvements
- Require developers to pay transportation impact fees
- Improve traffic law enforcement
- Create more alternative routes through a redundant street network
- Time traffic signals to improve efficiency
- Reduce speeds
- Bring MARTA up GA 400

##### **REMOVE/MODIFY**

- Clarify the meaning of multimodal transportation and active transportation
- Do not bring MARTA into the County

#### **QUALITY OF LIFE**

##### **ADD/AFFIRM**

- Focus on safety and education
- Preserve rural areas
- Increase open space and opportunities for outdoor recreation

##### **REMOVE/MODIFY**

- Do not adopt a policy of diversification, allow the market to decide

## **B.3 COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY**

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## COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

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### OVERVIEW

A web-based community survey was carried out during the visioning phase of Foster Forsyth to collect input from community members' on vision and priorities for Forsyth County's future and to complement input being collected at the April 2016 Visioning Workshops, May 2016 Design Workshops, and June 2016 Implementation Workshops as well as other community input channels. The community survey was open for approximately one month, between April 25 and May 22, 2016. The survey was advertised via a variety of methods, including the project website and outreach list, the County's monthly newsletter, the County's Facebook posts and press releases, and via public meetings and committee meetings. The survey was available online for all interested community members to participate and provide input, and as such, results should be viewed as a snapshot of the perspectives of participants rather than a full representative sample of all voices within the Forsyth County community.

*Input collected via the survey is being considered in coordination with other input collected via the planning process to shape the update to the Forsyth County Comprehensive Plan.*

### SNAPSHOT OF PARTICIPANTS

**Total number of respondents:** 4,806 (fewer respondents completed each subsequent question throughout the survey); 4,699 of the participants are residents of Forsyth County

**Relationship to County (Question 1):** 98 percent of participants live in Forsyth

**Age (Question 22):** Under Age 15 (0.1 percent), Age 15-18 (0.4 percent), Age 19-24 (0.9 percent), Age 25-31 (3.6 percent), Age 32- 45 (37.3 percent), Age 46-60 (36.4 percent), Over age 60 (21.5 percent)

**Gender (Questions 23):** Female (53.1 percent), Male (44.2 percent), Preferred not to answer (2.7 percent)

**Plan to live in Forsyth County five years from now (Question 20):** Yes (85 percent), No (15 percent)



## Gender and Age Comparisons to Population

To better understand how well survey participants compared to County residents, age distributions of the current population with the age distributions of the survey respondents, age groups from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2014 one-year estimates were compared against survey participants. See Table 1 below. Over 70 percent of those surveyed were between the ages of 32-60 years of age, but only 38 percent of the total population is between ages 35 and 59 years of age according to the 2014 ACS. Therefore, the survey disproportionately represents the opinions of the older residents within the community versus the young professionals (ages 19-31 for Survey, ages 20-34 for ACS) or high schoolers/young workers (ages 15-18 for Survey, ages 15-19 for ACS). High schoolers/young workers make up 7.8 percent of the Forsyth County residents, yet 0.4 percent participated in the survey. Young professionals make up 14.4 percent of County residents, but only 4.5 percent of young professionals participated.\* These differences are important to take into account when considering the implications of survey results and their application to future policy development.

\*Survey age group distributions and ACS age groups distributions do not fully match.

Figure 1: Gender and Age Distribution, 2014 Population Estimates and Survey Participants

	Percent of Total Population	Percent Survey Participants	
<b>SEX AND AGE</b>			<b>SEX AND AGE</b>
2014 Total Population	204,302	4,806	Total Surveyed
Male	49.2%	44.24%	Male
Female	50.8%	53.10%	Female
		2.65%	Prefer not to answer
Under 15 years	23.5%	0.06%	Under 15 years
15 to 19 years	7.8%	0.42%	15 to 18 years
20 to 24 years	4.5%	0.87%	19 to 24 years
25 to 34 years	9.9%	3.64%	25 to 31 years
35 to 44 years	16.7%	37.34%	32 to 45 years
45 to 59 years	21.7%	36.38%	46 to 60 years
60 years and over	15.80%	21.47%	Over age 60

Source: 2014 American Community Survey estimates; 2016 Foster Forsyth Community Survey responses

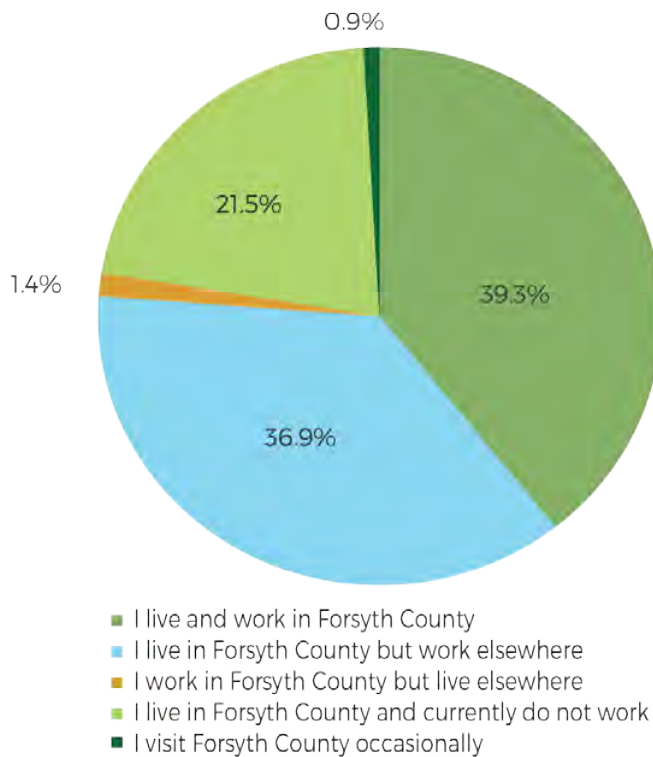
## SURVEY SUMMARY ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

#### Question 1: Which of the following best describes your relationship to Forsyth County?

Most respondents, 39 percent, live and work in Forsyth County, followed closely by 37 percent of respondents who live in Forsyth, but work elsewhere (see Figure 2). Forsyth County’s 2015 population estimate is 212,438; the 4,699 resident participants represent 2.2 percent of the total resident population.

Figure 2: Relationship to Forsyth County



**Question 2: If you live in Forsyth County now, what part of the County do you live in? Please reference the map below.**

Most respondents (48 percent) live in Area 1 (southeast portion) of Forsyth County. The next largest represented group is those participants living in Area 2, the southwest quadrant of Forsyth County (26 percent). When compared to the 2010 U.S. Census counts, it is evident that voices from the southeast quadrant of the county are over-represented in the survey, whereas voices from the northwest and northeast quadrants are underrepresented.

Figure 3: Residential Location

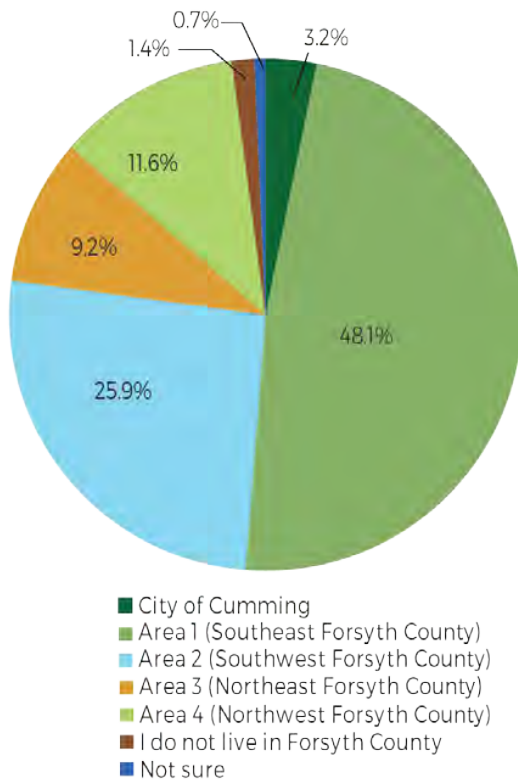


Figure 3: Map of Four County Quadrants



Figure 4: Participants by County Quadrant Compared to 2010 Population

Quadrant	2010 Total Population	Percentage	2016 Survey Participants*	Percentage
Southeast	57,468	33%	2300	51%
Southwest	48,067	27%	1238	27%
Northeast	32,091	18%	438	10%
Northwest	37,885	22%	554	12%
TOTAL	175,511	100%	4530	100%

Source: 2010 Census Blocks, Total Population; 2016 Community Survey Results

\*The survey participants column does not include those living in the City of Cumming (153 respondents), those that do not live in Forsyth County (67 respondents), and those that answered "Not Sure" (35 respondents).

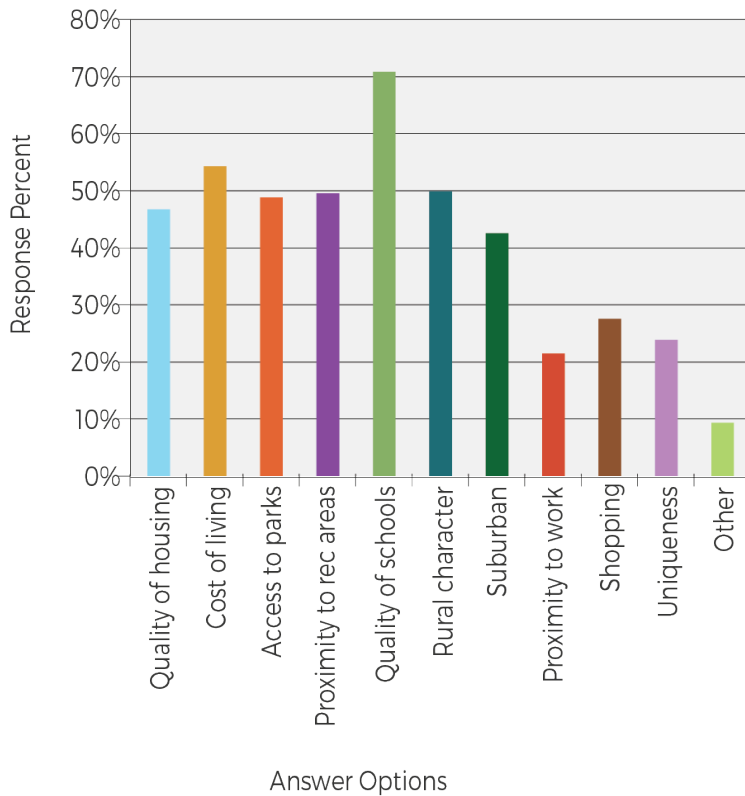
**VISIONING QUESTIONS**

**Question 3: What do you like most about Forsyth County? *Select all that apply.***

The quality of schools was rated the most common reason for liking Forsyth County and second was the cost of living, followed by access to parks, rural character, and proximity to regional recreation. Participants were able to select “other” to write in an additional option, should their desired answer choice being missing. Common topics participants spoke to when they selected “other” included the following:

- Importance of natural, open green space, rural character and preference for larger lots
- Low taxes (property tax breaks, senior exemptions, no school tax)
- Safety, little crime, and quiet neighborhoods
- Mention of small town feel and importance sense of community
- Place for families to reside and living here for generations past/present
- Concern about overcrowding of schools and increased traffic negatively impacting the quality of life

Figure 5: Like Most about Forsyth County



**Question 4: Imagine it is the year 2037. In a perfect future, how is Forsyth County different or the same as it is today? Please limit your response to 1-2 sentences.**

There were multiple future visions for Forsyth County, as this was an open-ended question that prompted many ideas to be shared. Concerns for reducing traffic and maintaining quality schools, while preserving green space were most often considered for future visioning. This is reflected by the word cloud showing most frequently used terms (Figure 6).

The following are common themes reflected in answer choices:

- Preservation of open green spaces and trees, nature trails, parks
- Maintain rural, small town character/managed growth strategy
- Downtown center with local amenities
- Better traffic flow from improved roadways
- Concern for over development and high density of housing
- Increased traffic
- Over-crowded population
- Multi-modal access: mass transit, and safe to walk or bike

As demonstrated below in Figure 4, there were a variety of responses that referenced how participants would or would not like to see the County evolve into.

- Gwinnett County was most often referenced as a lesson learned. Participants would like to slow development to avoid outcomes experienced in Gwinnett County, including traffic, over population, loss of large lot developments, and limited green space.
- Participants would like to see Forsyth County maintain and develop more of a small town atmosphere while it continues to develop. This includes maintaining rural character such as cows, trees, and pasture, as identified by one participant as well as small local businesses, including restaurants and shops.
- When referencing a perfect future, participants often reference reduced traffic and non-over-crowded, high rated schools. In many cases, people referenced no change at all.
- People generally would like to see an active downtown that revives Roswell, including walkable shopping and restaurants. Others saw evolving into Roswell as a negative, reflecting too much growth, development and traffic.

Figure 6: Word Cloud of Imagine It is the Year 2037



The Word Cloud above shows the most important words and phrases respondents used in their answer. The larger the font size, the more important or significant the word.

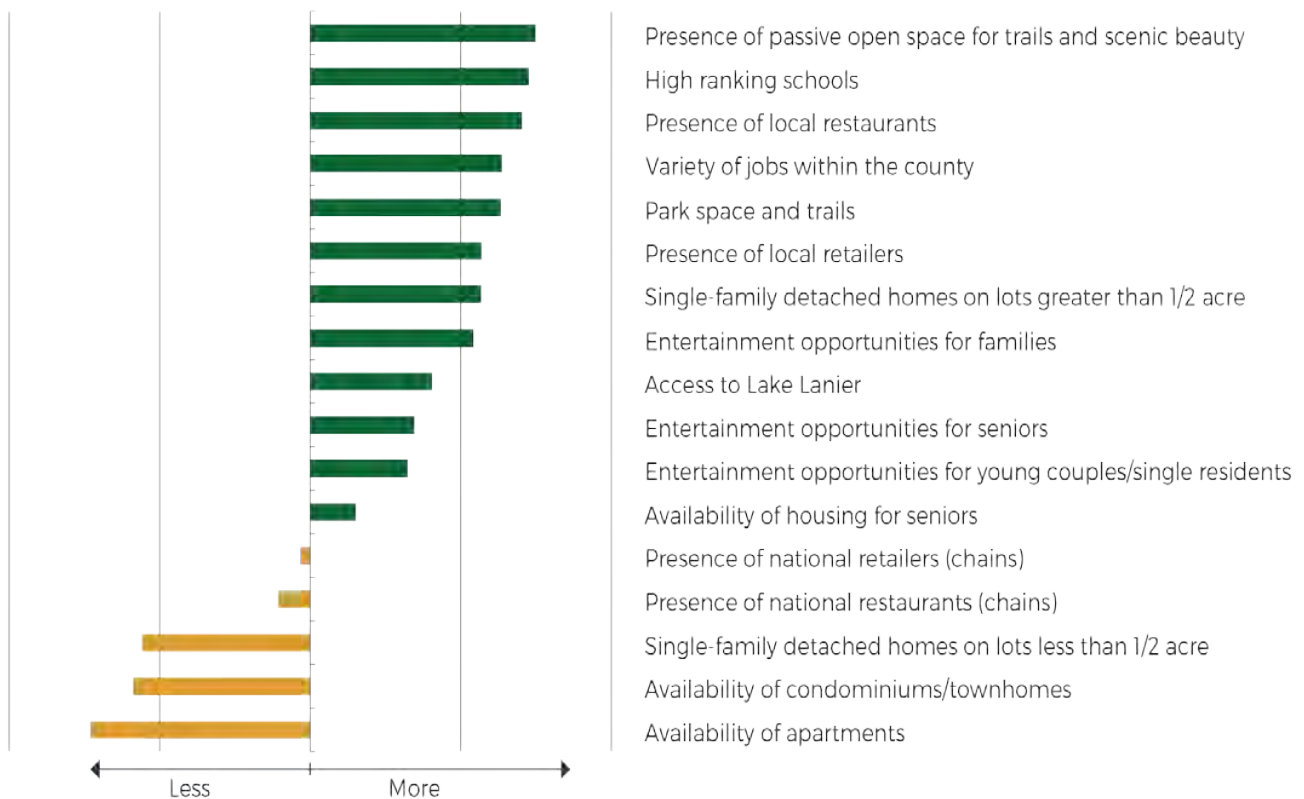


## LAND USE QUESTIONS

**Question 5: Which of the following are important to Forsyth County's future success? For each, please indicate whether you think the item should be more or less available in Forsyth County.**

Survey responses demonstrated a preference by respondents to increase preservation of open green spaces, maintain the scenic, rural character of the County, and to increase the presence of park space and trails, whereas there was opposition to increasing higher-density residences. Despite the limited appetite for high intensity uses, participants also found that increasing the presences of local retailers and restaurants, entertainment opportunities for families, and variety of jobs as important elements to th County's future success.

Figure 7: Elements Important to Forsyth Future Success (More or Less Available)





**Question 6: As the County continues to grow in population, what investments should be considered to help mitigate the effects of increased use of the County’s transportation network? *Select all that apply.***

Almost 75 percent of respondents selected widen GA 400 (the most popular answer), followed by widen other major roadways (62 percent).

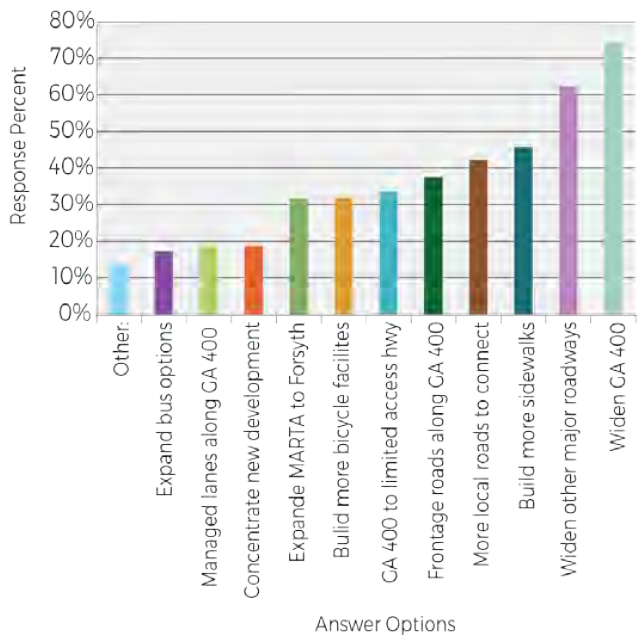
Response options that 30 percent or greater of participants selected include the following:

- Widen GA 400 (74.3 percent)
- Widen other major roadways (62.4 percent)
- Build more sidewalks (45.7 percent)
- Add more local road access (42.2 percent)
- Add frontage roads (37.4 percent)
- Upgrade GA 400 (33.4 percent)
- Build more bike facilities (31.8 percent)
- Expand MARTA rail to Forsyth (31.5 percent)

Participants also had the option to select “other” and write in a different option. Common themes reflected by the open-ended responses include the following:

- Opposition to expansion of MARTA, although a small contingent of respondents were in support of MARTA rail expansion and more bike trails and sidewalks.
- Opposition to continued development growth, fearing that growth is also clear cutting trees.

Figure 8: Preferred Transportation Investments



**Questions 7- 10: Referring to the map below, what types of development do you think are best for each area? Select all that apply**

Respondents indicated preference for similar developments across the four quadrants of the County. Across each of the four quadrants, the top three types of development people thought were most appropriate were the same: parks and recreation, open space, and single-family homes on lots greater than ½ acre. Each of these was selected by 50 percent or more of participants. Mixed-use development was viewed as slightly more appropriate in southeast Forsyth compared to the other quadrants. Shops and retail were seen as slightly more appropriate in northwest Forsyth when compared to the other three quadrants. There was more interest in placing light industrial in the northwest quadrant of Forsyth County than in the other three quadrants. Offices were seen as least appropriate in the northeast quadrant.

Figure 10: Map of County Quadrants

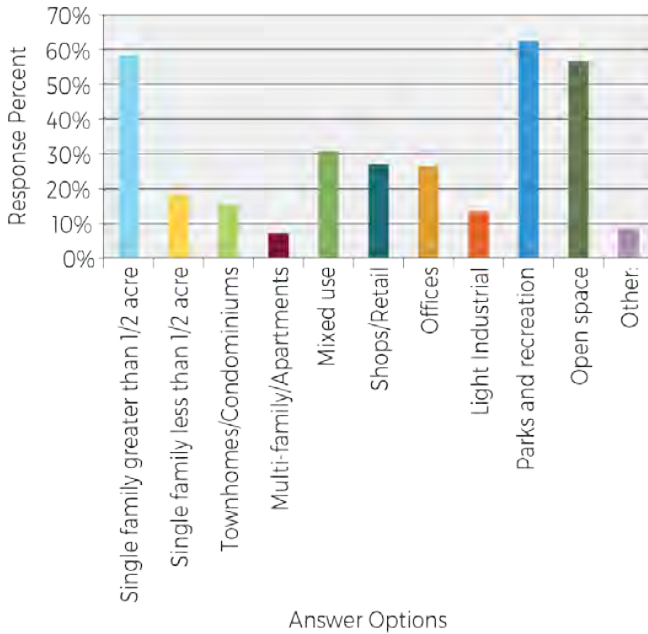


Figure 9: Summary of Development Preferences by Quadrant of Forsyth County

	Q7 (Area 1, SE)	Q8 (Area 2, SW)	Q9 (Area 3, NE)	Q8 (Area 4, NW)
Availability of single-family detached homes on lots <b>greater</b> than 1/2 acre.	58.2%	62.9%	65.7%	68.8%
Availability of single-family detached homes on lots <b>smaller</b> than 1/2 acre.	17.9%	19.8%	20.6%	22.5%
Townhomes/condominiums	15.4%	15.4%	15.8%	16.2%
Apartments	7.1%	7.4%	6.9%	8.8%
Mixed use (combination of housing, retail and/or office)	30.7%	29.4%	25.2%	27.4%
Retail	27.1%	29.5%	28.1%	31.7%
Offices	26.3%	23.9%	19.0%	23.2%
Light industrial	13.4%	16.2%	17.0%	24.3%
Parks and recreation	62.4%	61.9%	68.7%	66.0%
Open space	56.7%	55.2%	59.7%	59.0%
Other:	8.3%	6.5%	5.4%	5.5%

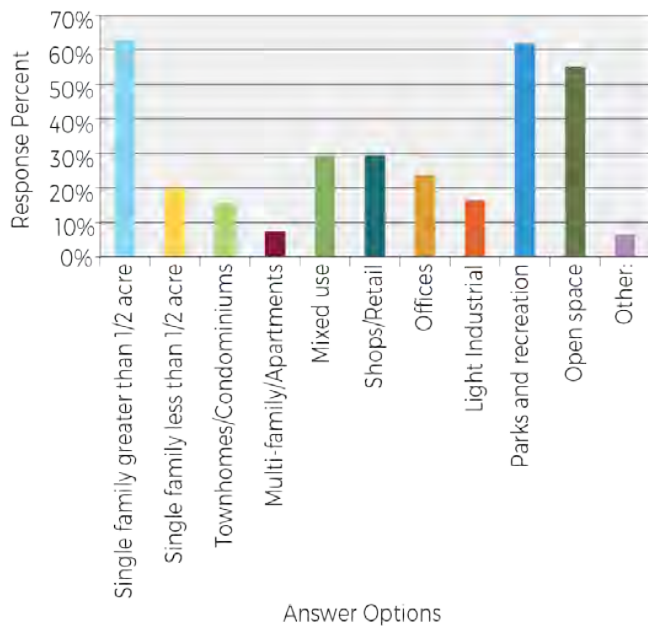
**Question 7: Referring to the map below (Area 1- southeast Forsyth County), what types of development do you think are best for this area?**

Figure 10: Summary of Development Preferences (Area 1, southeast Forsyth County)



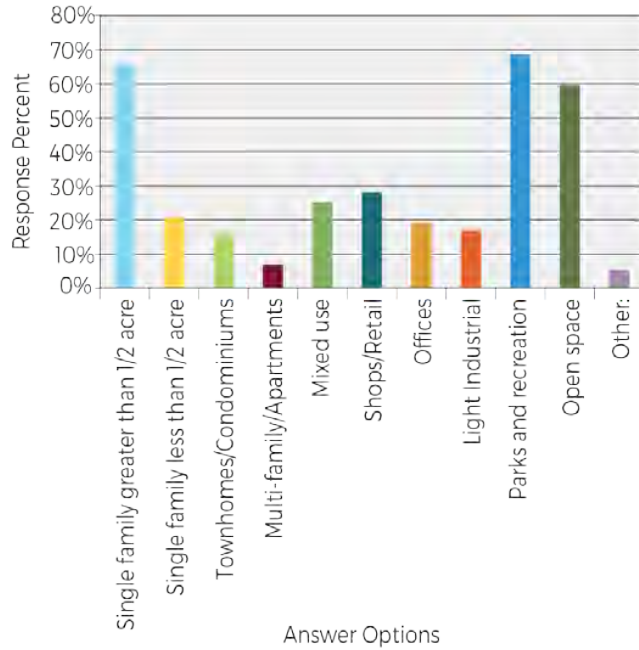
**Question 8: Referring to the map below (Area 2- southwest Forsyth County), what types of development do you think are best for this area?**

Figure 11: Summary of Development Preferences (Area 2, southwest Forsyth County)



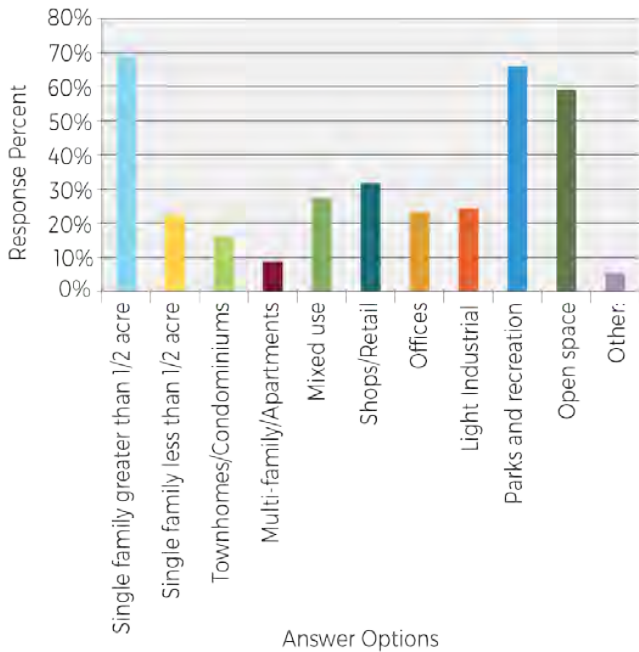
**Question 9: Referring to the map below (Area 3- northeast Forsyth County), what types of development do you think are best for this area?**

Figure 12: Summary of Development Preferences (Area 3, northeast Forsyth County)



**Question 10: Referring to the map below (Area 4- northwest Forsyth County), what types of development do you think are best for this area?**

Figure 13: Summary of Development Preferences (Area 4, northwest Forsyth County)



## HOUSING QUESTIONS

### Question 11: Development of housing in the County should: (select yes, no or unsure)

This question was designed to gain a better understanding on how community members would like to see the County's housing stock evolve in the future. A majority of respondents do not want to see a broader range nor a higher intensity of housing types and prefer to maintain rural character by allowing for single-family detached homes on lots greater than ½ acre and by preservation of open green space.

#### Yes, should provide:

- Include incentives to preserve existing open spaces and agricultural lands where possible (94.2 percent)
- Maintain the look and character of surrounding residential neighborhoods (93.3 percent)

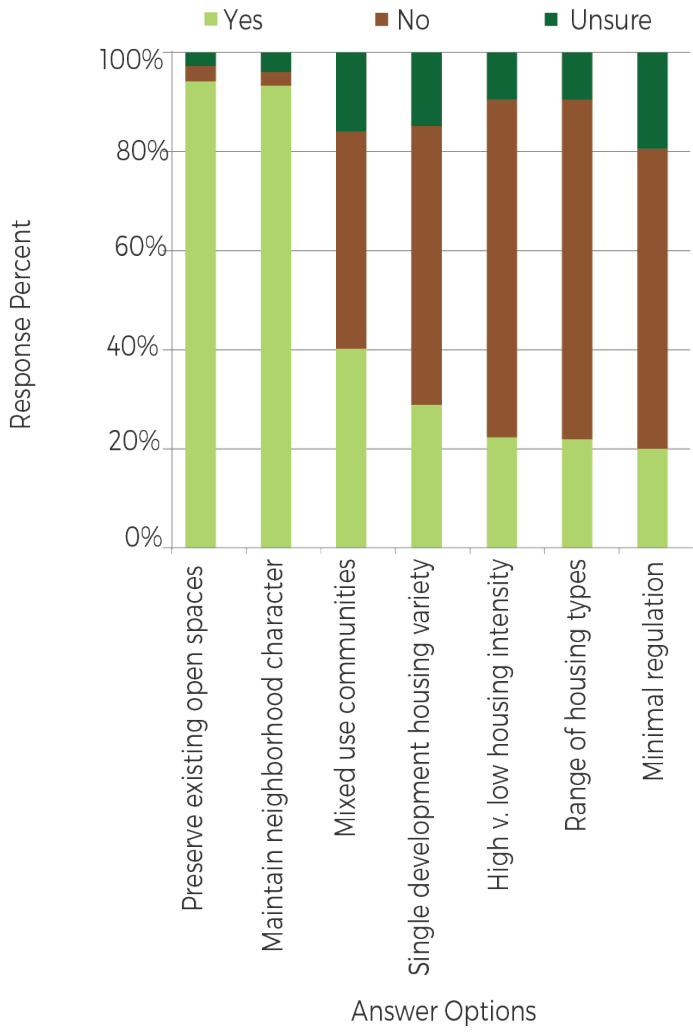
#### No, should not:

- Provide a broader range of housing types (68.6 percent)
- Focus higher intensity types in and around commercial centers and lower intensity housing types in areas that are away from commercial centers (68.1 percent)
- Incorporate a variety of housing types within a single development (56.2 percent)
- Be regulated as little as possible (60.5 percent)

There were mixed responses with regards to mixed-use communities with opportunities for retail and/or office uses integrated into one development, as 40.2 percent of respondents said yes; 43.7 percent said no; and 16.1 percent were unsure.



Figure 14: Housing Development Preferences



**Question 12: What do you think is the right mix of housing types in Forsyth County?  
Please indicate, in boxes to the right, using percentages that add up to 100 percent total.**

Survey participants prefer lower density housing types with little or no housing development devoted to multi-family structures such as townhomes, condominiums, and apartments.

- Single family detached homes lots greater than ½ acre:
  - 67 percent of respondents want this type of single-family detached homes to make up 40 percent to 80 percent of the housing stock
    - 20 percent of respondents want it to be half of housing stock available
  - 7.5 percent of respondents want it to be all of housing stock
- Single family detached homes lots smaller than ½ acre:
  - 61.7 percent of respondents want this type of single-family detached homes to encompass 10 percent to 30 percent of the housing stock; and
    - 20 percent of respondents alone want it to be one-fifth of housing stock
- Townhomes/condominiums:
  - 91.8 percent of respondents want Townhomes/Condos to make up 0-20 percent of the housing stock; and
    - 27.2 percent of respondents alone want Townhomes/Condos to be 10 percent of the housing stock.
- Apartments:
  - 88.9 percent of respondents want apartments to make up 0-10 percent of the housing stock available:
    - 31.4 percent want it to be none of the housing stock
    - 32.6 percent want it to be 5 percent of housing stock
    - 24.9 percent want it to be no more than 10 percent of housing stock



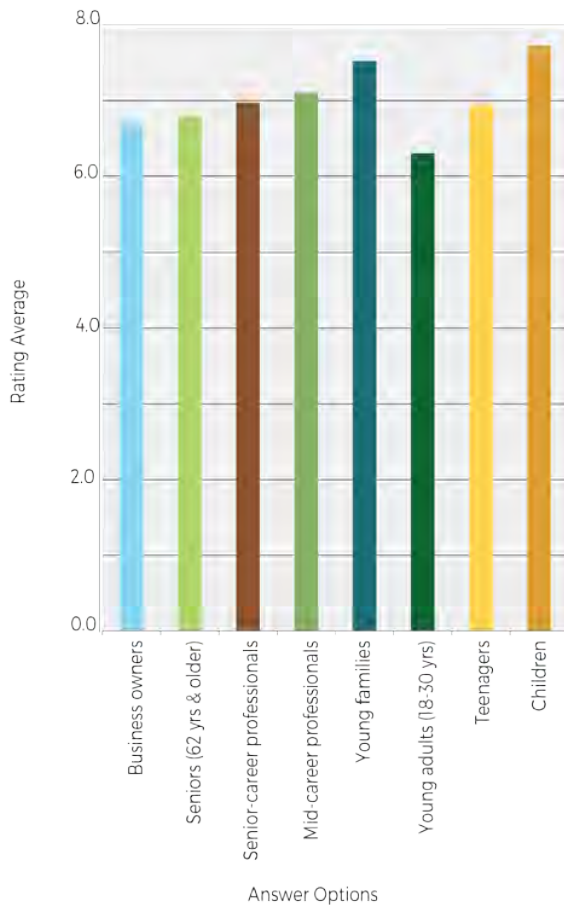
## QUALITY OF LIFE QUESTIONS

**Question 13: On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being fully meets needs), how well do you feel that Forsyth County meets the needs of:**

- Children (7.7 out of 10)
- Young families (7.5 out of 10)
- Mid-career professionals (7.1 out of 10)
- Senior-career professionals (7.0 out of 10)
- Teenagers (7.0 out of 10)
- Seniors, 62+ (6.8 out of 10)
- Business owners (6.7 out of 10)
- Young adults (6.3 out of 10)

The highest weighted ratings out of 10 were children and young families. No one community group appears to be highly underserved; however, young adults (ages 18-30) received the lowest rating of 6.3. Given that the survey primarily polls those respondents ages 35 and over, young adults and children might not have received an accurate rating. Those in that age group could potentially better rate if their needs are being met or not.

Figure 15: How Well Meet Needs of Community Members (Scale 1 to 10)

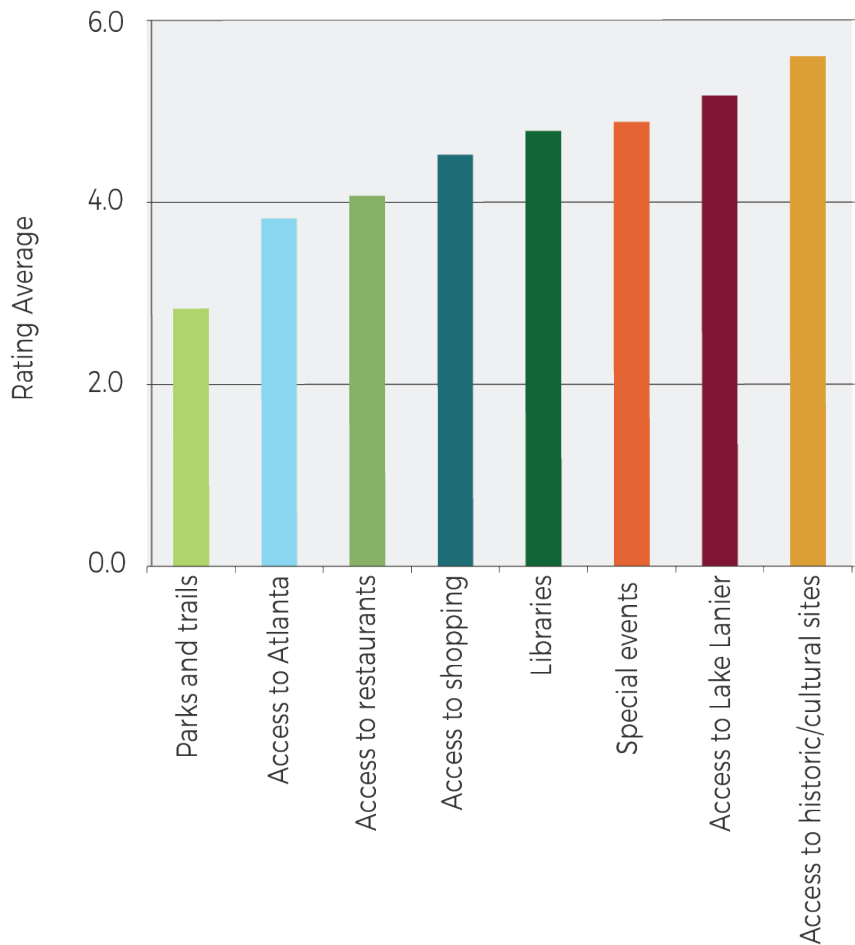




**Question 14: Please rank the community amenities below in order of importance (1 being the most important, 8 being the least important) to your household.**

Parks and trails was rated the most important amenity to survey participants; this aligns with other community visions of preserving open green space. Access to/ease of traveling to Atlanta and access to restaurants were also highly rated, but not as high as parks and trails access. Access to historic and cultural sites and Lake Lanier were rated the lowest in terms of importance to survey participants.

Figure 16: Ranked Community Amenities (1 most important; 8 least important)



Answer Options

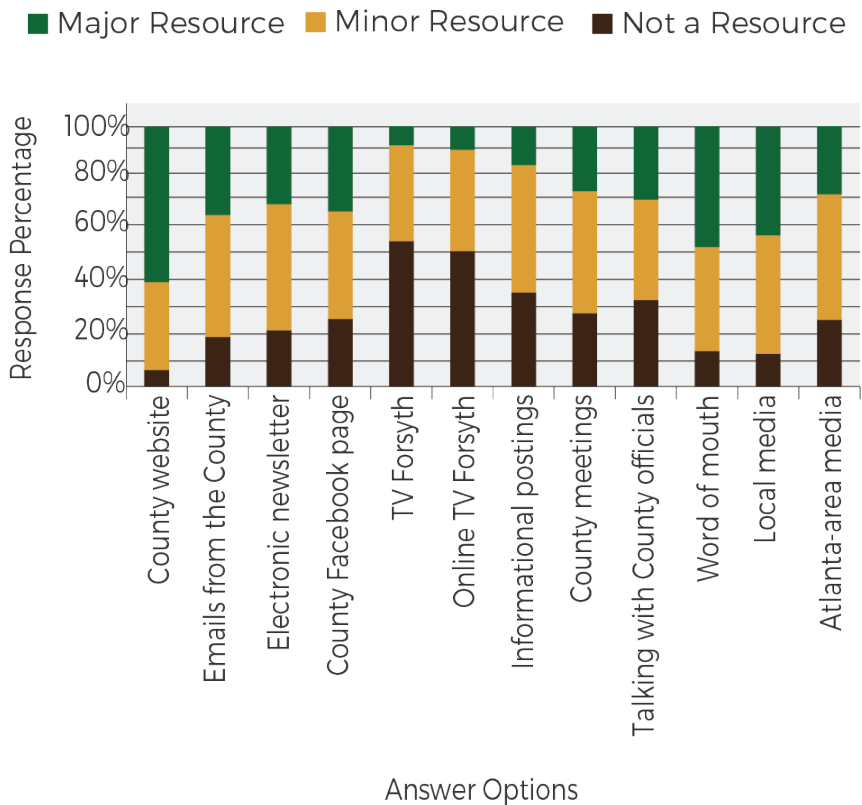


**Question 15: Please indicate how much of a resource, if all, you consider each of the following for obtaining information about the County Government?**

The greatest number of respondents rated electronic online platforms and in-person resources as the major resources for obtaining County government information. Some commented that they were not aware that some of these resources existed, namely the County Facebook page or suggested other community sources (NextDoor.com, community groups) from which they obtained information.

- A large majority of respondents utilize the County website as the major resource (59.8 percent) or minor resource (33.8 percent) to keep up and receive information.
- County emails, County electronic newsletter, County informational meetings, County government meetings, local media, and Atlanta-area media all serve as strong minor resources (with 46 to 49 percent using these as minor resources).
- The County Facebook page was mostly rated a minor resource.
- Word of mouth was rated as utilized resources, 45.7 percent major resource and 40.5 percent minor resource.
- Both platforms of the TV Forsyth are not majorly used by the residents as a resource.
- Local media was a strong major resource with 41.1 percent using it as a platform

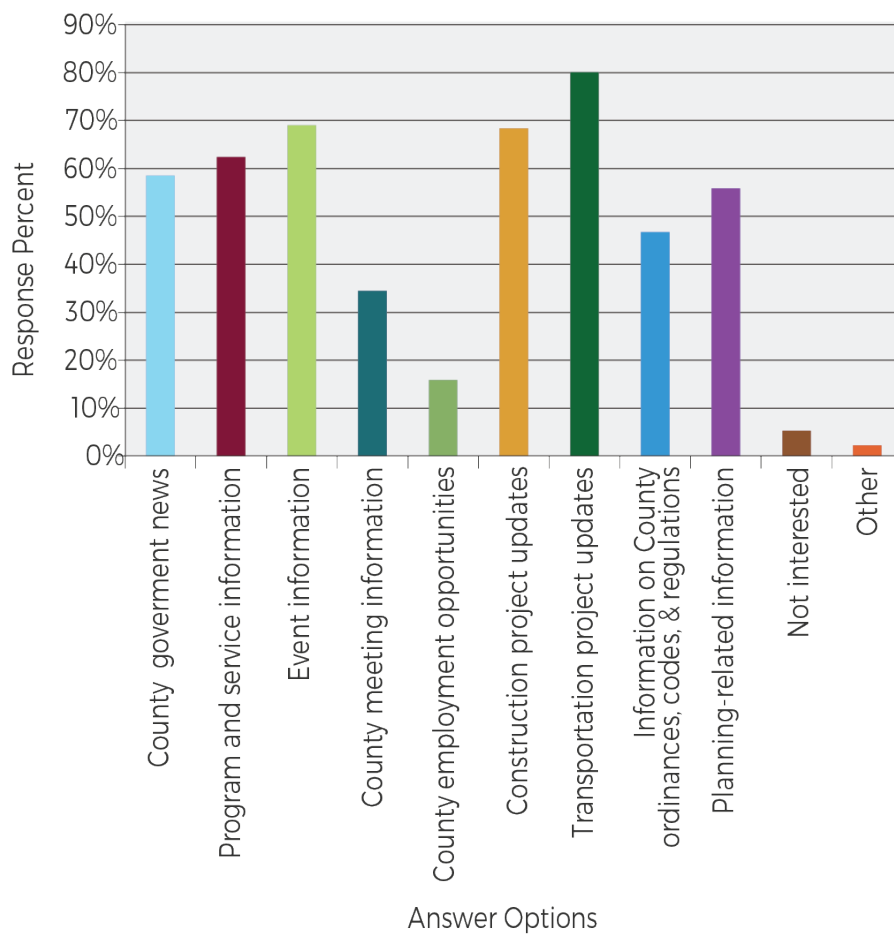
Figure 17: Resources for Obtaining County Government Information



**Question 16: What type(s) of County government information are you most interested in receiving? *Select all that apply.***

Respondents are most interested in transportation projects in Forsyth County. Information about events and County government construction projects were also highly rated. Additionally, a majority of respondents interested in receiving information on programs and services, County government news, and planning related information. Many of those respondents that selected "other" stated they wanted to know more about developments and strategic plans passed by commissioners/County officials.

Figure 18: County Government Information Most Interested in Receiving



**Question 17: In thinking about the future of Forsyth County, what are you most concerned about? Please rank the following from 1 being the item that most concerns you, to 12, the item that least concerns you.**

The highest concern of respondents was that “too much of the county is becoming developed” (46.7 percent rated this as a 1 on the 1 to 12 scale, with an average rating of 3.15). The majority of respondents are concerned with the increasing traffic congestion and the additional concerns of loss of open space /agricultural areas, and overcrowding of schools from these growing developments. Lack of affordable housing was rated the lowest concern with 29.1 percent of respondents rating it a 12 and an average ranking of 9.41.

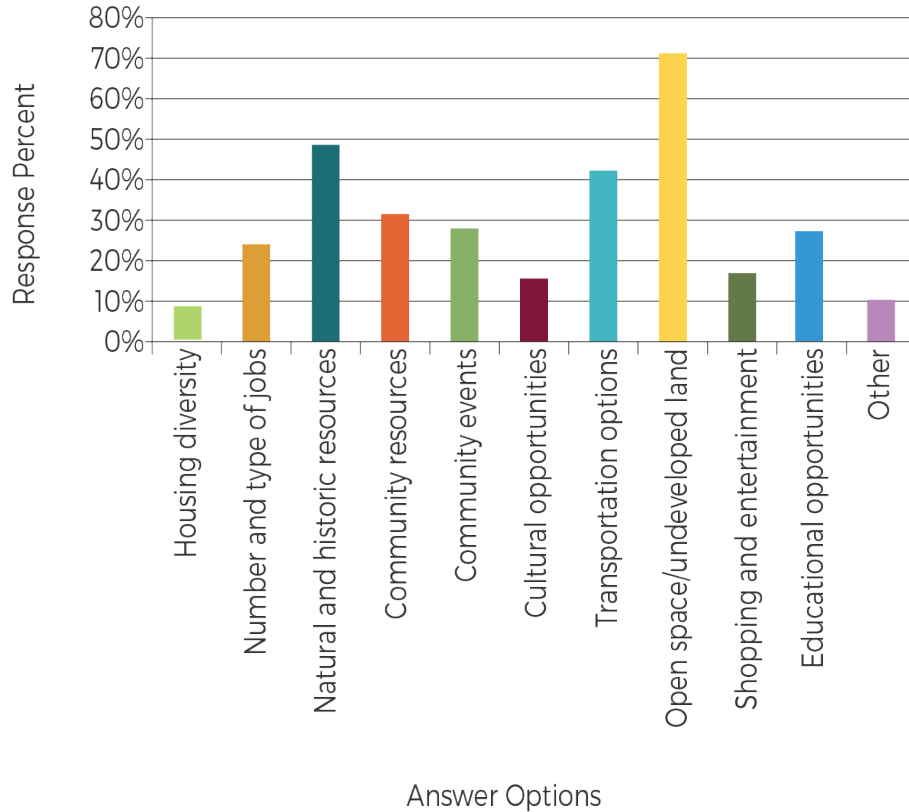
*Figure 19: Top Concerns for Forsyth County's Future*

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
Too much of the County becoming developed	3.15
Other roadways becoming too congested	4.22
GA 400 becoming too congested	4.49
Loss of open space/agricultural areas	4.72
School overcrowding	4.82
Increased commuting time to work	6.21
Loss of community character	6.78
Not enough recreational areas or activities	7.8
Change in general—keep Forsyth County the way it is now	8.06
The environmental quality of Lake Lanier	8.22
Lack of professional jobs	8.48
Lack of affordable housing in the County	9.41

**Question 18: In the next five years, what do you think Forsyth County should focus on? Please select your top three priorities.**

The largest majority of respondents (71.3 percent) felt that protecting open space/undeveloped land should be a top focus of the County in the next five years. Next in importance, in terms of participants selecting it as a top focus area, were protection of natural historic resources (48.7 percent) and expanding transportation options (42.2 percent).

Figure 20: Top Priorities for County's Focus in Next 5 Years



## PARTICIPANT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

### Question 19: How long have you lived in Forsyth County. Select One.

A majority of survey respondents have lived in Forsyth County for over 10 years (11-20 years and 21+ years, 52.6 percent); 21.6 percent have only lived in Forsyth for 1-5 years and are new to the area; and 22.1 percent of respondents have lived in Forsyth for 6-10 years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Forsyth County led population growth in Georgia and was 11<sup>th</sup> nationwide for rate of population growth from April 2010-July 2015, likely explaining that 21.6 percent of respondents have only lived there for 1 to 5 years.

Figure 21: Length of Time Living in Forsyth County

Answer Options	Response Percent
Less than 1 year	2.8%
1-5 years	21.6%
6-10 years	22.1%
11-20 years	38.4%
21+ years	14.2%
I do not live in Forsyth County	0.9%

### Question 20: Do you plan to live in Forsyth County 5 years from now?

The great majority of respondents (85 percent) plan to stay in Forsyth County. Comments indicate that those who do not expect to remain in the County would move due to traffic congestion, removal of open green space, lack of a strategic growth plan, and/or inability to find affordable housing. Many are also worried about overcrowding of schools and plan to leave the County when their children are out of high school. A small contingent mentioned a lack of social opportunities for adolescents.

Figure 22: Plan to Live in Forsyth County in 5 Years

Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	85.0%
No	15.0%

**Question 21: If you are not currently retired, do you plan to live in Forsyth County for your retirement?**

A majority of the respondents (63 percent) plan to retire in Forsyth or are already retired residents of Forsyth County. With this in mind, the County should plan to accommodate an aging population if this is the case.

*Figure 23: Plan to Retire in Forsyth County*

Answer Options	Response Percent
Yes	47.6%
No	37.0%
I'm Already Retired	15.4%

**Question 22: Age**

Most respondents are over the age of 32 and the survey may not be reflective of younger residents in the County. Just 3.6 percent of respondents were 25 to 31, compared to 32 to 45 (37.3 percent), 46 to 60 (36.4 percent), and over age 60 (21.5 percent).

*Figure 24: Survey Participant Age*

Answer Options	Response Percent
Under age 15	0.1%
Age 15-18	0.2%
Age 19-24	0.9%
Age 25-31	3.6%
Age 32-45	37.3%
Age 46-60	36.4%
Over age 60	21.5%

**Question 23: Gender**

A majority of respondents are female (53.1 percent).

*Figure 25: Survey Participant Gender*

Answer Options	Response Percent
Male	44.2%
Female	53.1%
Prefer not to answer	2.7%



**Question 24: Please use the space below to provide any other comments that Forsyth County should consider during the comprehensive planning process.**

*(1,359 of original 4,806 answered this open ended question):*

Respondents are concerned with the development around them and want to see a strategic plan to curb the amount of development. Concerns are not only that Forsyth County is developing too rapidly, but they are also apprehensive about the type of structures being built and the clear cutting of trees. Community members would like to see impact fees or stricter permits for developers removing trees and not providing bike lanes or sidewalks. Additionally, many respondents fear the increase in traffic in Forsyth from new development and want road infrastructure improvements.

There is a small contingent that supports the continued growth of Forsyth County and sees it as vital to make Forsyth an attractive place to work and live. This same contingent is often the same people who support expansion of public transit like MARTA into the community.

Whether the respondents are in support or opposition of community growth, both sides agreed that there should be more preservation of natural, green open space.

Other small contingent groups were concerned about property rights/values, keeping quality schools, taxes, and amenities for seniors. Some vocalized a distrust of county officials and visioning processes.

*Figure 26: Word Cloud of Imagine It is the Year 2037*



*The Word Cloud above shows the most important words and phrases respondents used in their answer. The larger the font size, the more important or significant the word.*



## **B.4 VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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## MEETING MINUTES (VISION COMMITTEE)

### JOINT KICK-OFF MEETING OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

April 11, 2016  
6:00 – 8:00 pm  
Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Beth Tipton, Linda Duncan, Niti Patel, Ruth Goode, Thomas Murphy, Tim Dineen, William Endo

Representing the Steering Committee: Betty Pita, Bobby Thomas, R.J. Amos, Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal, Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Jessica Choi (Kimley Horn Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-7pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Plan Overview

- **Planning Team Introductions**
- **Updating Our Plan – Why Now? Recent trends/changes. Top Goals.**
- **The Process & Schedule – General Overview**
- **Roles of The Two Committees**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm with two members of the Vision Committee and one member of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Tim Perry; Vision Committee – Kris Darnell, Troy Brumbalow).*

*An over presentation was given - no action taken.*

*Ms. Hatton began the meeting by introducing the planning team members that were present. Introductions were followed by an overview of why the County is updating its comprehensive plan at this point in time. Before completing the overview presentation of the project and planning process, Ms. Hatton along with Eric Bosman, the project's land use lead with Kimley-*



*Horn, provided highlights from existing conditions and trends analysis completed by the planning team. The presentation ended with an overview of the committee meetings as well as the role that the two committees would play in the planning process. The Visioning Committee will provide input to the visioning process and guidance to the development of overarching vision and goals, whereas the Steering Committee will have a longer engagement in the process, providing more targeted guidance to the development of the Future Development Map, other substantive elements of the plan, and the draft plan document.*

## **Joint SWOT Analysis**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris, facilitated a joint brainstorming session with all committee members regarding the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. No action taken. Notes from the brainstorming activity are provided below.*

### *Brainstorming Notes*

#### *STRENGTHS*

- *Schools*
- *Parks and recreation*
- *Housing, nice single family*
- *Blend of suburbs and rural*
- *Proximity to city [Atlanta]*
- *Low taxes*
- *Safe (security)*
- *Natural resources (lake, river)*

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- *Infrastructure, road capacity*
- *Cultural/arts, public and private*
- *Lack of center, gathering place*
- *Growth imbalance (concentrated in south) dependent on 400*
- *Schools overcrowded*
- *"brain drain" of talented kids/limited appeal for young professionals*
- *Lack of housing diversity*
- *Lack of entertainment: shopping, restaurants, festivals, events (go to Alpharetta, Roswell, Johns Creek, Smyrna)*

*\*Many of these are tied to growth*

## OPPORTUNITIES

- *Water bodies can be better utilized*
- *Create a town center, one focus... but size of County suggests multiple*
- *Fairgrounds are under-used*
- *GA400 exits can be leveraged for business/tech parks (higher-paying jobs, work closer to home)*
- *Tap into 400 fast internet/fiber*
- *Keep taxes low to entice new residents/investment*
- *Community's affluence: people have disposable income*
- *Maximize parks space through joint use*

## THREATS

- *Need growth to maintain low taxes*
- *Lack of affordable housing*
- *Transient nature of tech employees*
- *Keeping pace / quality of life with growth: i.e.- running out of sports field space*
- *Competition for best jobs, businesses, etc.*
- *Crime + drugs*
- *Traffic, particularly south end*
- *Potential loss of rural areas/agriculture, keep through economic development*
- *Land prices rising, making agriculture difficult*
- *Potential of losing natural beauty*
- *Overcrowding schools/ lack of control: disparity between schools in different areas*
- *General disparity between north and south County opportunities*
- *Lack of infrastructure/ transportation for elderly*
- *Infrastructure maintenance and keeping pace*
- *Water supply for future population*
- *Sewage infrastructure needs to keep up*



## **VISION COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (7-8pm)**

*Sub meeting called to order at 7:10 pm*

### **7:00 Member Introductions**

*Discussion – no action taken*

*Present committee members introduced themselves, their background in the County and identified what brought them to Forsyth County and makes it a great place to live. In addition to great characteristics, a couple challenges were introduced by committee members as well, as documented below in italics.*

#### **WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT FORSYTH**

- *Lake Lanier*
- *Rural Character*
- *Great Place for Kids and Family*
- *Access to Jobs*
- *Schools*
- *Natural Beauty*
- *Families with deep roots*
- *Sense of family, connectedness*
- *Nice people*

#### **Growing Concerns**

- *Lack of suitable housing*
- *Traffic*

#### **Closer Look at the Visioning Process – What are the Key Outcomes?**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton, explained the role of visioning in the Comprehensive Plan. The committee unanimously approved a decision that at least one member of the Vision Committee should be present at each Visioning Workshop and Design Workshop. Linda Duncan made the motion for the Committee to commit to being represented by at least one member at the Visioning and Design Workshops. Niti Patel seconded the motion. All members present unanimously voted in favor of the motion.*

- *April 18 – Tom to attend*
- *April 20 – Beth to attend*
- *April 23 – Tim to attend*
- *April 25 – Ruth to attend*
- *April 27 – Niti to attend*

## Existing Comp Plan – What It Says About Our Vision & Has It Changed?

*Discussion – no action taken*

*In the current comprehensive plan, the vision for the county is captured in a variety of policy statements and vision statements specific to different character areas of the County. We are looking at developing one overarching vision statement and identifying key goals for the future as we update the plan, while also revisiting each of the character area visions.*

*The overview was followed by committee members provide in a few words, key words that they felt belonged in a long term vision statement for the County's future.*

*Committee Input – Key Words for the County's Vision Statement*

- *Live, work, play*
- *Diversified population and occupation*
- *Inclusive community (youth, young adult, elderly)*
- *A place for all phases of life*
- *Safe*
- *Sustainable*
- *Livable, quality-of-life*
- *Community recreation (opportunity)*

### 7:35 Discussion of Input Activities at Upcoming Visioning Workshops & Survey

*Discussion – no action taken*

#### Discussion Notes

#### OUTREACH EVENTS

*The group discussed outreach events for the comprehensive plan. The planning team asked for suggestions for kiosk events – we are planning activities at parks and one at the Collection during the summer concert series; the following idea was provided: May 7 – Sharon Springs Park is having a lacrosse event; this may be a good option*

*How will people know about Foster Forsyth meetings and events?*

- *Press releases*
- *Forsyth news*
- *FosterForsyth.com*
- *Community leaders – like the committees – helping getting the word out*



*The group discussed that it would be helpful to have a summary sheet of comprehensive plan meetings compared to other plans going on – one sheet provided as a handout at meetings would be helpful for this.*

#### **MEETING ACTIVITY IDEAS**

##### *Questions We May Want to Ask*

- *What do we want more of? What do we want less of?*
- *Prompts for the four elements (land use, transportation, housing, economic development)*
- *One handout with all meetings, including parks plan*

##### *Promotional Material Ideas*

- *“Help Shape” rather than “How will . . .”*
- *We need to encourage folks to participate in our wording*
- *Less wording on fliers to not overwhelm folks and rather encourage them to participate*

#### **SURVEY INPUT**

*Committee members were asked to identify a topic or question that he/she felt belonged in the community survey for the planning effort:*

- *What is the community’s biggest pain point today? Land use, housing, economic development, transportation*
- *What is your top priority for Forsyth County? Housing, land use, economic development, transportation*
- *What is your single biggest concern in future development of Forsyth County?*
- *How likely are you to use public transportation if available?*
- *If you believe housing is the most important area of emphasis in the Co, what aspect of housing is most important to you?*
- *Price*
- *Location*
- *Rent vs. buy*
- *Driving distance*
- *What do you want Forsyth to be known for?*

**The Vision Committee adjourned at 8:06 p.m.**



## MEETING MINUTES (VISION COMMITTEE)

### JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING #2 OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

May 2, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Beth Tipton, Kris Darnell, Linda Duncan, Ruth Goode, Thomas Murphy, Tim Dineen, William Endo

Representing the Steering Committee: Bobby Thomas, County Commission Chairman R.J. Amos, Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal, County Planning Commission Chairperson Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw, Tim Perry, Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Audra Rojek (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Ben Miskelly (Kimley Horn Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-6:45pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Planning Process

- **Highlights from Visioning Workshops**
- **Highlights from Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Community Survey Interim Update**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm with two members of the Vision Committee and one member of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Betty Pita; Vision Committee – Niti Patel, Troy Brumbalow).*

*An over presentation was given - no action taken.*

*Ms. Hatton began the meeting by introducing the planning team members that were present. Introductions were followed by a presentation that began with an overview of the meeting goals as well as summary information of where we are in the process, including an update on public engagement activities. The project is still in the Visioning Phase, with a large amount of effort*



*for the planning process occurring over May and June, beginning with the Design Workshops. Highlights from stakeholder interviews, the ongoing community survey, and priorities from the Visioning Workshop were provided.*

*Before completing the overview presentation, Ms. Hatton gave the floor to Eric Bosman, the project's land use lead with Kimley-Horn, who further emphasized the key ideas heard during the Visioning Workshops and how those ideas helped shaped the format of the upcoming Design Workshops. Eric walked through the outline of the Design Workshops and briefly described the different activities planned to gather input from the community at the meetings.*

### **Group Discussion of Community Feedback**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Mr. Bosman, then opened the floor up for group discussion regarding community feedback to date. The planning team asked specifically about how the process was going and what committee neighbors were hearing from neighbors, colleagues, and friends about the process. Committee members responded to this question but also reintroduced some key substantive topics that have repeatedly surfaced.*

#### *What are you hearing?*

- *Availability of future water resources is an important consideration for future growth.*
- *Need for more jobs within the County, particularly due to the number of people leaving the County to work elsewhere.*
- *Understanding of what the comprehensive plan is/does and commitment to implement it.*
- *Perception or concern that there is an "agenda" of people leading the planning effort, by County leadership, the planning team (consultant team and County planning staff working on project), and others that are involved.*
- *Role of committee members and Board of Commissioners members at workshops – are they driving an agenda? They should sit back and listen.*
- *General angst regarding the timing of the plan update, which is targeted for adoption at the end of a Board of Commissioners (BOC) term cycle. Some new BOC members will take office in January. There is some believe that adoption of the plan should wait until new members of the BOC take office.*

## VISION COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (7-8pm)

*Sub meeting called to order at 7:02 pm.*

### Member Introductions

*Present committee members briefly introduced themselves.*

There was a motion by Tim Dineen and a second by Beth Tipton to adopt the meeting minutes from April 11, 2016 as provided. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Tipton, Darnell, Duncan, Goode, Murphy, Dineen, Endo) and two members absent (Patel and Brumbalow).

### Vision Statement Development

*The bulk of the Vision Committee meeting was spent discussing and developing an overarching vision statement with the committee. Ms. Hatton initiated the discussion by reminding members that the goal for the vision statement was to create a short 1-2 sentence statement(s) that reflects the overall vision for the County. Further along in the planning process, vision statements will be developed for each of the character areas that will provide more guidance for unique areas of the County. A couple key comments helped influence talking points during the discussion: 1) It was pointed out that the vision statement should be short and understandable with basic words, and 2) The statement should speak to the County's growth and development since this is a land-use based plan.*

*The consultant team developed the below initial statement as a starting point for discussion:*

Vision Statement Version 1: Forsyth County will be a place that reflects its rural heritage while expanding its infrastructure, improving its connectivity, and creating community centers to advance its attractiveness for continued investment by individuals, businesses, and families to further quality of life.

*The following terms were identified for improvement:*

#### *Define term*

- *Quality of life (tie to use of land)*
- *Rural heritage*

#### *Replace word*

- *Reflects (with values, improves, enhances or fosters)*
- *A place (with a community)*
- *Individuals (with residents)*



*The group discussed at length a variety of items that should be further discussed or considered for the vision statement:*

- *Wise use of greenspace*
- *Quality of schools*
- *People – population*
- *Using the term residents versus calling out individual groups that would all also be consider residents, such as families, individuals, everyone.*

*After some discussion, it was decided to rework a new statement based on input discussed to date. The following statement was developed:*

*Vision Statement Version 2:* *Forsyth County will be a community that fosters its quality of life while attracting continued investment by residents and businesses*

*The group discussed a variety of items that should be further discussed or considered for the version 2 vision statement:*

- *Protects/values/improves/fosters*
- *Replace “investment” by residents with something else; perhaps replace with “supporting or attracting businesses and residents”*
- *Consider including “recognized throughout the region and nation as a premier community” “by virtue of quality schools, attractive parks, welcoming and engaging people, recreational opportunities”*

*After additional discussion, it was decided to rework a new statement based on input discussed. The following statement was developed:*

*Vision Statement Version 3:* *Forsyth County will be recognized throughout the region and nation as a community of choice by residents and businesses for its CORE values of “community, opportunity, recreation, and education”*

*The group discussed a variety of items that should be further discussed or considered for the version 3 vision statement:*

- *Define CORE values*
- *Key character areas*
- *Balanced, responsible*
- *Maximize, preserve or conserve current land assets*

*After additional discussion, it was decided to rework a new statement based on input discussed. The following statement was developed:*

**Vision Statement Version 4:** *Forsyth County will promote balanced, responsible use of natural and developed assets to continue to be a community choice, reflecting our C.O.R.E. values*

*The group discussed a variety of items that should be further discussed or considered for the version 4 vision statement:*

- *Developed – terms that could replace this include established, current, built, community*
- *Assets – terms that could replace this, such as resources*
- *Quality of life*
- *The statement should be future focused.*

*Due to time restraints, it was discussed that the planning team would further tweak the statement to make sure it flowed well before bringing it out to the Design Workshops for input. The committee will refine the vision statement based on feedback at the May committee meeting.*

## **Goals Development**

*The planning team initiated a brief discussion of overarching goals with the group. The planning team provided some initial topics where goals seemed to be appropriate based on input collected to date.*

- *Grow Community Centers/Nodes (Live-work-play)*
- *Further Quality of Life*
- *Improve Connectivity*
- *Enhance Character*
- *Expand Infrastructure that Furthers Our Vision*
- *Grow Professional Jobs (mix of employment options)*

*After introducing these topics, the committee agreed it would be best to further develop them at the next committee meeting, based on input received on the vision statement.*

## **Discussion of Input Activities at Design Workshops**

*Discussion – no action taken*

*The group discussed a handful of ways that we could best gather input on the Draft Vision Statement at the Design Workshops:*

- *Ask something like – Is this statement inspiring? Are you inspired to be a member of Forsyth County?*



- *Give small handouts of the vision statement and ask workshop attendees to highlight words they like; cross out words they don't like. Have a large version of the statement for all to look at.*
- *Ask, what do these core values mean to you?*

*The group coordinated regarding who would attend which Design Workshops moving forward:*

- *May 11 – Tim to attend*
- *May 12 – Tom to attend*
- *May 16 – Beth to attend*
- *May 18 – Kris to attend*
- *May 21 – William (Bill) to attend*

**The Vision Committee adjourned at 8:02 pm.**

*The meeting ended with a motion and unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting (motion provided by Tim Dineen, seconded by Linda Duncan).*

There was a motion by Tim Dineen and a second by Linda Duncan to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 pm. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Tipton, Darnell, Duncan, Goode, Murphy, Dineen, Endo) and two members absent (Patel and Brumbalow).

## MEETING MINUTES (STEERING COMMITTEE)

### JOINT KICK-OFF MEETING OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

April 11, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Beth Tipton, Linda Duncan, Niti Patel, Ruth Goode, Thomas Murphy, Tim Dineen, William Endo

Representing the Steering Committee: Betty Pita, Bobby Thomas, R.J. Amos, Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal, Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Jessica Choi (Kimley Horn Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-7pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Plan Overview

- **Planning Team Introductions**
- **Updating Our Plan – Why Now? Recent trends/changes. Top Goals.**
- **The Process & Schedule – General Overview**
- **Roles of The Two Committees**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm with two members of the Vision Committee and one member of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Tim Perry; Vision Committee – Kris Darnell, Troy Brumbalow).*

*An over presentation was given - no action taken.*

*Ms. Hatton began the meeting by introducing the planning team members that were present. Introductions were followed by an overview of why the County is updating its comprehensive plan at this point in time. Before completing the overview presentation of the project and planning process, Ms. Hatton along with Eric Bosman, the project's land use lead with Kimley-*



*Horn, provided highlights from existing conditions and trends analysis completed by the planning team. The presentation ended with an overview of the committee meetings as well as the role that the two committees would play in the planning process. The Visioning Committee will provide input to the visioning process and guidance to the development of overarching vision and goals, whereas the Steering Committee will have a longer engagement in the process, providing more targeted guidance to the development of the Future Development Map, other substantive elements of the plan, and the draft plan document.*

## **Joint SWOT Analysis**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris, facilitated a joint brainstorming session with all committee members regarding the County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. No action taken. Notes from the brainstorming activity are provided below.*

### *Brainstorming Notes*

#### **STRENGTHS**

- *Schools*
- *Parks and recreation*
- *Housing, nice single family*
- *Blend of suburbs and rural*
- *Proximity to city [Atlanta]*
- *Low taxes*
- *Safe (security)*
- *Natural resources (lake, river)*

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- *Infrastructure, road capacity*
- *Cultural/arts, public and private*
- *Lack of center, gathering place*
- *Growth imbalance (concentrated in south) dependent on 400*
- *Schools overcrowded*
- *"brain drain" of talented kids/limited appeal for young professionals*
- *Lack of housing diversity*
- *Lack of entertainment: shopping, restaurants, festivals, events (go to Alpharetta, Roswell, Johns Creek, Smyrna)*

*\*Many of these are tied to growth*



## OPPORTUNITIES

- *Water bodies can be better utilized*
- *Create a town center, one focus... but size of County suggests multiple*
- *Fairgrounds are under-used*
- *GA400 exits can be leveraged for business/tech parks (higher-paying jobs, work closer to home)*
- *Tap into 400 fast internet/fiber*
- *Keep taxes low to entice new residents/investment*
- *Community's affluence: people have disposable income*
- *Maximize parks space through joint use*

## THREATS

- *Need growth to maintain low taxes*
- *Lack of affordable housing*
- *Transient nature of tech employees*
- *Keeping pace / quality of life with growth: i.e.- running out of sports field space*
- *Competition for best jobs, businesses, etc.*
- *Crime + drugs*
- *Traffic, particularly south end*
- *Potential loss of rural areas/agriculture, keep through economic development*
- *Land prices rising, making agriculture difficult*
- *Potential of losing natural beauty*
- *Overcrowding schools/ lack of control: disparity between schools in different areas*
- *General disparity between north and south County opportunities*
- *Lack of infrastructure/ transportation for elderly*
- *Infrastructure maintenance and keeping pace*
- *Water supply for future population*
- *Sewage infrastructure needs to keep up*

## STEERING COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (7-8pm)

*Eric Bosman with the planning team called the subcommittee meeting to order at 7:12 pm.*

### Member Introductions

*Discussion – no action taken*

*Committee Member Introductions- Committee members present included County Commission Chairman R.J. (Pete) Amos, Planning Commission Chairperson Jayne Iglesias, Planning and*



Community Development staff member Vanessa Goldman, Liz Shaw, Bobby Thomas, Claudia Castor, and Betty Pita. Consulting team members included Eric Bosman and Jessica Choi of Kimley-Horn.

### **Closer Look at the Planning Process – Where May We Hit Road Bumps?**

Mr. Bosman provided a recap of upcoming public meetings including 5 Visioning Workshops from April 18-27, 5 Public Design Workshops from May 11-21, 2 Implementation Workshops in June and 2 Open Houses in August.

*Discussion – no action taken*

### **Existing Conditions – Focus on Land Use**

Mr. Bosman provided an overview of the existing land use map, zoning map, and future land use map and discussed the role of each document in the planning, zoning, and development process. The focus on the Comprehensive Plan effort will be to review, analyze, and update the future land use map as a vision for the future of Forsyth County and a tool for use by the community and County to inform future land use, rezoning, and development decisions. As a product of the Comprehensive Plan Update, policy statements may also be generated that could impact the County's Unified Development Ordinance, resulting in future changes to the County's zoning code.

*Discussion – no action taken*

### **Discussion of Land Use Challenges**

- **What is currently working well?**
- **What challenges does the County face in terms of land use?**
- **What geographic areas are likely to change or need to change over the next 10-20 years?**
- **Where might we experience road bumps in the process?**

*Discussion – no action taken*

### **Main Issues**

- Need to articulate a stronger vision within the Comprehensive Plan
- Interconnectivity within Forsyth is a concern (walkability, bikeability, etc.)
- Preservation of non-residential land
- Identification/differentiation of different areas within the County- currently the overlay districts are the only codes that encourage a sense of design and place

## General discussion of challenges within the County

- Density has been cut down in recent years (higher densities with 9,000 SF lots is no longer as widespread as it was before)
- R-3 for example
- Could we offer more high-density residential but then enforce that there be more green space/conservation?
- We need more high-density residential that is of quality development and design
- The current comprehensive plan does not articulate a clear vision for what we want to be
- One of the strengths of the county is the overlay districts but these too could be fine-tuned more and offer more in creating a greater identity within the county
  - Overlays are only on major roadways. They should start including adjacent areas to make sure there is a clear transition
  - Linear nature of the county and development pattern is a weakness
- North/South identities are different in the County
- Lack of connectivity between activity nodes for vehicles and pedestrians
- Mixed-use is necessary (Avalon) but the subdivision growth is going to be a challenge since mixed-use likes grid style roads
- Forsyth is missing “middle housing”
- North side needs to start preparing for growth by means of infrastructure
  - How do we prepare for that?
  - How do we take lessons learned from the southern portion and apply it to the north?
- How do we tie subdivisions together in the north so we can avoid what happened in the south?

## Areas with great potential

- Lake
  - How can we leverage the lake? Mary Ellis, Crystal Cove?
  - Not many opportunities around the lake given limited land availability and environmental concerns/Corps of Engineers control
- Undeveloped land area
  - Neighborhood-level commercial/retail for the north is necessary
- Cumming
  - Can we create a multiple nuclei-centers approach for Forsyth with Cumming being the center?
  - We’ll need collaboration from city and county
- Ronald Reagan
- Sharon Springs
- Dawsonville



- What can we do to capture some commercial and retail action happening between Cumming and Dawsonville?
- What is Forsyth's identity within that?
- Can we leverage the North for office space?
  - What about the new interchange at 369?
- Need to "raise the bar" from a development standpoint and re-establish a greater sense of character within the County

#### Challenges that may be faced during the planning process

- Residential densities
- Aesthetic struggles
- No forethought in development
- Clear cutting for new development
- Home vs. lot size (big homes on small lots)
- Scale and character of new development
- Access and traffic
- Is Forsyth attracting the right developers? How do we make that better?
- South of 20 vs North of 20
- Subdivisions on major arterials
- Big Creek Basin

**Adjourned at 8:12 p.m.**

## MEETING MINUTES (STEERING COMMITTEE)

### JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING #2 OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

May 2, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Beth Tipton, Kris Darnell, Linda Duncan, Ruth Goode, Thomas Murphy, Tim Dineen, William Endo

Representing the Steering Committee: Bobby Thomas, County Commission Chairman R.J. (Pete) Amos, Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal, County Planning Commission Chairperson Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw, Tim Perry, Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Audra Rojek (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Ben Miskelly (Kimley Horn Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-6:45pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Planning Process

- **Highlights from Visioning Workshops**
- **Highlights from Stakeholder Interviews**
- **Community Survey Interim Update**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm with two members of the Vision Committee and one member of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Betty Pita; Vision Committee – Niti Patel, Troy Brumbalow).*

*An over presentation was given - no action taken.*

*Ms. Hatton began the meeting by introducing the planning team members that were present. Introductions were followed by a presentation that began with an overview of the meeting goals as well as summary information of where we are in the process, including an update on public engagement activities. The project is still in the Visioning Phase, with a large amount of effort*



*for the planning process occurring over May and June, beginning with the Design Workshops. Highlights from stakeholder interviews, the ongoing community survey, and priorities from the Visioning Workshop were provided.*

*Before completing the overview presentation, Ms. Hatton gave the floor to Eric Bosman, the project's land use lead with Kimley-Horn, who further emphasized the key ideas heard during the Visioning Workshops and how those ideas helped shaped the format of the upcoming Design Workshops. Eric walked through the outline of the Design Workshops and briefly described the different activities planned to gather input from the community at the meetings.*

### **Group Discussion of Community Feedback**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Mr. Bosman, then opened the floor up for group discussion regarding community feedback to date. The planning team asked specifically about how the process was going and what committee neighbors were hearing from neighbors, colleagues, and friends about the process. Committee members responded to this question but also reintroduced some key substantive topics that have repeatedly surfaced.*

#### *What are you hearing?*

- *Availability of future water resources is an important consideration for future growth.*
- *Need for more jobs within the County, particularly due to the number of people leaving the County to work elsewhere.*
- *Understanding of what the comprehensive plan is/does and commitment to implement it.*
- *Perception or concern that there is an "agenda" of people leading the planning effort, by County leadership, the planning team (consultant team and County planning staff working on project), and others that are involved.*
- *Role of committee members and Board of Commissioners members at workshops – are they driving an agenda? They should sit back and listen.*
- *General angst regarding the timing of the plan update, which is targeted for adoption at the end of a Board of Commissioners (BOC) term cycle. Some new BOC members will take office in January. There is some believe that adoption of the plan should wait until new members of the BOC take office.*

## STEERING COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (7-8pm)

*Eric Bosman with the planning team called the subcommittee meeting to order at 6:58pm*

### Member Introductions

*Present committee members briefly introduced themselves.*

*There was a motion by Pete Amos and a second by Jayne Iglesias to adopt the meeting minutes from April 11, 2016 as provided. Motion carried with eight members in favor (Thomas, Amos, Castro, Dolezal, Iglesias, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman) and one member absent (Pita).*

### Identify Forsyth County Model Developments

*Mr. Bosman asked the steering committee to come up of a list of model developments and places that Forsyth County can set as good examples. Steering committee members then located and labeled these places on maps. These mapped developments would be used to help supplement the imagery boards to be utilized at the design workshops.*

*Discussion- no action taken*

### Priority Areas Discussion

*Mr. Bosman led the steering committee in an exercise to define general character areas. The steering committee members took a blank aerial map and divided the county into basic character areas. These character areas would be used to create an editable base map for the design workshops.*

*Discussion- no action taken*

### Adjournment

*The meeting adjourned at 8:11pm.*



## MEETING MINUTES (STEERING COMMITTEE)

### JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING #3 OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

May 25, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Beth Tipton, Tim Dineen, Thomas Murphy

Representing the Steering Committee: Betty Pita, R.J. (Pete) Amos, Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal, Liz Shaw, Tim Perry, Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Amanda Hatton and Allison Stewart-Harris (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Ben Miskelly (Kimley Horn and Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-6:45pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Planning Process

- **Overview of public involvement**
- **Website update**
- **Community Survey results**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm with six members of the Vision Committee and two members of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Bobby Thomas, Jayne Iglesias; Vision Committee – Kris Darnell, Linda Duncan, Niti Patel, Ruth Goode, Troy Brumbalow, William Endo).*

*Before beginning the meeting, Ms. Hatton asked if there was a quorum of both committees; there was a quorum for the Steering Committee but not for the Vision Committee. The meeting then began with a brief presentation that reviewed public involvement activities to-date, reminded attendees of important upcoming dates, and introduced the Meeting in a Box concept.*



*Question: Do you know how long the Meeting in a Box will take?*

*Answer: Up to an hour, but probably at least 30 to 45 minutes.*

*The presentation then contained an overview of the Community Survey, which had over 4,000 responses. Ms. Hatton pointed out that 85 percent of respondents stated that they plan to be in Forsyth County in five years. Respondents like the quality of schools, cost of living, and open spaces most. Respondents were not supportive of diversifying the housing stock but were very interested in preserving the quality of schools and passive open space, while expanding the variety of jobs and presence of local restaurants. Ms. Hatton also then shared results from visioning statement exercise, including words that people liked and did not like.*

*Mr. Bosman presented results from the design workshops in the form of a series of development heat maps and a community character map. The character area map has been revised per feedback from the community. The GA 400 corridor now has two areas, and the north and south Lake Lanier areas are now their own areas. Mr. Bosman then presented the images that were most highly ranked in the visual preference exercise completed at the design workshops and shared the heat map results. He noted that the residential heat map may be misleading in that it does not represent priorities for housing discussed in the groups. Mr. Bosman then introduced the draft agenda for the upcoming Implementation Workshops.*

#### **Group Discussion of Community Feedback**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Mr. Bosman, then opened the floor up for group discussion regarding community feedback to date.*

*There were no questions from the group.*

#### **VISION COMMITTEE SUB MEETING**

*No official meeting of the Vision Committee took place due to failure to reach of quorum of Vision Committee members. County staff will determine the most appropriate next steps for Vision Committee involvement since the May 25 meeting was scheduled as the last formal involvement of the committee in the planning process.*



## **STEERING COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (6:30-8pm)**

*Eric Bosman with the planning team called the Steering Committee sub meeting to order at 6:35 pm.*

### **Member Minutes**

*There was a motion by Tim Perry and a second by R.J. Amos to adopt the meeting minutes from May 2, 2016 as provided. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Pita, Amos, Castro, Dolezal, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman) and two members absent (Thomas, Iglesias).*

### **Deeper Dive into Design Workshop Outcomes**

*The steering committee discussed the differences in the meeting results and online survey results, focusing on how to reconcile the survey input into the growth maps. The committee also focused on current and planned sewer infrastructure and how to address development slated for the areas without the appropriate infrastructure.*

*The steering committee then revised the Community Character Map to take into account the most addressed subareas. The area around The Village was revised to include all appropriate surrounding residential. The steering committee decided to create a Lanier Character Area around the lake while following the community's recommendation to create a character area around Highway 20 north of South Forsyth (Haw Creek).*

### **Character Area Refinement and Definition**

*The Steering Committee reviewed an implementation workshop guide. Eric Bosman led the steering committee through each individual character area to get a feel for the appropriate levels of intensity for each area. The Steering Committee gave feedback that was utilized and adapted for the voting exercise utilized in the implementation workshop.*

### **Adjournment**

*There was a motion by Tim Perry and a second by Liz Shaw to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 pm. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Pita, Amos, Castro, Dolezal, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman) and two members absent (Thomas, Iglesias).*

## MEETING MINUTES (STEERING COMMITTEE)

### JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING #4 OF VISION AND STEERING COMMITTEES

July 14, 2016

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Suite 220, County Administration Building

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representing the Vision Committee: Linda Duncan, Ruth Goode, Thomas Murphy, William Endo

Representing the Steering Committee: Betty Pita, Bobby Thomas, R.J. (Pete) Amos, Jayne Iglesias, Liz Shaw, Tim Perry, Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman

Representing Forsyth County: Tom Brown, Director of Planning and Development; Vanessa Bernstein-Goldman, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Representing the Consultant Team: Jonathan Bartlett, Amanda Hatton, and Allison Stewart-Harris (Jacobs); Eric Bosman and Ben Miskelly (Kimley Horn and Associates)

#### JOINT MEETING (6-6:15pm)

##### Joint Welcome & Planning Process

- **Joint Welcome**
- **Planning Process Update**
- **Public Outreach: Highlights from Recent Activities**

*Amanda Hatton, project manager with Jacobs, called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm with five members of the Vision Committee and two members of the Steering Committee absent (Steering Committee – Claudia Castro, Greg Dolezal; Vision Committee – Beth Tipton, Kris Darnell, Niti Patel, Ruth Goode, Troy Brumbalow).*

*Before beginning the meeting, Ms. Hatton asked if there was a quorum of both committees; there was a quorum for the Steering Committee but not for the Vision Committee. The meeting then began with a brief presentation that reviewed project status and timeline, remaining public meetings, and highlights from recent public engagement activities.*



*The presentation included high level outcomes of the implementation workshops, including the vision statement and goals feedback activity and small group priorities discussions. Mr. Bosman summarized the results of character area exercises at the workshop.*

*Ms. Hatton completed presentation, including an overview of results from the Meeting in a Box Activity and the web mapping tool.*

#### **Group Discussion of Community Feedback**

*The planning team, led by Ms. Hatton and Mr. Bosman, then opened the floor for questions. There were no questions from the group.*

#### **VISION COMMITTEE SUB MEETING**

*No official meeting of the Vision Committee took place due to failure to reach of quorum of Vision Committee members. The group met informally with Allison Stewart-Harris and Tom Brown of the planning team to review the status of and provide informal input to the vision and goals statements.*

#### **STEERING COMMITTEE SUB MEETING (6:15-8:00pm)**

*Amanda Hatton with the planning team called the Steering Committee sub meeting to order at 6:23 pm.*

#### **Adoption of Minutes**

*There was a motion by Pete Amos and a second by Tim Perry to adopt the meeting minutes from May 25, 2016 as provided. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Pita, Thomas, Amos, Iglesias, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman) and two members absent (Castro, Dolezal).*

#### **Plan Element Priorities Review**

*Ms. Hatton led the group in review of draft priorities lists, which will drive actions in the five-year community work program. Committee members were asked to provide input on initiatives to address each priority area as well as provide other general feedback on the lists.*

##### *Economic Development*

- Public demands fees; wants business to pay for residential.
  - We do not want fees to prohibit businesses – they will move to neighbor communities like Dawson County.

- Have to be business friendly.
- Need to incentivize businesses to come here.
- Town Centers: we have one town, with no center.
  - Can we designate a public gathering space? Make better use of space we have? (e.g. fairgrounds)
  - Certain laws prohibit congregating in some places.
  - Alcohol policies need to be revisited.
  - May want to explore shuttle options.
- Commission has to send message to business community that new business is welcome here.
  - Look to nearby counties as a roadmap.

### *Housing*

- Is housing priority list based on existing housing or what is zoned and not built?
  - There have been several zonings for senior housing.
- Expecting new developments to pay “fair share” of costs – remember it may be existing residents moving into these new developments
  - What is “fair share”? Need to define this.

### *Transportation*

- Kids do not take the bus; this causes congestion on school days.
- There is a current Safe Routes to School program, but it is not considered effective, in part because kids are not allowed to walk or bike to school on their own per school policy. Also, the program is not robust enough – with events occurring once a year rather than a regular emphasis on the program.

### *Land Use*

- No Comments.

### *Quality of Life*

- No Comments.

**ACTION:** Ms. Hatton will send priorities to committee members to fill in and return comments.



## Review of Character Area Map & Zoning

*Mr. Bosman (EB) led the group through a review of each of the eleven character areas with a focus on zoning districts and associated design requirements for each character area.*

### ***Discussion of Unified Development Code and Other Regulatory Needs***

- Need to raise the bar for quality development.
- EB: Consider ideas like rezonings that expire after 36 months if no activity.
  - Suggestion that there is a provision to renew.
  - GA is a vested rights state – need to consider this.
- EB: There is rational basis for a tree ordinance.
  - There is a current tree ordinance that is ineffective, bureaucratic.
  - Lots of the current tree cover is pine forest that doesn't have much value or history.
- Need to consider new zoning districts that actually get you the development you want.
  - Particularly the case in mixed-use development, where it is easy today to skirt the commercial component to get more housing density.
- Missing a high density residential code – gets you more walkable, higher quality housing.

### ***Discussion of Character Areas\****

#### *McFarland*

- Size/location of business node should be shifted.

#### *South GA 400*

- Should node along 141 be narrower?

#### *South Forsyth*

- Need to be encouraging Res 1 and 2, but it looks as though it is encouraging Res 3 and 4.
- Lots of discussion about higher density in the South Forsyth node and if that is appropriate.
- RES4 should only be appropriate in nodes.

#### *Haw Creek*

- Need to address commercial setbacks in images.

#### *Lanier*

- Need to show Lake Residential (cannot rezone to this so okay not to show).
- Add images of public/entertainment/culture.

*The Village*

- No comments specific to this area.

*Campground*

- Only allow CR2 with appropriate design standards.

*North GA 400*

- Allow RES1 and RES2 to be appropriate everywhere in this character area.
- Discussion on Conservation Subdivision (doesn't incentivize use).

*Chestatee Jot em Down*

- Need to ensure chart matches document.

*Northwest Forsyth*

- Need to require large setbacks in this area.
- CR2 should be addressed in a conservation style.

*Sawnee Mountain*

- Res3 should be the upper end.
- Only allow CR2 with appropriate design standards.

*\*It was determined that RES3 and RES4 should have overarching design standards that clean up their appearance and form across the entire county.*

## Medium Density Housing Policy Discussion

*Ms. Hatton facilitated a brief discussion regarding missing housing products in Forsyth County. In advance of the meeting, committee members had received a memo highlighting housing policy in similar communities and possible shortcomings in Forsyth County's residential zoning districts.*

- Concerns in the medium density residential – what should medium density housing look like in Forsyth County 20 years from now?
  - Not seeing small quality homes; we're seeing small "starter" homes – we want nicer products.
  - Multi-generational doesn't have to be age restricted.
- Vickery is special, and has taken a long time to evolve. It is still not an easy place to do commercial.



## **Adjournment**

*There was a motion by Pete Amos and a second by Bobby Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 pm. Motion carried with seven members in favor (Pita, Thomas, Amos, Iglesias, Shaw, Perry, Bernstein-Goldman) and two members absent (Castro, Dolezal).*



## **B.5 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW REPORT**

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## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS: COMMON TOPICS AND THEMES REPORT

### OVERVIEW

At the onset of the comprehensive planning process, the consultant team conducted interviews to help support the baseline conditions analysis, to begin the identification of key community initiatives, needs, and priorities, and to help inform key discussion points for public involvement activities. Interviews were carried out with a cross section of Forsyth County stakeholders, including residents, area business owners, local developers, key partner organizations such as the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, University of North Georgia, Northside Hospital, and Forsyth County Schools.

Interviews were carried by the Foster Forsyth planning team as either one-on-one sessions or small groups meetings. Interviewers utilized a prepared questionnaire that included a range of

discussion points, which gave stakeholders an opportunity to discuss Forsyth’s strengths, needs and opportunities and also share their experiences as a member of the Forsyth community. Key challenges and focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan were topics of discussion, including land use, transportation, housing, and economic development. Interviews provide insight into the overall vision and priority needs and opportunities from community leaders.

The majority of interviews were conducted over a two-day period in order to gather concise and timely feedback. Additional interviews were held with stakeholders who were unavailable during the two-day interview period. A record of the interviews conducted is provided in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Stakeholders Interviewed

Organization	Name And Role	Date Of Interview
Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce	James McCoy (CEO & President)	April 7, 2016
University of North Georgia	Gerald Sullivan (Associate VP of Auxiliary Services & Real Estate) & Bill Moody (Director, Facilities & Operation)	April 7, 2016
Port Royale Marina	Brent Pearson	April 7, 2016
Midway Building Supply	Phil Bettis (local attorney & representative of family-owned business)	April 7, 2016
Northside Hospital	Lynn Jackson (Hospital affiliate & Resident)	April 7, 2016
Scientific Games	Phil Bower & Joe Stewart	April 7, 2016
Forsyth County	Barry Russell (Resident)	April 11, 2016
Forsyth County	Howard Carson (Developer)	April 11, 2016
Forsyth County	Jayne Iglesias (Planning Commission Chairman)	April 11, 2016
City of Cumming	Scott Morgan (Planning Director) Jerry Weitz (Comprehensive Plan consultant)	April 11, 2016
Forsyth County	Pete Amos (Board of Commissioners Chairman)	April 11, 2016
Forsyth County Schools	Dr. Jeff Bearden (Superintendent)	April, 14, 2016
Sharon Sprinas Alliance	Phillip Barlaa (Resident)	April 15, 2016



Organization	Name And Role	Date Of Interview
Northeast Georgia Mountains	Cheryl Smith (DCA Senior Tourism Manager)	April 21, 2016
Wakefield Beasley & Associates	Lamar Wakefield (Commercial Real Estate Developer)	May 25, 2016

*This document summarizes interviewee perspectives on key topics discussed, as identified above, as well as common themes coming out of the interviews.*

## KEY TOPICS

### KEY ASSETS

Forsyth is well known for its natural amenities like its lakeshore, outdoor recreation and parks, trails and the Sawnee Mountain Preserve. Forsyth County schools consistently rank highest in the state of Georgia. Forsyth County's proximity to Atlanta and Lake Lanier make it an attractive community to live in with a great quality of life. Population growth has allowed for the hospital expansion. The hospital also provides more healthcare opportunities and jobs to the community.

#### SUMMARY OF KEY ASSETS

- Advantageous proximity to Atlanta
- Great quality of life
- Connection to Lake Lanier
- Outdoor natural areas and recreation (i.e. trails, lake, hiking, Sawnee Mountain Preserve)
- Hospital/healthcare

### MAJOR DRIVERS OF CHANGE FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Developers and residents especially have observed that much of the current development has been over the last two to three years in a horizontal fashion. Residents understand that development has been attractive because of the lower land costs and access to amenities, resulting in many permitted residential projects. Residential developments have provided greater return on investment than commercial development. Expansion of the hospital has led to new employment

opportunities and possible attraction of biotech sector jobs. The school systems have expanded considerably to match the growing population. The University of Georgia has also created a satellite campus with hopes to continue to expand by offering course offerings that connect with Forsyth County's unique strengths and employment needs. There is interest in lakeshore development, but infrastructure and regulatory restrictions around the lake will likely limit future development.

### PRIORITY NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The needs and opportunities for Forsyth County include priority and long terms ideas. These include needed updates to infrastructure (such as roads and sewer that can accommodate the continued growth), revised impact fees, natural preservation (in part to deter developers from completely removing natural greenery and older growth trees), and transportation improvements (to reduce congestion and commute times). There was also some concern from businesses and developers that the development regulations need some additional flexibility; current regulations are so strictly adhered to that there are limited opportunities to address unique situations and allow for creative solutions. Those interviewed understand and value the opportunity for long-term strategic planning. Strategic planning suggestions from these stakeholders include investment and growth opportunities to promote a sense of identity

for Forsyth County neighborhoods, to encourage sustainable growth strategies, to leverage attractive amenities, to preserve natural green space, and to provide mixed-use centers that serve as social gathering spaces. These needs and opportunities are highlighted below.

### **SUMMARY OF PRIORITY NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES**

- Infrastructure updates
- Preservation of natural open spaces
- Transportation improvements
- Flexibility in development regulations

### **IDEAS FOR LONG TERM**

#### **OPPORTUNITIES VARIED WIDELY AMONG STAKEHOLDERS; HOWEVER, SOME RESPONSES ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

- Further economic development activities, and further promote business growth to reduce strain for residential school tax and keep talent in the County
- Strategic planning to address important elements such as limitation of growth in some areas, tree protection, creation of downtown centers, preservation, traffic reduction
- Create identity and placemaking of developed districts
- Provide social centers, mixed uses and walkable areas
- Better integrate the University of Georgia Cumming campus and Northside Hospital into the County by improving access to transit and amenities
- Increase specialized healthcare and living options for residents aging in place
- Create sense of identity for University of Georgia Cumming campus as it expands and incorporated into new development
- Sustain local business models

- Leverage the lakeside (i.e. events, amenities, hotels, housing, business, tourism)
- Preserve natural green space
- Cluster tech jobs
- Attract more businesses with amenities offered to residents wishing to work and play in Forsyth County
- Incorporate alternative transportation along GA 400 (for example, rail, bus)

### **CHALLENGES**

Stakeholders found common ground in the challenges facing Forsyth County. A major challenge is long commutes and congestion along major arterials, prompting residents to suggest transportation alternatives and additional routes. Several participants, including school affiliates, businesses and long term community members, see a lack of diversity of affordable housing and of housing types such as apartments as a challenge to housing current workers and/or attracting additional jobs. Multiple stakeholders want to improve the permitting process in Forsyth County and to foster balanced development as many feel homeowners are driving the market but want downtown centers, retail, attractive business spaces, and natural vegetation preservation. An additional concern regarding development is access to water and need for sewer lines to accommodate a growing County; many businesses and the hospital cannot rely on septic tanks. The challenge remains to better brand Forsyth County as stakeholders feel that a unified sense of place for the county as a whole is currently lacking.

### **SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES**

- Traffic congestion, long commutes
- Lack of diversity of housing types/affordable housing
- Permit process
- Need for downtown centers
- Attractive business space
- Sewer infrastructure



- Placemaking in a divided community
- Natural environment preservation

### FOSTER FORSYTH

Interviewees believe that the Comprehensive Plan should provide policy direction/recommendations for several topics, such as:

- Strategic development process—review of development permits, long-term visioning, balanced project types, necessary infrastructure updates (i.e. sewer, roads)
- Housing stock options—residents understand balanced housing market needs
- Transportation solutions—to reduce increasing traffic congestion
- Placemaking—creating sense of identity, attractive downtown centers, natural amenities preservation

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND NEEDS

Some stakeholders pointed out the existence of an antigrowth sentiment particularly among the older generations of Forsyth and in the northern part of the County. That said, stakeholders believe that balanced and strategic growth is very important for the future of the Forsyth County. Diversity of amenities and housing types can be a selling point to businesses attracting talent, which helps to stimulate the need for better housing. The abundant skilled workforce the County has to offer also serves as an economic strength. There is a need to provide adequate housing for those workers likely to have a single-income household, such as hospital technicians and school teachers. The idea for commercial centers at certain community crossroads within the county would promote cross marketing and benefit all parts of the economy.

### SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TRENDS

- Community crossroads as commercial/downtown centers in exiting area
- Promote workforce, quality of life as economic strength
- Outdoor, recreation an asset (i.e. lakefront, trails, mountain conservancy)
- Frustrations with permitting (i.e. permit process, strict regulations, lengthy review)
- Need for local branding
- Tourism and need for more accommodations
- Ensure economic development addresses local need
- Residential development, but lack of downtown centers

### UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING A GROWING COMMUNITY

Forsyth County has seen tremendous growth over the last few years due to Forsyth County's land value as well as its proximity to Lake Lanier and other desirable assets, such as the North Fulton jobs market. The developments are primarily residential and the school system is rapidly expanding to accommodate the influx of residents. As the community grows, interviewed community members noted there has been limited business growth as well as shortcomings in the diversity of housing types to provide for this growing community and resultant workforce. Single-income households such as nurses and teachers cannot afford living in Forsyth nor do they have the option for a short commute to work. Many community members suggested strategic growth planning to foster balanced development in which Forsyth can sustain their growth responsibly while continuing to offer a great quality of life, great schools, variety of housing options, and economic development opportunities.

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

A variety of opinions were provided in regards to housing and neighborhood topics between the *business perspective* and the *resident perspective*. From the Business Perspective (i.e. hospital, County schools, and business stakeholders) the leading frustration was the lack of housing type variation. They are not seeing enough multi-family development and zoning to accommodate single and moderate-income workers. Blended housing growth with a mix of development would help reduce the number of County workers from moving away and commuting into the County for work instead. Also, more affordable, assisted or aging in place living complexes would benefit Northside Hospital and residents planning to spend their older years in the county. Some of the residents interviewed were in support of denser center development as long as capacity is considered. Developers recognize an anti-growth sentiment and simultaneously see a demand for mixed-uses and retail in neighborhoods, like developed town centers. Businesses and residents alike agree on the opportunity for strategic planning and long term visioning, as well as the need for neighborhood town centers. The resident perspective wants to protect open green space and give neighborhoods a sense of place and identity, while leveraging the natural amenities already present. *The summary of Housing and Neighborhood topics from both Resident Perspectives and Business Perspectives are highlighted below*

### BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES

- Multifamily dwellings/zoning (apartments do not require taking care of yard)
- Lack of moderate/low-income housing
- Monotony within subdivisions (not enough variation in design)
- Housing types (i.e. more than single family homes, includes townhomes and apartments)
- Single-income housing (i.e. teachers, hospital workers)
- Collaboration between lake amenities (i.e. park, trails, hotels, restaurants)
- Promote attractive neighborhood amenities (i.e. trails, biking, urban feel)
- Neighborhood identity branding

### RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

- Neighborhood identities (i.e. provide neighborhood centers, recognize local amenities)
- Preserve the residential character of the community, including larger lots in appropriate areas
- Placemaking
- Schools overcrowding and maybe a need for private schools
- Plan for school capacity
- Place density in center

### BOTH BUSINESS AND RESIDENT PERSPECTIVES

- Strategic growth/long-term visioning (i.e. accommodate future development, green preservation, attracts businesses, mixture of housing types)
- Tree and natural amenity protection
- Neighborhood downtown and social center
- Walkable mixed-uses



## TRANSPORTATION

Prime access to GA 400 is seen as a huge benefit to Forsyth's location; however, the highway brings heavy traffic that some of the County's roads cannot handle. Shareholders requested additional roads and routes for travelers to use, which would ease the existing traffic. An increase in road connectivity would help to answer requests but also allows for economic development along these new roads. In the long-term, convenient public transit would also greatly benefit the commuting workforce in and out of Forsyth County while reducing congestion. Many Forsyth County workers commute in from nearby counties and many residents commute out for work.

### SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION TOPICS

- Access to 400 very useful, sustains businesses
- Traffic makes it harder on commuting workforce
- Updated road infrastructure to ease traffic congestion and risk for accidents
- Lack of public transit/MARTA, need better proximity/access
- Better road connectivity to mitigate congestion, while inviting development alongside
- Many hospital workers require a 30 minute commute time, which is hard in traffic
- Workforce such as teachers cannot afford to live in Forsyth commute from outside communities
- Lack of walkability

## QUALITY OF LIFE/OTHER

Forsyth's park system and lakefront is one of its greatest assets to overall quality of life. The lake amenities attract business talent into the County. Also, the quality school system makes for an attractive quality for parents. There is a small push for a private school option, but the public schools are still boosted. Lastly, the emerging diversity of residents and possible amenities sells as an important asset to today's society. It allows for more inclusion in government decisions and fosters a more united community.

### SUMMARY OF QUALITY OF LIFE ASPECTS:

- Great school system
- Better quality of life/amenities to help attract business talent
- Growing diversity helps as asset
- Desirable place to live
- Taxes
- Safety, low-crime, responsive police
- Location proximity to Atlanta
- Parks, green open space, natural amenities
- Not walkable, communities disconnected
- No downtown center for neighborhoods
- Need to attract more high-paying jobs (tech jobs) with amenities



## **B.6 SUMMARIES OF OTHER INPUT ACTIVITIES**

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## OUTREACH KIOSK SUMMARY

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### OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Foster Forsyth outreach kiosks was to create more opportunities to interact with community members. Kiosks, staffed with consulting project team members and volunteers from the Steering and Visioning Committees, were held at four times and locations during the visioning phase of the planning process.

These booths featured input activities designed to broaden the reach of the plan and to provide input from those who may not otherwise engage with the planning process. Each kiosk included a display promoting the Foster Forsyth Comprehensive Plan, which described the plan update process and the need for public input. It also included an input board engaged people with the County's greatest assets and hurdles.

The kiosk also had two fliers for distribution, one with the project's schedule and one that promoted the Design Workshops. Business cards with the Foster Forsyth website on them, and water bottles with Foster Forsyth branding, were also distributed to passers-by. Interested individuals could also sign up for inclusion on the email outreach list.

### KIOSK LOCATIONS AND COMMENTS

#### SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 8 AM TO 10 AM, BIG CREEK GREENWAY TRAILHEAD IN FOWLER PARK

This kiosk event coincided with a run/walk charity event and was intended to publicize Foster Forsyth as widely as possible to attendees. The kiosk was set up at the finish line for maximum visibility. Hundreds of race participants and viewers saw the booth and its distinctive Foster Forsyth branding.

#### SATURDAY, MAY 7, 10 AM TO NOON, CENTRAL PARK

Visitors to this kiosk took time to chat with staffers. Topics of interest included:

- Developers bearing additional responsibility for additional infrastructure
- Narrow subdivision roads were too narrow for parking
- Long drives for short distances
- Growth brings rising home values, but also more traffic
- Many residents plan to sell and move as county changes character
- Fears of the highly-concentrated rental areas bringing decline versus the need for affordable homes for workers
- Frustrated with the appearance of reactive instead of proactive planning
- Schools should be located at or near community/neighborhood centers
- Hope for improved land use plan to lessen political favors with developers
- Road capacity increase after population growth creates dangers
- Targeted retail growth is a reassuring concept for addressing traffic
- Trip time to the grocery store has grown from 10 minutes to 30 over past ten years



## **SATURDAY, MAY 14, 10:30 AM TO 12:30 PM, SAWNEE MOUNTAIN PRESERVE VISITOR CENTER**

This kiosk event did not coincide with a special event. It was intended to meet people during their regular Saturday activities. Forsyth County's lovely parks are a regional draw, as it turns out, and so many of the people who dropped by the kiosk were not Forsyth County residents. All the same, staff at this kiosk distributed fliers and business cards to about 30-40 Forsyth people, some of whom interacted with the input board.

Topics of interest at this kiosk were:

- Value of quality amenities in the County like parks
- Concerns about tax money going to shared amenities – visitors from other counties
- Importance of seeking quality growth over growth-at-any-cost
- Need for family-friendly venues and activities

## **MONDAY, MAY 23, 5 PM TO 7 PM, LANIER TECH'S FOOD TRUCKS N' FORSYTH**

The final kiosk was erected at the food truck rally sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. The event got off to a late start and many people were in line for food instead of at the kiosk. Approximately ten people came by the kiosk, chatting with the staff and participating in the engagement activities.

Of interest to those who visited the kiosk:

- Retirees and young folks want smaller homes that require little to no maintenance
- Desire for slow growth or no growth
- Concerns about the safety and ongoing availability of water in Forsyth County and the region

## **INPUT FROM BOARD**

Participants noted additional comments in response to two prompts stated on input boards posted at the event kiosks. Key themes from input board content included:

### **Our County's biggest hurdles to overcome in the next years...**

- Growth outpacing infrastructure
- Spot zoning
- Old zoning that makes no sense now
- Maintenance of current public facilities – parks
- Clean, safe, affordable water
- Uncontrolled growth
- Lack of corporate commercial development
- Control multi-unit housing
- Scale up [increase depth of] government
- Traffic congestion
- Roads

### **In 2037 I won't want to live anywhere but Forsyth County because...**

- Hyperdevelopment
- Destruction of the natural environment
- Increased greenspace
- No high res development
- A responsive comprehensive plan County officials abide by
- Affordability



## MEETING IN A BOX SUMMARY

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### OVERVIEW

The Meeting in a Box activity provided Forsyth County residents with an option to host their own mini workshops as part of community group meetings. Each box contained an explanation of the comprehensive planning process, information about future involvement opportunities, a set of discussion questions, directions for a mapping exercise, a large format map, stickers, and comment forms. The kits were made available for pick up at the Forsyth County Department of Planning and Community Development between June 1, 2016 and June 22, 2016.

### PARTICIPANTS

Eight boxes were picked up and six envelopes with comments were returned, as indicated below.

#### GROUP 1

**Organization Represented:** Biscuit Boyz

**Reason for Meeting:** Regular Thursday Mentor Training

**Location of Meeting:** Hearthstone Lodge Senior Center

**Number of Attendees:** 6/9/16 (16 attendees) 6/16/16 (19 attendees)

#### GROUP 2

**Organization Represented:** Aberdeen Homeowners (Not the HOA)

**Reason for Meeting:** Forsyth County Growth: Citizen Input

**Location of Meeting:** Aberdeen Clubhouse

**Number of Attendees:** 12 – Charlie Smith, Jessica Mercon

#### GROUP 3

**Organization Represented:** Age Well Forsyth

**Reason for Meeting:** Monthly Board Meeting

**Location of Meeting:** Home of Executive Director

**Number of Attendees:** 10

#### GROUP 4

**Organization Represented:** Democratic Women of Forsyth County

**Reason for Meeting:** Monthly Meeting

**Location of Meeting:** Rosati's Restaurant

**Number of Attendees:** 20 (8 people written on Discussion Question #2)



## GROUP 5

*(Did not return envelope, checked out by Bill Gunby for FCRG)*

## GROUP 6

**Organization Represented:** Forsyth County Democratic Party

**Reason for Meeting:** Monthly Meeting

**Location of Meeting:** McDonald 7 Son Funeral Home Community Room

**Number of Attendees:** 20 (only map given no comment sheet)

## GROUP 7

**Organization Represented:** Shiloh Farms HOA

**Reason for Meeting:** Comments on the Comprehensive Plan

**Location of Meeting:** Shiloh Farms Clubhouse

**Number of Attendees:** 8

## GROUP 8

*(Did not return envelope, checked out by Les Dobbins for neighborhood)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

**Imagine it is five years from now. What does Forsyth County have in 2021 that makes you an even happier member of the Forsyth community than you are today?**

## GROUP 1

- More greenway paths connecting areas, like Big Creek and Sawnee Mountain
- Manage growth
- Term limits on Commissioners
- Upgrade all state highways to 4 lanes or more to move out of county traffic through the county.
  - #400 8 lanes
  - #369 & #20 6 lanes
- Plan new business and shopping to be a destination away from major highways so the only traffic would be that seeking those areas.
- Circle those areas with perimeter roads for multiple entry points without having to drive thru the middle.

## GROUP 2

- Larger lots, fewer homes
- More attractive for business versus residential
- More coordination of infrastructure before development occurs
- Greenway more coordinated (i.e. connect to the parks)
- Independent restaurants –no chains

- More walk to restaurants
- Intake to the lake for the county

### GROUP 3

- Civic center/arts community support
- County-supported adult day care facilities
- Better transportation for seniors and disabled adults, expanded hours for Dial-A-Ride
- Memorial Day and Veterans Day, recognition of names on flags

### GROUP 4

- Train in county
- Water, roads improved
- Government-subsidized (low-income) housing for the elderly

### GROUP 7

In order to have a happier community, we believe that during the next five years Forsyth County should implement or have completed projects that address the following:

- More walkable areas
- Greenspace incorporated into new subdivisions
- Stronger overlay districts along GA Hwy 9 and GA Hwy 141
- Road and other infrastructure improvements
- A “downtown/main street” core area such as the City of Suwanee or City of Duluth
- Moratorium on school redistricting
- More conservation of property significant or historical to Forsyth County i.e. family farms, historic homes/tracts, scenic views, etc.
- Larger lot subdivisions
- Attracting new large scale business and sustainable jobs

## DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

**What is the number one action you would like to see Forsyth County accomplish in the next five years? This can be a policy, initiative, program, infrastructure investment, or other item.**

### GROUP 1

- Less traffic. Improved traffic lanes.
- Less apartments. Apartments draw an element that strains the school system.
- John’s Creek area seems to get more/better facilities than Cumming area.
- GA 400 4 lane highway need coordinated improvement to the remaining lesser grid of roads.



- This group is made up [of] senior citizens average age 75+; the concern of the group was that we have the facilities we want we just can't get to them easily.
- Planning should start with the transportation corridors; move new development away from these areas to allow traffic to flow.
- We all moved to this county to escape the development this plan promotes. At our ages, quality of life brought us here and loss of quality of life or live itself will move us from here.
- The younger people planning for more development will move when Forsyth County resemble[s] DeKalb and Gwinnett.

## GROUP 2

- Bicycle lanes
- Infrastructure –roads, fiber, utilities
  - Make sure in place before houses are built
- Economic director—specific to bringing/promoting business
- Attracting young workers/families
- Need a program/marketing to compete with John's Creek, Alpharetta with bringing high paying jobs to Forsyth County. We need to make Forsyth County more attractive to businesses relocating.
- Also have a technology park for businesses to relocate

## GROUP 3

- Public/private supported adult day care
- Expanded transportation for seniors

## GROUP 4

- Less people
- More transportation
- Stop mini-mansions
- Start-up industries
- Affordable housing – quality (starter homes)

## GROUP 7

- We would like to see moratorium on all residential rezoning applications and residential building permits until schools and infrastructure are at levels to support not just the existing population, but also the future population of Forsyth County.



**MAPPING EXERCISE**

Each group was provided with a map and multicolored dot stickers, along with directions for completing the mapping exercise. The different colored dots represented different types of future development: two for town center/mixed-use (red); three for business and industry (blue); and four for residential (orange). Participants were given descriptions and reference images for each type of development. They were asked to place the corresponding dots in the locations they felt were most appropriate for future development of each type. The completed maps are shown in Figures 1-6 below.



Figure 1. Group 1 Map



Figure 2. Group 2 Map



Figure 3. Group 3 Map



Figure 4. Group 4 Map





Figure 5. Group 6 Map



Figure 6. Group 7 Map



## ONLINE MAPPING TOOL SUMMARY

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### OVERVIEW

Between mid-April and mid-June 2016, community members had the opportunity to provide input via an online mapping tool available at the project website, [fosterforsyth.com](http://fosterforsyth.com). A total of 160 comments were posted via the online mapping tool. Although there were several participants that provided more than one comment, it is estimated that 109 different people participated based on the information provided. The map on the last page of this summary depicts the types of comments received by geographic location.

### COMMENTS

#### COMMENT TYPES

Mapping Tool comments were classified as additional services, new development, no development, or other. Of the 160 mapping tool comments received the following related to each:

- No Development (55 comments)
- Other (55)
- New Development (45)
- Additional Services (5)

A large majority were concerned with maintaining low-density residential living in Forsyth County and reducing congestion on roads. Many were concerned with the rapid development occurring throughout the County and the resultant traffic. About one fifth of participants have a concern with over-crowding of schools and related congestion.

#### MOST COMMON PARTICIPANT CONCERNS

- Lower density living (63 mentions)
- Rapid uncontrolled development (58)
- Road improvements/alternatives, primarily to address congestion (37)
- Maintain Forsyth County residential community, primarily single-family (37)
- School overcrowding (20)
- Preserve agricultural land (17)
- Protect nature and reduce natural environment disturbance, including tree canopy (16)
- Critical waterways and flood runoff (11)
- Tax concern, expand tax base to reduce burden on residential (9)
- Support for non-residential commercial development (4)
- Declining property values from high-density developments/renters (3)

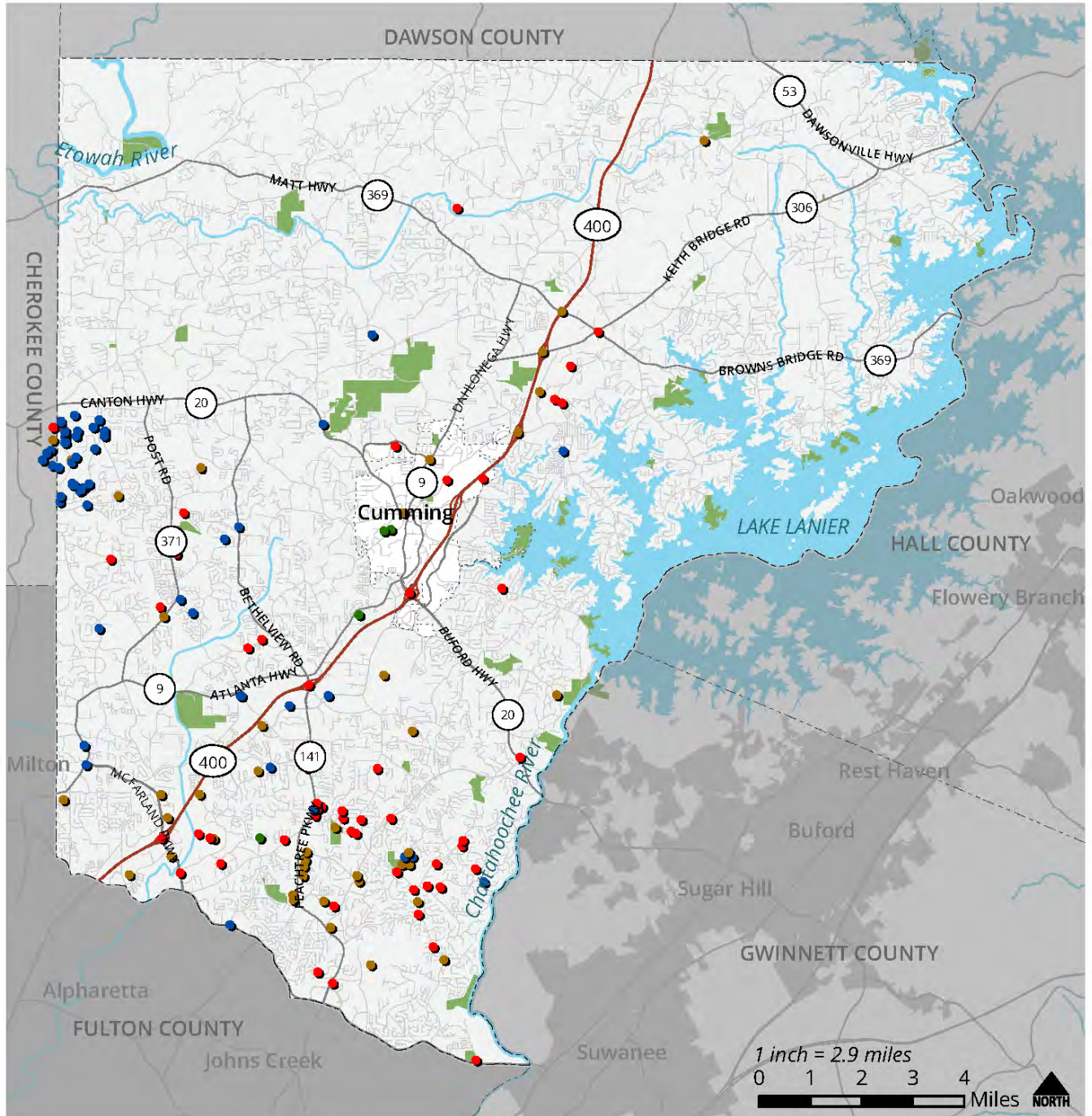


## COMMENTS BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA

- The majority of comments in the “West Central Area” fell into the other category. Nearly all of the comments identified a desire for low density development and maintenance of rural character. Participants identified a desire to return to how the area was before and to be estate residential.
- The majority of comments in the “Sharon Road Area” were for no new development. People largely spoke to overcrowded roads and limited opportunity to improve infrastructure as a primary reason for no new development. Sharon Road, Old Atlanta Road, and Peachtree Parkway are primary roads referenced. Participants indicated a desire to maintain the area as low-density residential.
- Additional comments along Peachtree Parkway indicated a need to protect water sources as development occurs, as streams and aquifer feed into Lake Lanier.
- New development comments tended to be located along major roads, namely GA 400, Hwy 20, Peachtree Pkwy, and Sharon Road. Comments varied. Some indicated that no development should occur until the proper infrastructure is in place. Others identified appropriate locations for commercial, such as at major intersections where housing is inappropriate and others that leverage existing parks to create a town center. McFarland Parkway was identified as appropriate for more technology and professional jobs.
- In the areas of the County north of Cumming, participants identified an opportunity to extend MARTA to provide alternatives to driving in increasingly congested conditions and an opportunity to develop infrastructure where development is already in place. No development comments in this area spoke to preservation of agricultural uses and need to consider unique development needs along the County’s water corridors.

## LESS COMMON PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

A small contingent of participants identified the need for improved infrastructure and public service amenities expansion to support growth and development in Forsyth County. Some participants want to see long-term planning for re-envisioning areas of the County, such as mining properties and major development opportunities. Additionally, some community members were in support of mixed-use projects in Forsyth County that would include residential and commercial uses as well as higher density uses.



**Online Mapping Tool Comments**

- Web Survey Comment Type:
- *Additional Services*
  - *New Development*
  - *No Development*
  - *Other*
- Forsyth County Boundary
  - City of Cumming
  - Lake Lanier
  - Parks and Recreation Areas
  - Rivers and Major Streams
  - Georgia Hwy 400
  - Major Roads
  - Local Roads

