



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.