

Planning Group 4

Meeting Notes: Work Session 1
Feb. 6, 2007

Co-Chair: Pam Sessions
Co-Chair: Keith Morris
Facilitator: Ruth Goode

Brian Dill Presentation

Brian Dill is Vice President of Economic Development at the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce. He gave a presentation to discuss economic development.

- 27 international firms – it is already an employment center.
- 4th largest amount of greenspace in Georgia
- In 2006, there were 52 inquiries from corporations and businesses
 - 21 prospects visited once
 - 18 projects – more visits, made finalists
- We are becoming a data security / data management hub
 - Technology-based
 - Medical field
- Science & technology
 - 22 projects from 2006 to 2007
 - 4 have capacity to add 12,300 new jobs, plus \$1 billion in new investments
- Becoming a regional employment center: Economic development prospects want live-work-play environment
- Today, Forsyth is 70% residential and 30% commercial. More commercial is needed to help balance the tax base.
- Our current challenges:
 - Creating new jobs for existing residents
 - Better use of the downtown development authority
 - Need integrity of design standards
 - Incentivize developers to maintain quality “professional housing.”
- Big lessons:
 - Proper planning
 - Community incentives and use of local tools

Scott Morgan Presentation

Scott Morgan, City Planning Director, gave a presentation to discuss downtown development.

The City of Cumming is 7 square miles. 5,000-plus residents live in the city, and 5 times that number (25,000) work in the city.

- 3,300 acres
- 10% zoned for commercial use
- Government center
- Hospital
- Sembler will add 250,000 square feet of commercial space
- Cumming Fairgrounds
- Water treatment
- Cumming has no local government property tax
- Building more residential
- Good relationship with the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA
- Mary Alice Park
- 100,000 cars in town each day, even though 25k-30k work in the city

Mayor Gravitt Presentation

Mayor Gravitt also talked about downtown development and other Cumming issues.

The City of Cumming needs:

- Healthcare – Northside
- 4-year college – North GA College
- Aquatic center – \$5-\$10 million facility – start construction in 2007
 - The facility will attract regional, state and national events
- Additional parking – Site at Maple and Castleberry. SPLOST 6 will facilitate the building of the parking deck
- “Cumming Village” is a proposed development with hotel, lofts and businesses
- Mary Alice Park project
 - 100 acres, owned by the Corps of Engineers
 - Year-round water park with hotel, restaurants, event center
 - Needs water, sewer and roads; bike and pedestrian friendly to park
- Infrastructure – Development of Buford Dam Rd.
- SPLOST 6 – 1-cent sales tax that will last 5 years, effective July, 2008, will raise \$250 million – City needs 15% for infrastructure

Frank Habit Presentation

Developer Frank Habit talked about the May’s Project

- Create live-work-play environment in 800,000 square feet
- Creating a shuttle system
- 270 residential “for sale” units will attract empty nesters and young professionals
- 90,900 square feet of retail space
- Hotel with city club, restaurant, bar
- 250,000 square feet of class “A” office space
- Gourmet grocery store – 20,000 square feet
- Eco-friendly construction

- Pedestrian-friendly

Keith Allen Presentation

Architect Keith Allen delivered a presentation to discuss downtown development strategies.

- Input – master plan
- Bring businesses into city
- Traffic patterns – pedestrian, bike, etc.
- Precincts or districts
- Design standards
- Create private-public relationships
- Lessons from other cities:
 - Lancaster, PA: preserve historic buildings
 - Fort Collins, CO: 4-year college, beauty of natural environment, define edge of city
 - Lexington, KY: 1-way streets are confusing to visitors, and traffic flows faster
 - McKinney, TX: residents over retail

Other Presentations and Group Discussion

Lisa Hoxie discussed “TDRs” or “Transfer Development Rights” as a land use tool to preserve greenspace and historic sites

Jernice and Jae, the citizen idea readers, delivered their presentation to discuss some of the ideas from the Fall Vision Meetings. The ideas highlighted include:

- Economic Development
 - Revitalization, renovation of Downtown, family friendly
 - Corporate headquarters / Businesses development
 - More high-end, white collar jobs, better paying jobs, more business dollars
 - Shops and Restaurants within walking distance
 - Vickery Village with housing and retail
 - Lake Lanier – convention center with resort, shopping, boardwalk facility (with control)
 - Balanced Tax Base – more commercial taxes (vs. residential) – Use tax incentives to bring in high-end companies and attract corporations
 - Cultural arts center / civic center
 - Convention Center
 - Hotels, Conference center
- Environmental / Downtown
 - Preserve and improve on the quality of lake and river water
 - Increase the water level of the lake
 - Walking areas on lake, but do not add to much access

- Walking bridge across Lake Fingers
- Preserve greenspace while developing
- Require developers to leave mature trees
- Make Cumming a “Tree City”
- Preserve air quality
- Utilize Sawnee Mountain as a natural preserve
- Downtown
 - Vickery on Steroids
 - Pedestrian-friendly with shops and restaurants (Olive Garden)
 - Parks / Greenspace
 - Downtown as a Destination – Use some attraction as a reason to go downtown
 - Move chicken plants

The group discussed what other information was needed, and who else to invite.

- What are the plans for Sawnee Mountain? It is the “end of the Appalachian Chain.”
- What are the current income levels in the county?
- Frank Norton Information
- 10-30 mile Bald Ridge Marina Road – Brian Dill could speak about this
- What will the agenda look like for the next meeting?

Other possible invitees:

- Large property owners
- Mashburns – Marcus, Jim
- Sanford Orkin
- Pope
- Commissioners
- North GA College
- Mary Helen
- Kathryn Amos
- Matt Pate
- Northside Hospital
- Rhonda O’Connor