



Taking the path
to **excellence**

Mission

As trusted stewards of Forsyth County's future, the elected officials and employees are dedicated to serving the community and to providing effective, professional public service with integrity and a commitment to excellence.

Vision

Forsyth County is committed to providing and maintaining the most efficient, customer service-oriented county government possible. The county will be an innovative and strategic leader in providing essential and effective public services in a fiscally prudent and professional manner. By preserving and enhancing a high quality of life, Forsyth County will remain a healthy, safe and compelling place in which to live, work, recreate, visit and invest.

About the cover:

The Big Creek Greenway is a 12-foot wide concrete and boardwalk path meandering through the deciduous woods along the Big Creek. The trail offers an ideal setting for walking, jogging, biking and inline skating. The first three phases of the Big Creek Greenway opened in 2009, and span approximately 6.8 miles from McFarland Parkway to Bethelview Road.



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Charles Laughinghouse
Chairman

District One



Brian R. Tam
Member

District Two



Jim Harrell
Vice Chairman

District Three



Patrick B. Bell
Secretary

District Four



Jim Boff
Member

District Five



Doug Derrer
County Manager

The mission of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is to exercise the powers, duties and responsibilities vested in and imposed upon it as the duly constituted governing authority of Forsyth County. The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is made up of five members, each living in a specific district and elected to serve four-year terms. Each January, the five members elect one of their own to serve as chairman of the board for the coming year. Forsyth County operates under the commission-county manager form of government.

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners meets in regular session twice a month, on the first and third Thursdays. The meetings are held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room on the second floor of the County Administration Building. The meetings are open to the public, and they also can be viewed on TV Forsyth on Comcast channel 23 and online at www.forsythco.com.

Forsyth County faced an incredibly **challenging year** in 2009. It was a year filled with declining revenues, budget reductions and difficult decisions. Throughout the year, county departments and agencies instituted **cost-saving measures** and sought ways to trim their budgets. The Board of Commissioners also took **budget-reducing steps** during the year and implemented measures we would have preferred not to take but knew were necessary. The year grew even more challenging as we prepared the 2010 budget, which was adopted December 28.

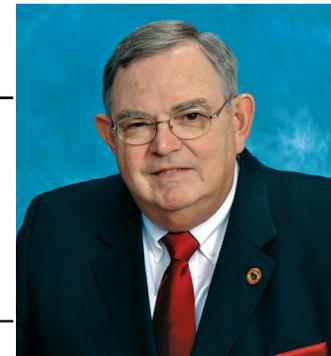
Despite the challenges faced, Forsyth County **continued to excel** in 2009. We continued to make strides in transportation, completing road improvement projects that will help make our roads more safe and less congested. We continued to make great recreational improvements such as the new Big Creek Greenway. We continued to find new ways to improve how we serve our residents by implementing online bill payment for water and sewer bills. And we continued to strive to provide the **very best service** possible to our citizens.

On behalf of all Forsyth County government officials and employees, **thank you** for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,



Charles Laughinghouse, Chairman



I am pleased to provide this annual report, outlining Forsyth County's **accomplishments** and **milestones** from 2009. We are hopeful that it better acquaints you with the programs, services and projects provided by your county government.

In 2009, the county was awarded a Georgia County Excellence Award from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and Georgia Trend Magazine. The award came in recognition of the county's efforts to preserve Sawnee Mountain. Being one of only eight recipients statewide, we were certainly **very proud** of this community recognition.

We are also **very proud** to serve the residents and businesses of Forsyth County every day. We are committed to making your government more effective, more efficient and more responsive while keeping the tax levy as low as possible to minimize the impact on county taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Doug Derrer, County Manager

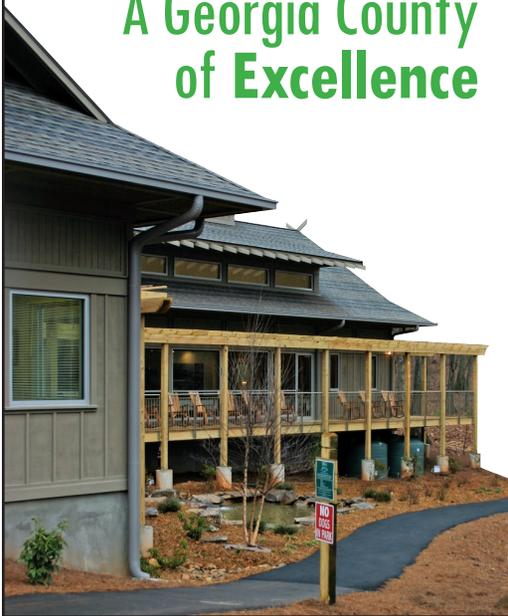


FORSYTHCOUNTY:
**A Georgia County
of Excellence**

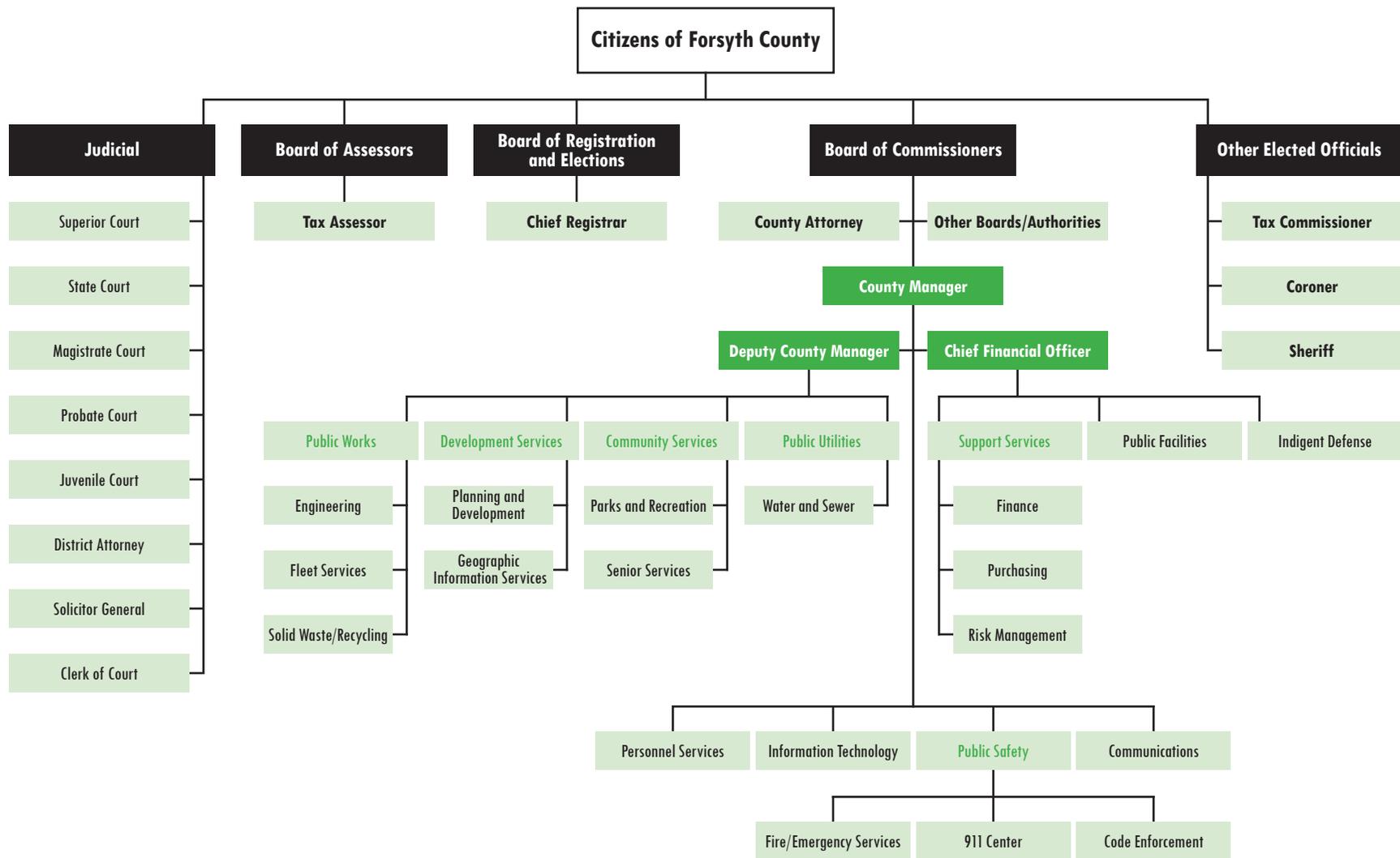
In the spring of 2009, Forsyth County was named a recipient of a Georgia County Excellence Award. Presented by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and Georgia Trend magazine, the County Excellence Awards recognize local government programs and services that are highly innovative, improve efficiency in government operations and demonstrate leadership in problem solving and planning. Forsyth County was one of eight recipients statewide.

Forsyth County's award was for the preservation of Sawnee Mountain. The creation of the Sawnee Mountain Preserve established protection of 963 acres of green space in a developing county and led to development of a passive recreation park featuring hiking trails, a visitor center, amphitheater and a variety of outdoor programming.

This prestigious recognition was just one of several Forsyth County garnered in 2009. To learn details about other county recognitions, see the 2009 in Review (starting on page 6).



Taking the path
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excellence in Public Safety

- The Sheriff's Office received the Flagship Award from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The agency was the first in Georgia to receive the honor. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office received six recognitions in 2009, recognizing its traffic safety programs for excellence.
- The Geographic Information Services (GIS) Department was honored for its GIS Mobile Emergency Response System (ERS), as part of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association 2009 Exemplary Systems in Government awards. Forsyth County developed its GIS Mobile ERS to enhance the preparedness, response and recovery phase of emergency management for the county.
- The Fire Department's 2007 Annual Report garnered an Excellence award in the annual reports category of the National Association of County Information Officers 2009 Awards of Excellence Competition. The Fire Department Annual Report is prepared jointly by the Fire Department and the Department of Communications.



Insurance Services Office Rating

Taking the path
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Outdoor Weather Siren



Traffic Safety Program



Mobile Emergency Response System

Public Safety

As always, public safety remained a priority in Forsyth County in 2009. One major accomplishment in 2009 was the reduction in the county's Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating. An ISO study was conducted in both Forsyth County and the city of Cumming in 2008, auditing Forsyth County's ability to serve the public through an examination of three key areas of public safety: fire protection, E-911 service and water services. The analysis was followed by months of study and evaluation by ISO, and in 2009, the county's rating improved from a 6/9 to a 5. Those located within five road miles of a fire station benefited from the rate change from a 6 to a 5. Those formerly classified as a 9 are now classified as a 5. ISO ratings are on a scale from 1 to 10, with lower numbers representing better levels of protection. The rate reduction meant potential insurance savings for residents and businesses.

Another public safety milestone in 2009 was the activation of the county's new outdoor severe weather sirens in February. In the event Forsyth County is placed under a tornado warning, the sirens (11 new and one replacement) will be activated. The new sirens are located throughout the county at Midway Park, Central Park, Charleston Park, Shady Grove Campground, Matt Elementary School, Chestatee Elementary School, Sawnee Primary School, South Forsyth Middle School, Forsyth County Public Safety Complex and Fire Stations 10, 14 and 15. Monthly testing of the sirens takes place at noon on the first Wednesday of every month, weather permitting.

Service

Forsyth County government is here to serve citizens. To improve service, two new online features were added in 2009 – online payment of water and sewer bills and the eStatus Web page for planning-related information. Online bill pay for water and sewer bills became available in July. The feature is accessible via the county Web site, www.forsythco.com. Many customers have taken advantage of this feature, which saves time and postage, and makes paying bills after county business hours possible.

Forsyth County's new interactive Web page, eStatus, was launched in 2009, designed to make planning-related information accessible in one, easy-to-navigate location. The eStatus Web page allows citizens and members of the development community to follow along during the public hearing process by quickly and conveniently locating project summaries, meeting dates and links to important documents, such as applications, aerial maps, concept plans, staff reports and final decision letters. It provides one more way to involve and engage community members and the development community in the planning and development process. Access the eStatus Web page at <http://estatus.forsythco.com>.

In 2009, the county's three recycling centers began accepting three new items – used cooking oil, books and plastic bags. In addition to these items, the recycling centers continue to accept such items as newspaper, magazines, cardboard and paperboard, tin food cans, aluminum beverage cans and glass food and beverage containers. 2009 was also a year for cleaning the county's waterways. Lower water levels in the spring and summer exposed trash on shorelines, making it easier to remove. In 2009, Keep Forsyth County Beautiful conducted 17 waterway cleanups with the help of 484 volunteers, removing over 7,350 pounds of trash from portions of the Etowah River and Lake Lanier.

Also working to maintain the county's high quality of life is the Code Enforcement Department. This county department works to develop partnerships with citizens and those who conduct business in the county, and to provide a safe, healthy and quality environment. In 2009, Code Enforcement addressed 2,276 code violations.

The county's Dial-A-Ride program continues to grow and experience increased demand for services. The program provided more than 18,000 trips in 2009, logging nearly 200,000 passenger miles. Dial-A-Ride provides on-call transportation to Forsyth County residents and is operated by the county's Fleet Services Department.

The Hearthstone Lodge Community Center was the recipient of new fitness equipment and a new pool ramp in 2009, both made possible thanks to donations. The new fitness equipment is designed specifically with seniors in mind, making it more user-friendly. The equipment was provided to the center by AgeWell Forsyth. The new pool ramp was installed in December and allows for increased accessibility to the pool for those with limited mobility. The ramp was donated to the county through AgeWell Forsyth by the family of Ms. Alice Mashburn, one of the center's clients.

Construction of the new Hampton Park Library continued in 2009. The county's third library branch opened in early 2010 and was funded by SPLOST V, impact fees and a grant from the Georgia Public Library Service.



FORSYTHCOUNTY 2009 in Review

**excellence
in Service**

- Forsyth County's 2008 State of the County video won national honors in the National Association of County Information Officers 2009 Awards of Excellence Competition. The video production, which showcased progress, projects and highlights from the past year, earned a Superior award in the audiovisual productions/DVD category.
- A photograph of Forsyth County was selected as the winning submission for the Association County Commissioners of Georgia 2009 Yearbook Cover Image Contest. The photograph of a pasture near Sawnee Mountain was featured on the cover of the 2009 ACCG County Yearbook, distributed to county commissioners, managers, clerks and attorneys throughout the state.



eStatus Web Page



Waterway Cleanup



Dial-A-Ride



Pool Ramp

excellence in Infrastructure

- In April, the water treated at the Forsyth County Water Treatment Facility on Antioch Road was named Best Tasting Tap Water at the district level by the Georgia Association of Water Professionals. This recognition came as part of the association's Drinking Water Taste Test.
- Dick Creek, Fowler, Manor and Windermere Water Reclamation Facilities and the Forsyth County Water Treatment Facility on Antioch Road all received Gold awards from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division in 2009. Water and wastewater plants win Gold awards for receiving no violations during a year.
- Forsyth County teamed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense® program to help consumers save water for future generations and reduce costs on their utility bills. WaterSense aims to decrease indoor and outdoor water use through water-efficient products and simple water-saving practices.



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Howard Road



Holtzclaw Road



Best Tasting Tap Water

Infrastructure

Transportation improvements continued to be a focus for the county in 2009, as a number of road projects were completed. Howard Road and Holtzclaw Road were both improved during 2009, thanks to funding from SPLOST VI. Another SPLOST VI project, the Ronald Reagan Boulevard extension, opened in December and stretches 1.1 miles from McGinnis Ferry Road/Union Hill Road to McFarland Parkway. The four-lane, median-divided roadway includes a five-foot sidewalk as well as a ten-foot wide multi-use trail running the entire distance from McGinnis Ferry Road to McFarland Parkway. In addition to providing motorists with an alternate to GA 400, it also provides for much-needed infrastructure in the area for economic development. Approximately 54 miles of roadway resurfacing was accomplished in 2009, along with 51 miles of milling and patching, 80 miles of road striping, and over 3,400 miles of mowing of county-maintained right-of-way.

While Georgia returned to a non-drought schedule for outdoor water use in June, the county continued to encourage water conservation. Forsyth County entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District for participation in the district-wide toilet rebate program. The program is designed as an incentive for Forsyth County Water and Sewer Department customers to replace older, inefficient toilets. More than 75 customers have already taken advantage of this rebate program. The Water and Sewer Department added 580 new accounts in 2009, bringing the total number of customers served to 43,908.

Recreation

Forsyth County is known for its stellar parks and recreation offerings. Throughout 2009, Forsyth County continued its commitment to improving the quality of life for the citizens of Forsyth County by providing quality programs, facilities and opportunities. Three phases of the Big Creek Greenway multi-purpose trail opened in 2009, providing 6.8 miles of trail for walking, jogging, biking and inline skating. The county broke ground in 2009 for Fowler Park, which is slated for completion in 2011. When complete, plans call for Fowler Park to feature fields for baseball, softball, football, soccer and lacrosse, tennis and basketball courts, walking trails, a track, pavilions, playground, ten-acre passive area, skate park and trail head for the Big Creek Greenway. Future plans for the park include a recreation center.

Properties Acquired Using Funds from the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond



Several projects were completed in 2009 with funding from the \$100 million Parks, Recreation and Green Space bond approved by voters in 2008. The projects include new fencing and other improvements at Coal Mountain, Bennett and Sharon Springs Parks; and installation of artificial turf at Midway, Bennett and Sharon Springs Parks. Just over 500 acres of land were acquired in 2009 with the funding from the Parks, Recreation and Green Space bond. Of those acres of land, nearly 400 acres are slated to serve as green space (Buice, McClure, Eagle's Beak and Windermere properties) and approximately 109 acres (Lanierland property) are slated for use as a north community park. These acquisitions are in addition to the nearly 250 acres (Harrison and Wallace Tatum properties) acquired in 2008 using bond funds.

The variety of youth and adult athletic programs offered continued to engage a large number of participants. Over 4,600 adults took part in the adult athletic programs; youth programs had over 14,170 participants.

Central Park is the home of 183 new trees, planted in December 2009 thanks to a Tree Legacy Grant from the Georgia Urban Forest Council. The new trees will not only shade parking areas and add natural beauty to the park, but also will help control storm water runoff and reduce air pollution.



excellence
in Recreation

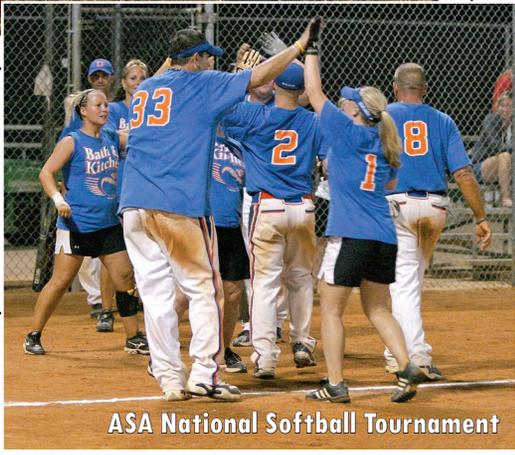
- The Parks and Recreation Department received the Amateur Softball Association's James Farrell Award of Excellence for conducting one of the highest-rated ASA national championship softball tournaments in 2009.
- In October, Georgia Recreation and Park Association (GRPA) recognized the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department as the District 7 Agency of the Year. Forsyth County is one of 39 agencies in GRPA's District 7.



Fowler Park Groundbreaking



Tree Legacy Grant



ASA National Softball Tournament



District 7 Agency of the Year

Revenues

Fiscal sustainability is one of Forsyth County government's primary goals. In 2009, that goal was put to the test as the county worked to balance sharply declining revenues while maintaining service levels for residents.

The General Fund's primary source of revenue is taxes. Drops in property taxes and sales taxes (Forsyth County's largest and second largest revenue sources, respectively), and commercial real estate property taxes were seen in 2009. On the heels of a significant decrease in revenues in 2008, Forsyth County saw a decline in revenues of \$8.2 million, or 9.35%, in 2009. After a mid-year budget adjustment and reductions by county departments and agencies, Forsyth County was able to avoid a significant deficit and realize only a small deficit at the end of the year.

Millage Rate

Compared to neighboring counties, Forsyth County continues to have one of the lowest millage rates.

MILLAGE RATE COMPARISON (County and Fire)

County	2009 Millage Rate
Gwinnett	11.78
DeKalb	10.46
Cobb	9.38
Dawson	8.14
Hall	7.76
Cherokee	7.12
Forsyth	5.68

Data Source: Georgia Department of Revenue

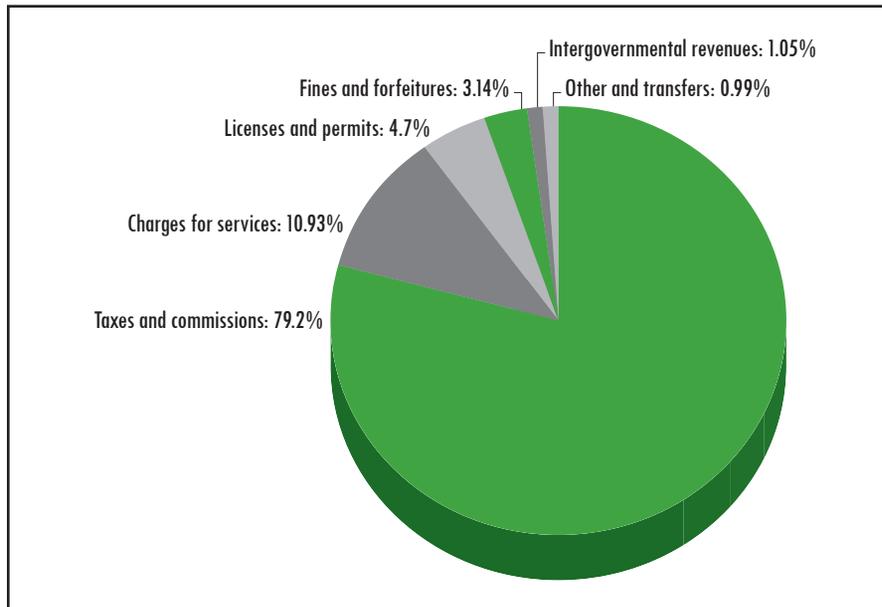
Expenditures

The majority of the services Forsyth County government provides are funded through General Fund resources. The General Fund supports the general administration of the county. Services not funded by the General Fund include the Fire Department, which is funded by a separate property tax, and the 911 Center, which is funded by land and wireless telephone charges.

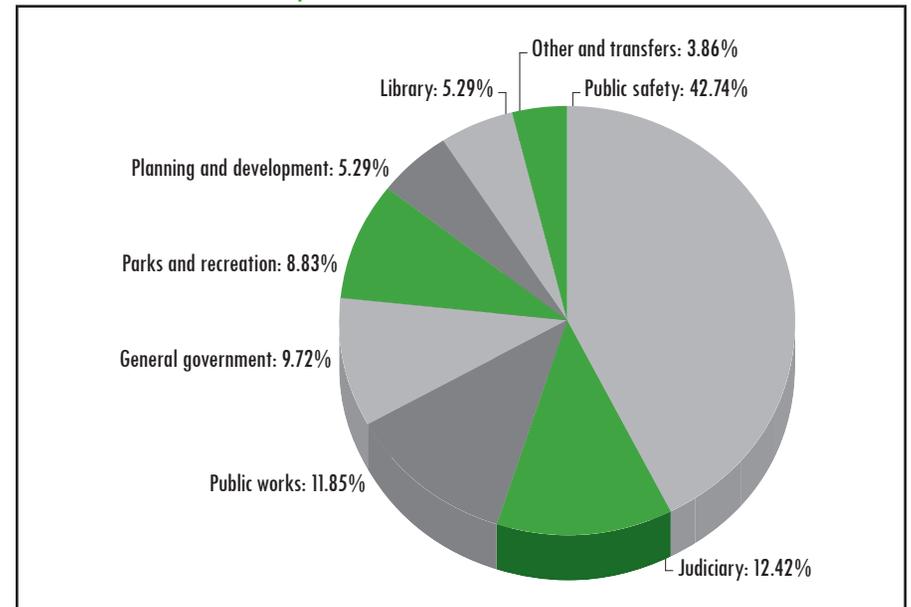
In 2009, General Fund expenditures were reduced in conjunction with the decrease in revenues.

Public safety (the sheriff, coroner and ambulance services) utilizes the largest part of the General Fund, representing 42.74% of total expenditures in 2009. Other, non-public safety General Fund expenditures include judiciary, public works, general government, parks and recreation, planning and development, library and public health. These functions accounted for 53.4% of General Fund expenditures. The remaining expenditures are for the transfer of General Fund resources to other funds.

FY 2009 General Fund Revenues



FY 2009 General Fund Expenditures



SPLOST

Forsyth County's Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) is a one-percent sales tax approved by Forsyth County citizens. This tax has provided funding for infrastructure improvements and capital projects that otherwise may not have been possible.

The current SPLOST program, SPLOST VI, was approved by voters February 5, 2008, and went into effect July 1, 2008. It will expire June 30, 2013. Original projections for the five-year program anticipated collections of approximately \$160 million. Through December 2009, approximately \$38.4 million was received. Based on these receipts, SPLOST VI revenues are not expected to meet the original projections.

The SPLOST VI funds that have come in have already been put to use on a number of projects throughout the county. Transportation projects funded in 2009 by SPLOST VI include improvements to Howard Road and Holtzclaw Road, the Ronald Reagan Boulevard extension, and nearly 54 miles of road resurfacing. Also completed with SPLOST VI funding is the acquisition of a facility to serve as a future Senior Services facility (Forsyth County's third) and payment of \$1 million toward a community meeting facility at Lanier Technical College.

Other projects slated to receive SPLOST VI funding include a variety of parks and recreation improvements, public safety improvements and the Post Road Public Library.

Bond Rating

Despite the economic downturn, Forsyth County has been able to maintain its Aa1 (Moody's) and AA+ (Standard & Poor's) bond rating. When Forsyth County issues the remaining \$17 million in Parks, Recreation and Green Space bonds, the county's bond rating will help ensure receipt of favorable interest rates on these bonds.

Grants

Forsyth County was awarded 19 grants in 2009, totaling \$1,234,908. The county received grants from federal, state and private foundations for a variety of uses including law enforcement personnel; Juvenile Court, Drug Court and DUI Court operations; senior services; public transportation; bullet proof vests; criminal alien assistance; crime victim assistance; tree planting program; litter prevention; the county's recycling program; and a courthouse digital display system.

excellence in Financial Reporting

Forsyth County earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting in 2009 from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) that was issued for FY 2008. The award represents the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. Forsyth County has received this award each year since 2000.

Date of Incorporation	December 3, 1832
Form of Government	Commission — County Manager
Total Area in Square Miles	247
2009 Population Estimate*	174,520
Historic Population*	1990: 44,083 2000: 98,407 2005: 140,393
Population Growth Ranking (April 1, 2000 – July 1, 2009 [percent])*	Sixth fastest-growing county in United States
County Government Employees in 2009	Total employees: 1,286 Full-time employees: 1,111 Part-time/seasonal employees: 175

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau





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