

*Opportunity Knocks*



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## **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**

Pictured on the front and back cover of this report are distinct doors representing different facets of Forsyth County. Some represent the county's commitment to public safety, while others represent the many recreational opportunities offered. No matter what door you pass through here in Forsyth County, you can count on the professional service and outstanding amenities that make Forsyth County a great place to call home and do business.

**Pictured on front cover from left:** Forsyth County Administration Building, Forsyth County Tax Commissioner's Sharon Springs Office, Forsyth County Public Safety Complex, Forsyth County's Hampton Park Library, Forsyth County Fire Station 2, Central Park Recreation Center Expansion.

**Pictured on back cover from left:** Forsyth County Sheriff's Office North Precinct, Midway Park Community Building, Sawnee Mountain Preserve Visitor Center, Senior Center at Charles Place, Forsyth County Courthouse, Fowler House.

## FORSYTHCOUNTY *Board of Commissioners*



### **The 2011 Forsyth County Board of Commissioners (from left):**

District 1 Commissioner and Secretary R.J. (Pete) Amos, District 2 Commissioner and Chairman Brian R. Tam, District 3 Commissioner Todd Levent, District 4 Commissioner and Vice Chairman Patrick B. Bell, and District 5 Commissioner Jim Boff

## FORSYTHCOUNTY *Administration*



**Doug Derrer**  
County Manager



**Tim Merritt**  
Deputy 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](http://www.forsythco.com).

### **Outgoing Commissioners in 2010**



**Charles Laughinghouse**



**Jim Harrell**

Forsyth County would like to thank outgoing County Commissioners Charles Laughinghouse (District 1) and Jim Harrell (District 3) for their years of service to the citizens of this community. Both commissioners left office at the end of 2010.

## *Message from the Chairman*



**'Forsyth County truly  
is a great place to call  
home.'**

Forsyth County – what a great place to call home! I am continuously reminded of what makes Forsyth County so special. Forsyth County is a great place to raise a family, complete with outstanding parks and a stellar school system. Forsyth County is also a great place to do business. The county is working to provide opportunities to businesses locating to or expanding in the county. You can read more about such initiatives on page four of this report.

Here in Forsyth County, I believe we have weathered the economic difficulties far better than many others. The county has been able to maintain the high quality services we provide citizens, even while operating on a budget that has been significantly reduced over recent years. And our bond ratings improved in 2010 for the second time in four years, putting Forsyth among the highest rated counties in Georgia.

Forsyth County truly is a great place to call home. On behalf of all of the county's elected officials, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian R. Tam'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian R. Tam  
2011 Chairman and District 2 Commissioner



## *Message from the County Manager*



**'We continually strive to provide the most effective, professional public service possible.'**

While Forsyth County government certainly faced challenges in 2010, we have elected to view those challenges as opportunities. Opportunities to operate a more efficient county government. Opportunities to find new ways of providing services to residents. Opportunities to do more with less. And I believe all of these opportunities have helped us progress, as we continually strive to provide the most effective, professional public service possible.

Forsyth County has a dedicated staff committed to serving our citizens. Whether they are repaving a road, answering a customer service phone line or issuing a building permit, every employee plays a pivotal role in the county's operations.

I hope this publication serves to better acquaint you with your county government and the many services and programs the county provides. We look forward to serving you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Doug Derrer'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Doug Derrer  
County Manager

## Opportunity Knocks in FORSYTHCOUNTY

## 400 North Opportunity Zone

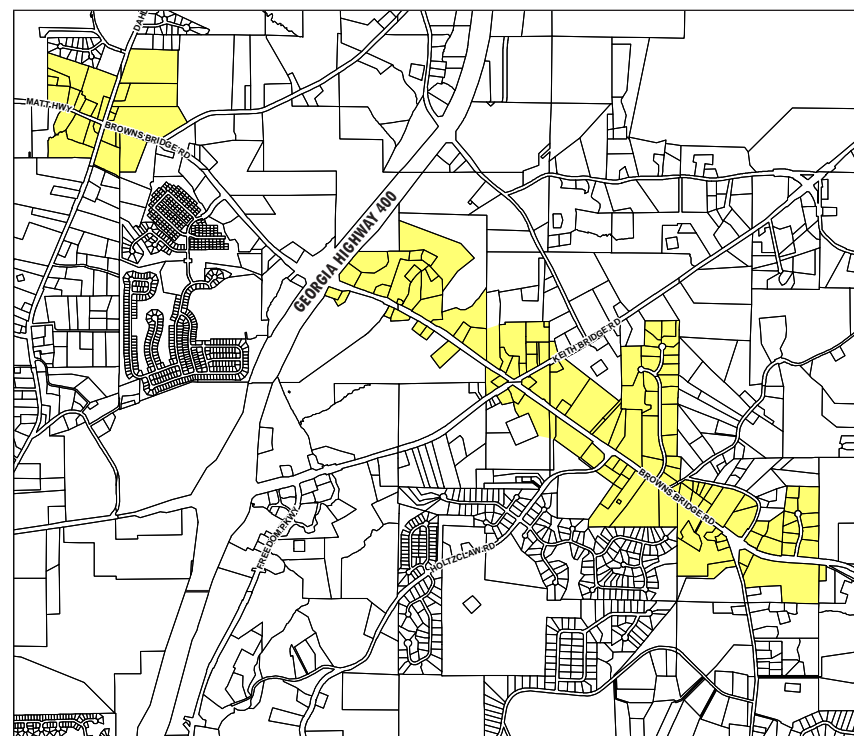
In 2010, a portion of north Forsyth County was named an Opportunity Zone by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The area, which includes various parcels along Highway 369 from Highway 9 to Mashburn Drive, was established in hopes of promoting private investment, creating jobs and increasing the tax base. The 400 North Opportunity Zone encourages redevelopment and revitalization efforts by offering expanded job tax credits to new and existing businesses.

## Local Small Business Initiative Extended

In December 2009, the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners approved extending the county's Local Small Business Initiative through calendar year 2010. The program is designed to return as much taxpayer money as possible to the local economy by providing more opportunities for Forsyth County companies to do business with the county government.

## First Vendor Symposium Held

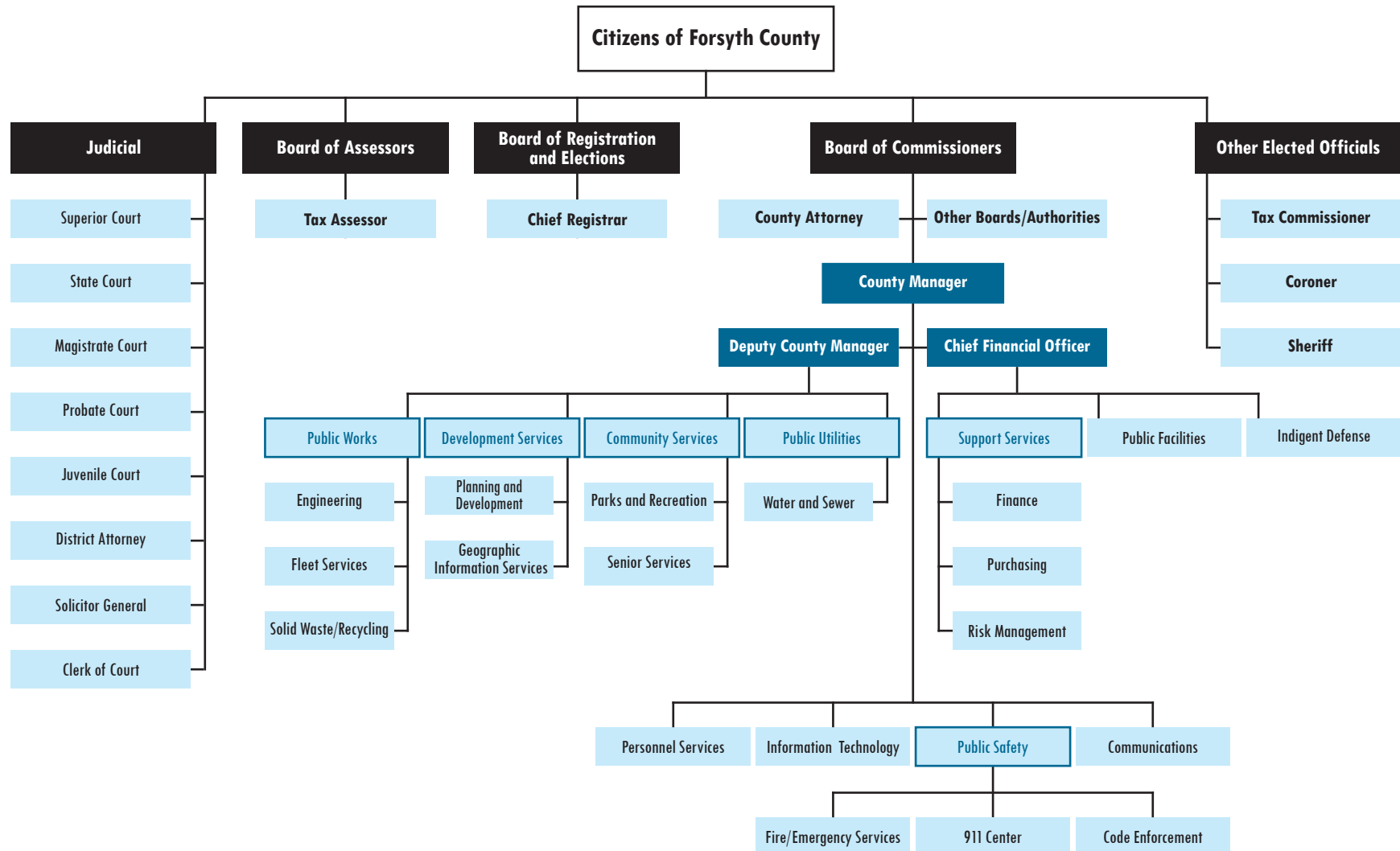
Forsyth County's first Vendor Symposium was held September 29, 2010. The event was an opportunity for vendors and contractors to meet the buyers and contracting officers from Forsyth County Procurement. The symposium, which included information on how to do business with Forsyth County, was attended by 139 firms.



## 400 North Opportunity Zone



# FORSYTHCOUNTY *Organizational Chart*



# *Planning and Building for the Future*

## **Comprehensive Plan Update Process Begun**

Forsyth County's Department of Planning and Development began in 2010 working with the community to update the Comprehensive Plan that is required to maintain the county's Qualified Local Government status. The Comprehensive Plan assesses existing conditions and seeks to adequately plan for upcoming expansion through serving as a policy guide as decisions are made related to growth and land use change. The plan addresses critical issues while incorporating a shared community vision for a preferred, future growth scenario over the next two decades.

In 2010, the draft Community Assessment and Community Participation Program were submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs after a public hearing was held in September. The *Community Agenda* public process then began in October with a kick-off open house followed by two community workshops as well as concurrent stakeholder interviews. The update will continue throughout 2011 with a series of additional public workshops.



Comprehensive Plan Update Kick-Off

## **Expansion of Antioch Road Water Treatment Facility Underway**

In May, work began to expand the Forsyth County Water Treatment Facility on Antioch Road. The expansion will further enhance the quality of finished water, increase efficiency through implementation of a backwash recycling system, and will allow for an additional 12 million gallons of water to be treated daily. The project is slated for completion in early 2012.

The Water and Sewer Department continues to grow. In 2010, 683 accounts were added, bringing the total number of customers served to 44,631.



Antioch Road Water Treatment Facility





WaterFirst® Designation



Buford Dam Road Improvements

## County Earns WaterFirst® Designation

Forsyth County's efforts in water conservation, environmental stewardship and education outreach earned the county designation as a WaterFirst® community in 2010. The county was presented with the designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs during a ceremony held March 31. At that time, Forsyth County was just the eighteenth community in the state to earn the prestigious designation.

## Transportation Improvements Completed

In 2010, Forsyth County continued its ongoing focus of improving transportation throughout the county. Included among the projects completed in 2010 were:

- Right and left turn lanes were constructed and traffic signals installed at the Bethelview Road/Drew Road intersection and the Dr. Bramblett Road/Spot Road intersection, and a 3.8-mile section of Dr. Bramblett Road was resurfaced.
- New traffic signals were installed on Bethelview Road at Bennett Parkway, and on McGinnis Ferry Road at Old Alpharetta Road.
- Culvert replacements to improve drainage were completed on Concord Road, Fowler Road, McConnell Road, Sharon Lane and Shiloh Road.
- The Old Atlanta Road at Brannon Road intersection improvement project was completed.
- A 5-foot wide sidewalk was added along James Burgess Road from Old Atlanta Road to the Rivermist subdivision.
- Design was completed for 21 intersection improvement projects and four major road widening projects.
- Intersection improvements were completed on Buford Dam Road at Samples Road, along with the repaving of a 2.6-mile section of Buford Dam Road.

## Ground Broken for New Fire Station 7

Ground was broken August 12 for the county's new Fire Station 7. New Fire Station 7 will be located at 6320 Dahlonega Highway, approximately 0.75 miles north of the current station at 5775 Dahlonega Highway. The current structure was constructed by volunteers on leased land in 1974 and has far exceeded its life expectancy. The new two double-bay, 7,333-square foot facility will replace current Fire Station 7 and will serve the Silver City area of north Forsyth County. The project is funded by SPLOST and Impact Fees, and is slated for completion in 2011.

## Forsyth County's Fire Chief Earns Top Honor

On August 7, the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs named Forsyth County Fire Chief Danny D. Bowman the 2010 Georgia Fire Chief of the Year. Bowman was selected for the prestigious award for his professional accomplishments, compassion for his troops, genuine love of the job and willingness to always put others before himself. There are 662 fire departments in Georgia.

Bowman joined the Forsyth County Fire Department in 2001, and has served as chief of department since July 2003.

### 911 Center

269,738 calls processed in 2010

### Sheriff's Office

143,361 calls for service handled in 2010

### Fire Department

11,530 alarms answered in 2010



Groundbreaking Ceremony for New Fire Station 7



Fire Chief Bowman (left) Receiving the 2010 Georgia Fire Chief of the Year Award





County Recertified StormReady®

## County Recertified as StormReady® Community

In 2010, the National Weather Service recertified Forsyth County as a StormReady® community, signaling the county has continued to maintain a high level of severe weather preparedness. In 2007, the National Weather Service first designated Forsyth County as a StormReady® community. The designation came only after meeting stringent requirements displaying the county is well prepared for severe weather events.

## Emergency Supplier Network Established

Forsyth County government took another step toward ensuring a prompt response in providing supplies and services to residents during times of an emergency by establishing in 2010 an Emergency Supplier Network. This network provides an opportunity for vendors to sign up to provide materials and/or services to Forsyth County in the event of a declared emergency. The Emergency Supplier Network would help streamline Forsyth County emergency recovery efforts.



13 Firefighters Join Fire Department

## Fire Department Graduates 13 Recruits

In a ceremony held October 8, the Fire Department graduated 13 recruits, officially welcoming them as Forsyth County firefighters. The recruits completed 12 weeks of rigorous training and education in structural and wildland firefighting; emergency medical response; motor vehicle firefighting and victim extrication; water rescue; and fire service history, traditions and etiquette. The 13 new firefighters were the first recruit class the Fire Department has had since 2007.

## Sheriff's Office Honored

In March, Mothers Against Drunk Driving Georgia (MADD-GA) named the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office the MADD-GA Statewide Agency of the Year for demonstrating excellence in implementing innovative techniques in the detection and deterrence of traffic violations and DUI. The Sheriff's Office uses numerous techniques to promote education and enforcement of impaired driving.

# Recreation

## Central Park Recreation Center Expansion Completed and Opened

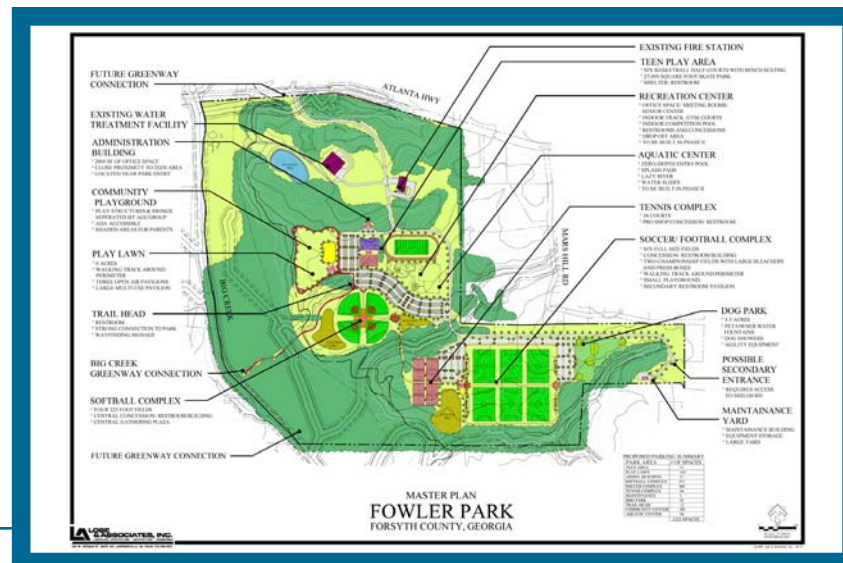
The Central Park Recreation Center expansion officially opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony September 28. The expansion adds 15,000 square feet to the facility, including three rooms for youth and adult programs as well as a large banquet room. The project was funded by the \$100 million Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by voters in 2008.

## Fowler Park Construction Continues

Throughout 2010, work continued on the new Fowler Park in south Forsyth County. Funded by the \$100 million Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond, the project came in under budget when opened in early 2011. Fowler Park features a skate park, trail head for the Big Creek Greenway, walking trails, a 5-acre passive area, large multi-use pavilion and turf amphitheater area, tennis and basketball courts, and numerous athletic fields. Fowler Park is located at 4110 Carolene Way.



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Central Park Recreation Center Expansion



Fowler Park Master Plan



Fowler Park Construction Progresses in Time for Opening in 2011





Shady Grove Campground



Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond-Funded Projects

## Improvements Made at Shady Grove Campground

During the camping off-season, improvements were made at Shady Grove Campground on the shores of Lake Lanier. The improvements, funded by the \$100 million Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond, included shoreline restoration, adding power hookups to tent sites that were previously without power, expanding pads to make spaces more adequate for today's larger recreational vehicles, and creating a grassy play area for campers to enjoy.

## Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond Dollars at Work

A number of projects were completed in 2010 with funding from the voter-approved \$100 million Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond.

- Improvements were completed at Sharon Springs Park in March. This included replacement of fencing on the baseball and softball fields, upgrading the bathroom facilities, and the addition of a new playground.
- Concrete sidewalks were added to Bennett Park in June. Fencing was also added and replaced on the park's baseball and softball fields.
- In August, a press box was added at Central Park. Fencing was added for the youth football field and lighting was added to park's walking trail.
- The parking lot at the Bethelview Road trail head to the Big Creek Greenway was expanded in September.
- The county acquired the approximately 85-acre Echols Road property in December. The property was acquired for use as green space. To date, more than 800 acres of property has been purchased with the Bond to preserve land as green space and parks for future generations.

## *Serving Community*

### **New Hampton Park Library Opens**

The Forsyth County Public Library completed construction of and opened the new Hampton Park Library at 5345 Settingdown Road in 2010. The branch is the county's third library, joining the Cumming and Sharon Forks branches. The 23,000 square-foot Hampton Park branch opened in March with over 60,000 collection items and 33 public computers. The facility hosts a wireless environment, programs for all ages, and a 100-seat meeting room. Hampton Park Library was built with funds from SPLOST, Impact Fees and a construction grant from the Georgia Public Library Service.

The library system continued to experience increased patronage in 2010. The number of library card holders increased in 2010 from 2009 by 16%, to over 69,000 card holders. The number of materials checked out from the library system also increased in 2010, with patrons checking out more than 1,735,000 items.

### **Keep Forsyth County Beautiful Launches New Initiative**

As part of its commitment to beautification and litter reduction, Keep Forsyth County Beautiful launched the Mobile Trash Unit initiative in 2010. The program offers monthly cleanup opportunities for families and for high school student volunteers to get out and make a difference in litter issues around the county. In its first year, the Mobile Trash Unit had 225 participants.

The many programs and recycling opportunities provided by Keep Forsyth County Beautiful and the Forsyth County Solid Waste and Recycling Department continued to be widely used in 2010, with over 14 million pounds of materials recycled through the county's programs and convenience centers. The county's three convenience centers accept a variety of materials for recycling, including cardboard and paperboard, glass food and beverage containers, tin food cans, books, and plastic bags.



Hampton Park Library



Keep Forsyth County Beautiful Cleanups



New Display Terminals in the Forsyth County Courthouse

## New Display Terminals Installed in Courthouse

Visitors to the Forsyth County Courthouse were provided some helpful guidance in January, thanks to new display terminals. The terminals show a daily listing of State and Superior Court case names, case numbers, courtroom numbers and times. Two monitors are located on the first floor, and one monitor is located on the second floor. A grant funded the project, and required no matching funds from the county.

## Serving Seniors

Forsyth County's commitment to serving the community's senior population continued in 2010, through programs offered at both Senior Services locations – the Center at Charles Place and the Hearthstone Lodge Community Center – as well as through outreach programs.



The Meals on Wheels Kitchen Prepares Thousands of Meals Annually

Almost 150 people were served in 2010 by the Senior Services' Sunshine Club Alzheimer's Respite Program, which provides an environment of comfort, enjoyment and safety for Alzheimer's patients while offering their caregivers an often much-needed reprieve. In 2010, the program provided caregivers 5,784 hours of respite. The Meals on Wheels home-delivered meal program provided over 43,000 meals to home-bound seniors. Participation in the variety of wellness activities offered by Senior Services topped 25,000 in 2010.

Plans continued in 2010 for the renovation of a facility that will become the county's third Senior Services location. The Lakeland Southern Baptist Church facility in the south end of the county was purchased by Forsyth County in 2009, and will become the Sexton Hall Enrichment Center. Funded by SPLOST VI, the center is slated to open in late 2011.



# Financial Outlook

## Revenues

Forsyth County government realized some progress toward one of its primary goals of fiscal sustainability with revenues beginning their recovery in 2010. The sharp declines of 2009 were followed by a modest reversal this past year.

The General Fund's primary source of revenue is taxes. Both property taxes and sales taxes (Forsyth County's largest and second largest revenue sources, respectively) came in above budget in 2010. The Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), which responds quickly to economic conditions, increased 15 percent, or \$3.1 million last year, after falling 17 percent, or \$4.3 million, from 2008 to 2009. Along with continued careful budgeting, the stronger revenues enabled the county to maintain effective service levels for residents.

## Millage Rate

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

### Excellence in Financial Reporting

Forsyth County earned the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) that was issued in 2010 for FY 2009. 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.

### MILLAGE RATE COMPARISON (County and Fire)

County	2010 Millage Rate
Gwinnett	11.78
DeKalb	10.46
Cobb	9.38
Dawson	8.14
Hall	7.76
Cherokee	7.67
<b>Forsyth</b>	<b>6.71</b>
Data Source: Georgia Department of Revenue	



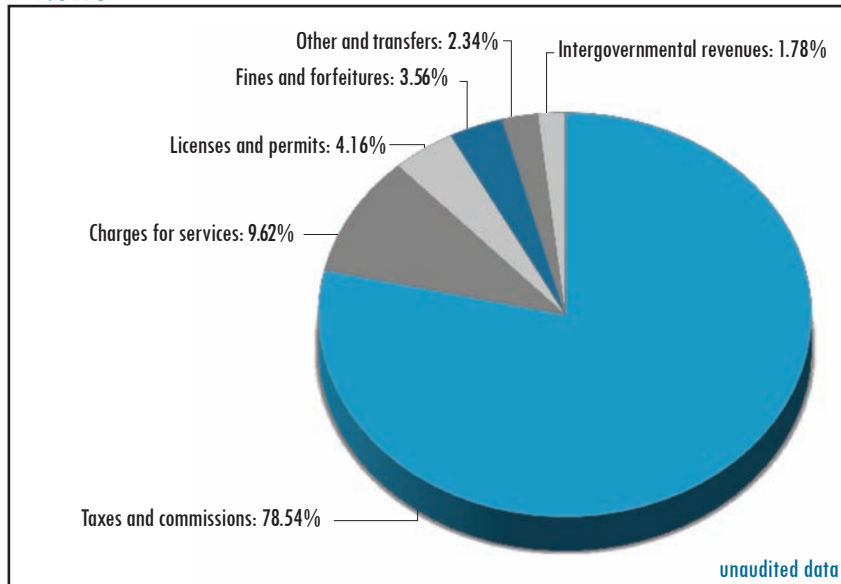
## Expenditures

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.

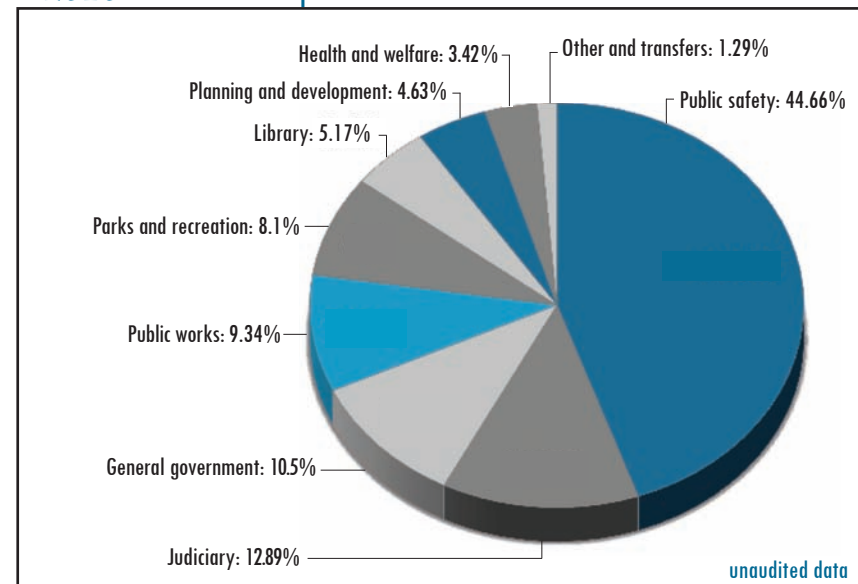
In 2010, General Fund expenditures were reduced in conjunction with the decrease in budgeted revenues.

Public safety (the sheriff, coroner and ambulance services) utilizes the largest part of the General Fund, representing 44.66 percent of total expenditures in 2010. Other, non-public safety General Fund expenditures include judiciary, general government, public works, parks and recreation, library, planning and development, and public health. These functions accounted for 54.05 percent of General Fund expenditures. The remaining expenditures are for the transfer of General Fund resources to other funds.

**FY 2010 General Fund Revenues**



**FY 2010 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 2010, approximately \$66 million was received. Based on these receipts, SPLOST VI revenues are not expected to meet the original projections.

The SPLOST VI funds received thus far have been utilized for a number of projects throughout the county. Transportation projects funded in 2010 by SPLOST VI include intersection improvements on Buford Dam Road at Samples Road, along with the repaving of a portion of Buford Dam Road; installation of a new traffic signal and addition of right and left turn lanes at the Dr. Bramblett Road at Spot Road intersection; and construction of a 5-foot wide sidewalk along James Burgess Road from Old Atlanta Road to the Rivermist subdivision. SPLOST VI also funded the resurfacing in 2010 of 168 roads, covering 61.95 miles.

Also completed in 2010 with SPLOST VI funding were a number of parks and recreation improvements, including new concession and restroom facilities and new dugout covers at Bennett Park; a new walkway at Ducktown Community Park, connecting the park's walking trail to the restrooms; and the addition of bleacher and dugout covers, along with repaving of the walking trail at Sawnee Mountain Park.

## **Bond Rating**

Despite the challenging economy, Forsyth County has been able to maintain its excellent bond ratings. In 2010, the county's bond ratings improved for the second time in four years. Forsyth County, rated Aaa (Moody's) and AA+ (Standard & Poor's), is one of the highest rated counties in Georgia.

## **Grants**

Forsyth County was awarded 28 grants in 2010, totaling \$1,364,831. The county received grants from federal, state and private foundations for a variety of uses including environmental education; law enforcement personnel; Juvenile Court, Drug Court and DUI Court operations; senior services; public transportation; bullet proof vests; fire rescue; criminal alien assistance; crime victim assistance; and an assistive listening device system for the Courthouse.

## **FORSYTH**COUNTY *at a Glance*



Date of Incorporation	December 3, 1832
Form of Government	Commission — County Manager
Total Area in Square Miles	247
2010 Population*	175,511
Historic Population*	1990: 44,083 2000: 98,407 2005: 140,393
County Government Employees in 2010	Total employees: 1,435 Full-time employees: 1,108 Part-time/seasonal employees: 327

\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau



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