

2011 FORSYTHCOUNTY Annual Report

Preserving Community



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

Forsyth County's natural beauty and stellar parks and recreation offerings are two things for which the community is well known. The county government places an emphasis on preserving the area's natural resources and beauty, while also working to continually enhance parks and recreational opportunities available to citizens.

Pictured on the cover is the approximately 85-acre Echols Road property, acquired by the county in December 2010 through the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by Forsyth County voters in 2008. In October 2011, ground was broken on this property for a green space passive use park – to be called Haw Creek Park – slated to open in 2012.

This new green space passive use park is just one example of Forsyth County's ongoing commitment to preserving community.



Board of Commissioners

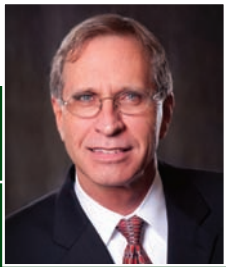
The mission of the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is to exercise the powers, duties and responsibilities vested in and imposed upon it as the duly constituted governing authority of Forsyth County. The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is made up of five members, each living in a specific 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.



The 2012 Forsyth County Board of Commissioners (from left):
District 1 Commissioner R.J. (Pete) Amos, District 2 Commissioner Brian R. Tam,
District 3 Commissioner and Secretary Todd Levent, District 4 Commissioner and Vice Chairman Patrick B. Bell,
and District 5 Commissioner and Chairman Jim Boff

Administration



Doug Derrer
County Manager



Tim Merritt
Deputy County Manager



Message from the Chairman

The theme of this annual report – ‘Preserving Community’ – truly embodies what Forsyth County is all about. Not only do we have an amazing community today, but we are also continually working to both enhance and preserve it. One such example is the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by county voters in February 2008. Through this bond, Forsyth County has been able to acquire more than 800 acres of property, allowing us to preserve this land as green space and parks for future generations to enjoy. As you will read about in this publication, work has been completed and is underway on a number of Bond-funded projects.

Our amazing parks and green space areas are just one reason Forsyth County is such a great place to call home. Our tax rates are among the lowest in metro Atlanta; the county’s finances are strong; and we have a county government staff dedicated to providing outstanding public service. The number of building permits issued for new residential units in unincorporated Forsyth County has continued an upward trend in each of the past three years. Sixteen economic development projects in 2011 – made possible by the cooperative efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, county, city, school system and state – were forecasted to create upwards of 1,000 new jobs and generate more than \$42 million in new capital investment.

There are many reasons to be proud to call Forsyth County home; many reasons to enjoy and preserve this wonderful community.

On behalf of Forsyth County’s elected officials, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

Jim Boff
2012 Chairman and District 5 Commissioner



*‘Not only do we have an amazing **community** today,
but we are also continually working to both **enhance** and **preserve** it.’*

Message from the County Manager

Service. This one word sums up the focus of your Forsyth County government staff.

While the employees of the county perform a wide variety of functions – everything from answering 911 calls and paving roads to maintaining our park facilities and reviewing building plans – the focus of all our team members is service. We are here to serve our residents and businesses and we take that task very seriously, priding ourselves on providing the most effective, professional public service possible.

The county government continually explores opportunities not only for improved service but also for improved efficiency. As stewards of your tax dollars, we work diligently to provide the high quality services our citizens have come to expect from Forsyth County government, doing so in a cost-effective manner.

It is with a great deal of pride we present this annual report, highlighting the accomplishments of Forsyth County in 2011. We hope this publication better acquaints you with your county government and the many services and programs provided.

On behalf of all of the Forsyth County government employees, we look forward to serving you soon.

Sincerely,



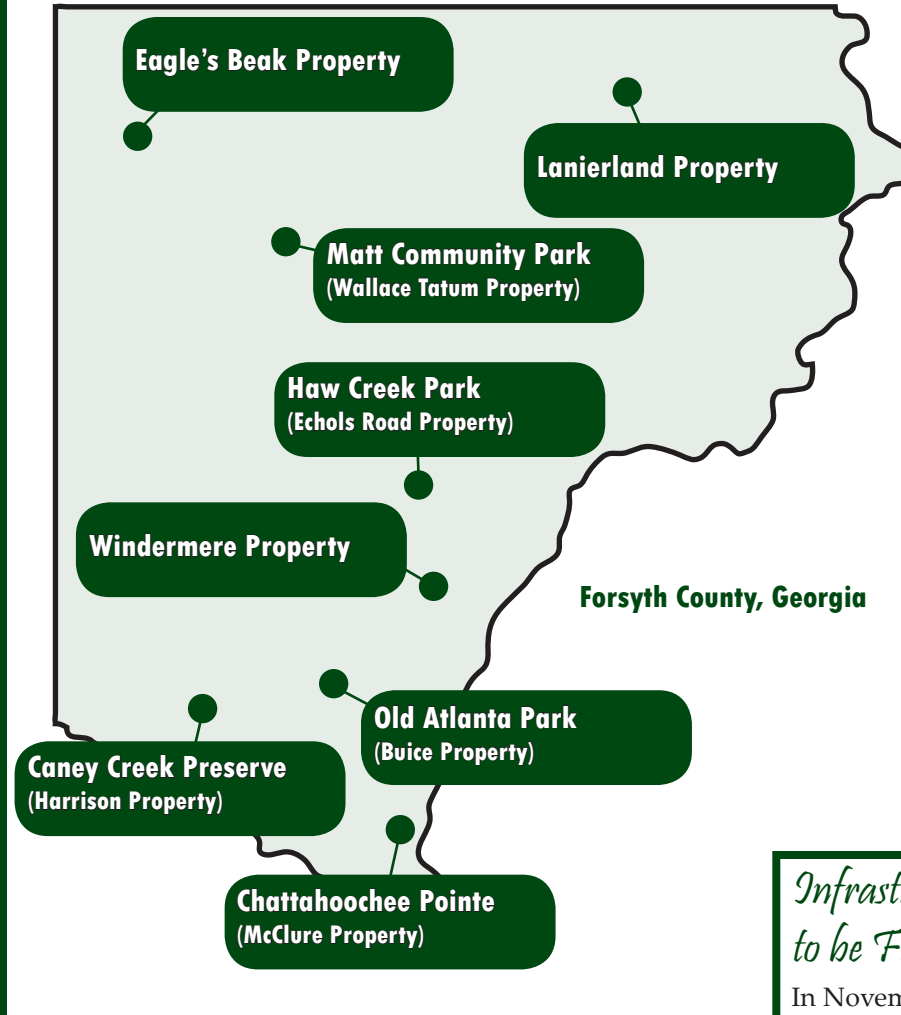
Doug Derrer
County Manager

*'We are here to **serve** our residents and businesses and we take that task very seriously, priding ourselves on providing the most **effective, professional** public service possible.'*



FORSYTHCOUNTY

Preserving and Preparing for the Future



Green Space and Parks Preserved for Future Generations

To date, more than 800 acres of property has been purchased via the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by voters in 2008 (see map at left). Acquisition of this land allows for it to be preserved as green space and parks for future generations. See page 11 for details on Bond-funded projects underway in 2011.



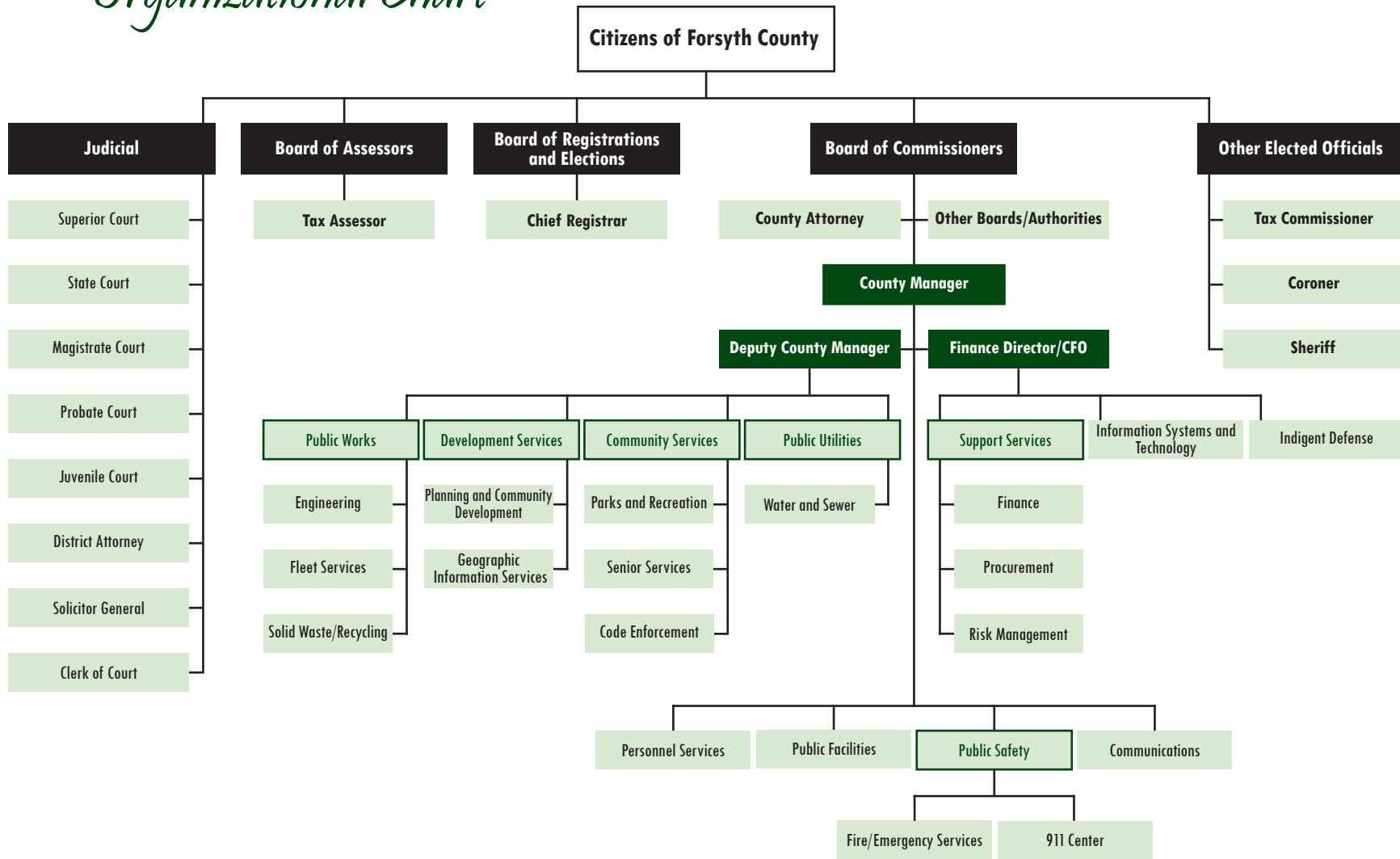
Infrastructure Improvements to be Funded by SPLOST Continuation

In November 2011, Forsyth County voters approved a continuation of the current Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program. County projects to be funded by the SPLOST VII program include a new courthouse and parking facilities, jail expansion, emergency raw water generator, transportation projects, scheduled replacement of fire engines, expansion and renovation of the Sharon Forks Library, and an animal shelter.



FORSYTHCOUNTY

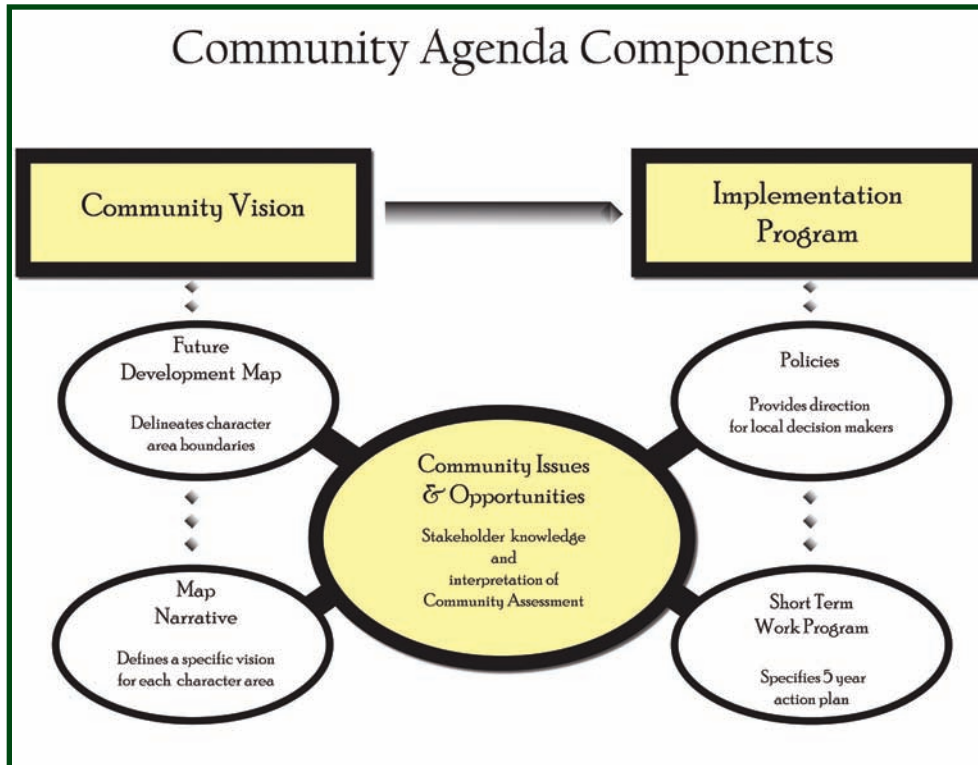
Organizational Chart





FORSYTHCOUNTY

Building Community

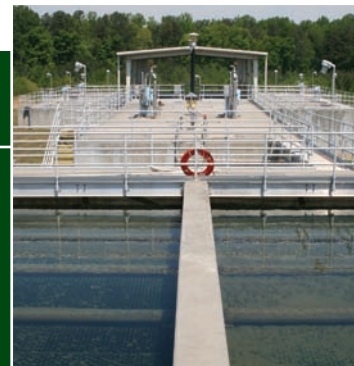


Comprehensive Plan Update

Forsyth County's Department of Planning and Community Development completed the public participation process for the *Community Agenda*, the final component of the Comprehensive Plan update, which encompasses the community's vision and implementation measures to attain the plan's long-term goals. Public participation began during the fall of 2010 and continued throughout 2011, incorporating feedback from a total of seven community workshops and seven steering committee meetings as well as two public hearings. The *Community Agenda* draft was then submitted to the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission in December of 2011 for state review and approval. The Comprehensive Plan update was adopted in early 2012.

Expansion of Water Treatment Plant

Work continued throughout 2011 to expand the Forsyth County Water Treatment Plant on Antioch Road. The expansion, which began in May 2010, will further enhance the quality of finished water, increase efficiency through implementation of a backwash recycling system, and provide the capability to treat an additional 12 million gallons of water daily. The project is slated for completion in 2012.





Transportation Improvements

In 2011, Forsyth County continued its ongoing commitment to improving transportation throughout the county. Included among the projects completed in 2011 were 13 intersection improvement projects; resurfacing of 190 roads covering nearly 60 miles; striping of 120 miles of roadways; construction of a roundabout at Hopewell and Jot-em-Down Roads; and replacement of the culvert at Watson Road at Yellow Creek.

The Forsyth County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Update was approved by the Board of Commissioners in 2011, following public meetings to garner community input on the plan. The CTP, which includes the city of Cumming, is a blueprint designed to guide overall transportation development during a 20-year time period. The CTP identifies strategies, projects, costs and funding sources to adequately serve the travel demand for the short, intermediate and long-range time frames.





FORSYTHCOUNTY

Protecting Community



New Fire Station 7 Opens

On June 24, the Forsyth County Fire Department officially opened new Fire Station 7 in north Forsyth County. New Fire Station 7 is located at 6320 Dahlonega Highway in the Silver City community approximately 0.75 miles north of the former Fire Station 7, which it replaced. That structure was constructed by volunteers on leased land in 1974 and had far exceeded its life expectancy. The new two-bay, 7,333-square foot facility was funded by SPLOST V and Impact Fees.



Ground Broken for New Fire Station 4

On November 14, ground was broken for new Fire Station 4, which will be located at 3910 Evans Road, adjacent to the current station. That structure was constructed by volunteers in 1974 and has far exceeded its life expectancy. The new two-bay, approximately 7,333-square foot facility will replace current Fire Station 4 and will serve the Ducktown area of west Forsyth County. The project is funded by SPLOST VI and Impact Fees, and is slated for completion in the fall of 2012.

Fire Department Graduates Six Recruits

In a ceremony held December 9, the Fire Department graduated six 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 recruits filled existing vacancies within the department's Suppression Division.

Sheriff's Office Honored with International and State Awards

The Forsyth County Sheriff's Office earned first place in the 2011 International Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement Challenge Program. The recognition came for the agency's work to combine officer training, public information and enforcement to reduce crashes and injuries. This marked the fourth time the agency has received the award. In 2011, the Sheriff's Office was also awarded first place in its size category in the overall Governor's Challenge program, recognizing outstanding achievements in highway safety enforcement and education, and received a special category award for motorcycle safety.

911 Center

261,428 calls processed in 2011

Sheriff's Office

136,640 calls for service handled in 2011

Fire Department

11,566 alarms answered in 2011

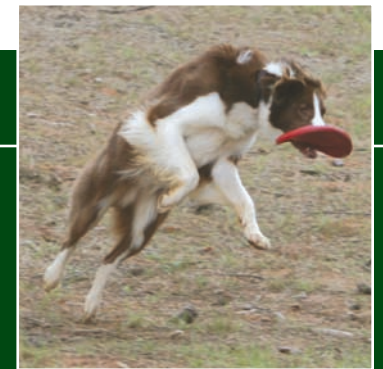


FORSYTHCOUNTY *Recreation*



Fowler Park Opens

The new approximately 85-acre Fowler Park opened for residents to enjoy in February 2011. Fowler Park features the county's first skate park, a dog park, a trail head for the Big Creek Greenway multi-use trail, walking trails, a 5-acre passive area, tennis and basketball courts, and numerous athletic fields. Construction of the park was funded by the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by voters in 2008, and was completed under budget. Fowler Park is located at 4110 Carolene Way, off of Highway 9 across from the intersection with Castleberry Road in south Forsyth.





Work Begins on Two New Recreation Centers

Work began in 2011 for two new recreation centers – one each at Fowler Park and Old Atlanta Park (formerly referred to as the Buice property). The new recreation centers, which opened in February 2012, were made possible by the voter-approved Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond and by Impact Fees.

Ground Broken for Four Green Space Passive Use Parks

The county held groundbreaking ceremonies in October for four new green space passive use parks – Old Atlanta Park, Caney Creek Preserve (formerly referred to as the Harrison property), Haw Creek Park (formerly referred to as the Echols Road property) and Chattahoochee Pointe (formerly referred to as the McClure property). The acquisition of these properties – which together total approximately 282 acres – was funded by the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond. Construction of these passive use parks is funded by a combination of the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond, SPLOST and Impact Fees. These new parks are expected to be completed in the summer of 2012 and will include such features as pavilions, natural playgrounds, a mountain bike trail, a multi-use trail for pedestrians and cross-country runners, a gated zero-depth water feature and a dog park.





FORSYTHCOUNTY *Serving Community*

New Facility Serves Active Adults

Forsyth County Senior Services opened its third facility – the Sexton Hall Enrichment Center – on September 30. Focused on providing life-long learning opportunities for active adults ages 50+, the center offers programs and activities such as art, music, dancing, fitness, technology and continuing education. Acquisition and renovation of the facility, which is located in the southern portion of the county, was funded by SPLOST VI.



Drive-Through Service Added at Tax Commissioner's Main Office

Residents visiting the main office of the Forsyth County Tax Commissioner's Office, located at 1092 Tribble Gap Road, may now enjoy the added convenience of drive-through service. Two new drive-through windows were added in October 2011 to accept property tax payments, process tag renewals and issue disabled persons parking placards. In addition to providing convenience for customers, the drive-through windows are reducing visitor traffic inside the main office, helping to keep both lines and wait times short.

Library System Goes Digital

The Forsyth County Public Library opened its eLibrary in 2011. This virtual branch – a library of clicks, not bricks – allows library patrons access to a world of digital resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the comfort of home. By the end of the year, the library's rapidly growing electronic collection contained more than 2,600 eBooks, which patrons can read on a variety of electronic devices; 1,400 eAudiobooks; and more than 6,000 streaming eVideos on a variety of subjects. In addition, the library subscribes to 38 premium online resources in its eReference collection, including investment information and language learning programs.

The library continued to experience increased usage in 2011, with more than 494,000 visits to the three branches, more than 169,000 information questions answered by staff, and more than 1,898,000 items checked out by patrons.

Keeping Forsyth County Beautiful

In 2011, the many programs and recycling opportunities provided by Keep Forsyth County Beautiful (KFCB) and the Forsyth County Solid Waste and Recycling Department continued to be widely used. In early 2011, KFCB accepted more than 6,000 Christmas trees during the annual "Bring One for the Chipper" Christmas tree recycling event. A wood chipper processes the trees into mulch. 2011 was the first full year the county has accepted electronics for recycling at the Tolbert Street Convenience Center, contributing to the more than 226,000 pounds of electronics recycled countywide in 2011. Volunteers continued to support the various KFCB litter cleanup efforts, with 674 volunteers taking part in 105 Adopt-A-Road cleanups, removing 513 bags of trash from county roadways. Volunteer efforts also positively impacted the county's waterways in 2011, with 17 organized waterway cleanups during which 658 volunteers removed 363 bags of trash and more than 1,660 pounds of debris.

The county's three convenience centers accept a variety of materials for recycling, including cardboard and paperboard, glass food and beverage containers, tin/steel cans, books, and plastic bags. In 2011, the centers joined Fire Station 1 in serving as drop-off locations for worn-out American flags in need of a proper retirement.





FORSYTHCOUNTY

Financial Outlook

Revenues

Forsyth County continued to realize progress toward one of its primary goals of fiscal sustainability with revenues continuing their recovery in 2011. The sharp declines in 2009 were followed by modest reversals in both 2010 and 2011.

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 2011. The Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), which responds quickly to economic conditions, increased 3.9 percent, or \$2 million, in 2011 over 2010. Along with continued careful budgeting, the stronger revenues enabled the county to maintain effective service levels for residents.

Millage Rate

Forsyth County's millage rate for Maintenance and Operations and Fire combined is 6.787. 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 that was issued in 2011 for Fiscal Year 2010. 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 Maintenance and Operations and Fire)

County	2011 Millage Rate
DeKalb	12.130
Gwinnett	11.780
Cobb	10.780
Cherokee	8.494
Dawson	8.138
Hall	7.900
Forsyth	6.787

Data Source: Georgia Department of Revenue

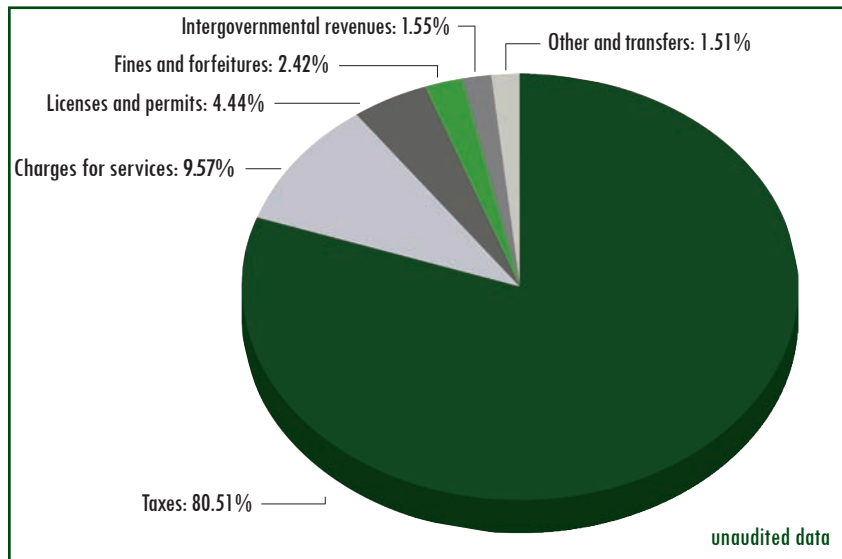
Expenditures

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; the 911 Center, which is funded by land and wireless telephone charges; and the Water and Sewer Department and the Solid Waste and Recycling Department, both of which are supported by user fees rather than by tax dollars.

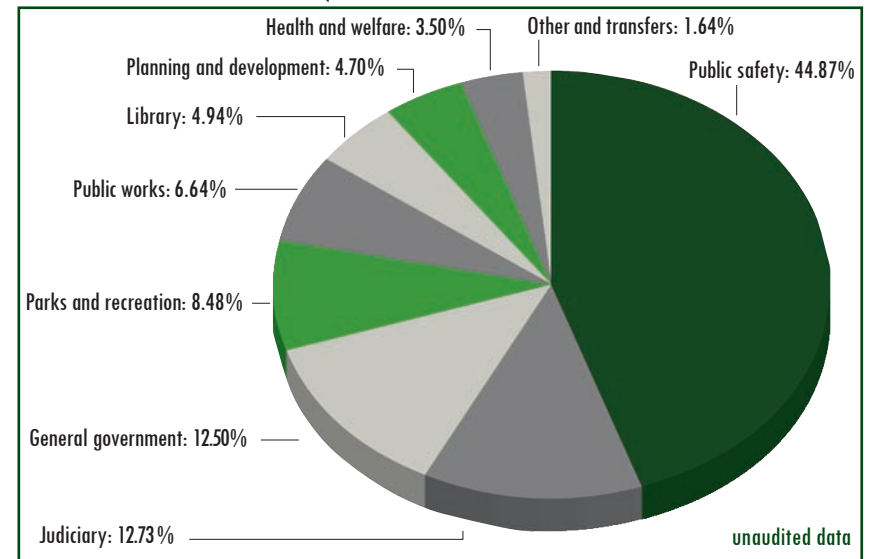
In 2011, the adopted General Fund expenditure budget totaled \$88.2 million. General Fund expenditures in 2011 came in under budget, at approximately \$86.3 million.

Public safety (the sheriff, coroner and ambulance services) utilizes the largest portion of the General Fund, representing 44.87 percent of total expenditures in 2011. Other, non-public safety General Fund expenditures include judiciary, general government, parks and recreation, public works, library, planning and development, and public health. These functions accounted for 53.49 percent of General Fund expenditures in 2011. The remaining expenditures are for the transfer of General Fund resources to other funds.

FY 2011 General Fund Revenues



FY 2011 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 2011, approximately \$95.6 million was received. Based on these receipts, SPLOST VI revenues are not expected to meet the original projections.

SPLOST VI funds have been utilized for a number of projects throughout the county. Transportation projects funded by SPLOST VI in 2011 include placement of street lights along State Route 141 from GA 400 to Majors Road; construction of a roundabout at Hopewell and Jot-em-Down roads; and a number of intersection improvements throughout the county. SPLOST VI also funded the resurfacing in 2011 of 190 roads, covering nearly 60 miles.

Also completed in 2011 with SPLOST VI funding was the renovation of the facility that serves as the Senior Services' new Sexton Hall Enrichment Center, located in south Forsyth County. Improvements to a number of county parks were funded by SPLOST VI, including construction of an additional parking lot at both Bennett and Midway parks, the paving of a parking lot at Ducktown Park, and the installation of turf fields at Central Park, Sawnee Mountain Park and Sharon Springs Park. SPLOST VI is also helping to fund new Fire Station 4 in west Forsyth County, construction of which began in 2011.

On November 8, 2011, Forsyth County voters approved the continuation of the SPLOST program, with their approval of SPLOST VII. SPLOST VII collections will begin in July 2013, following the expiration of the current SPLOST VI program. The collections will continue for six years, through June 2019. County projects slated to be completed with SPLOST VII funding include a new courthouse and parking facilities, jail expansion, emergency raw water generator, transportation projects, scheduled replacement of fire engines, expansion and renovation of the Sharon Forks Library, and an animal shelter. The referendum was held in 2011 in order to take advantage of lower construction costs for the jail expansion, courthouse and parking facilities, as the county can bond the future SPLOST VII revenue and begin building these projects at today's lower construction costs.

Bond Rating

Forsyth County continues to maintain its excellent bond ratings. In 2011, Forsyth County maintained its Aaa (Moody's) and AA+ (Standard & Poor's) ratings. Forsyth is one of only three counties in Georgia with the Aaa rating from Moody's.

Grants

Forsyth County was awarded 22 grants in 2011, totaling \$2,744,322. The county received grants from federal, state and private foundations for a variety of uses including law enforcement personnel; environmental education; environmental restoration; emergency preparedness; Juvenile Court; Drug Court; DUI Court operations; senior services; public transportation; criminal alien assistance; road improvements; and crime victim assistance.

FORSYTHCOUNTY *at a Glance*

Date of Incorporation

December 3, 1832

Form of Government

Commission — County Manager

Total Area in Square Miles

247

Historic Population*

1990: 44,083
2000: 98,407
2010: 175,511

2011 Population Estimate*

181,840

**Population Growth Ranking
(April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2011)*+**

Thirty-third fastest growing county in the United States

County Government Employees in 2011

Total employees: 1,312
Full-time employees: 1,114
Part-time/seasonal employees: 198

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

+ Among U.S. counties with 10,000 or more population in 2011



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FORSYTHCOUNTY

Board of Commissioners

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