

FORSYTHCOUNTY 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



Forsyth County Government

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.

FORSYTHCOUNTY

Date of Incorporation: December 3, 1832

Form of Government: Commission-County Manager

Total Area in Square Miles: 247

2012 Population Estimate: 187,928*

County Government Employees in 2012

Total employees: 1,314

Full-time employees: 1,127

Part-time employees: 187

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Pictured on the Cover

**Haw Creek Park
opened in June**



**Midway Park Stream Restoration
Project completed in May**



**Ground
broken for
Post Road
Library in July**



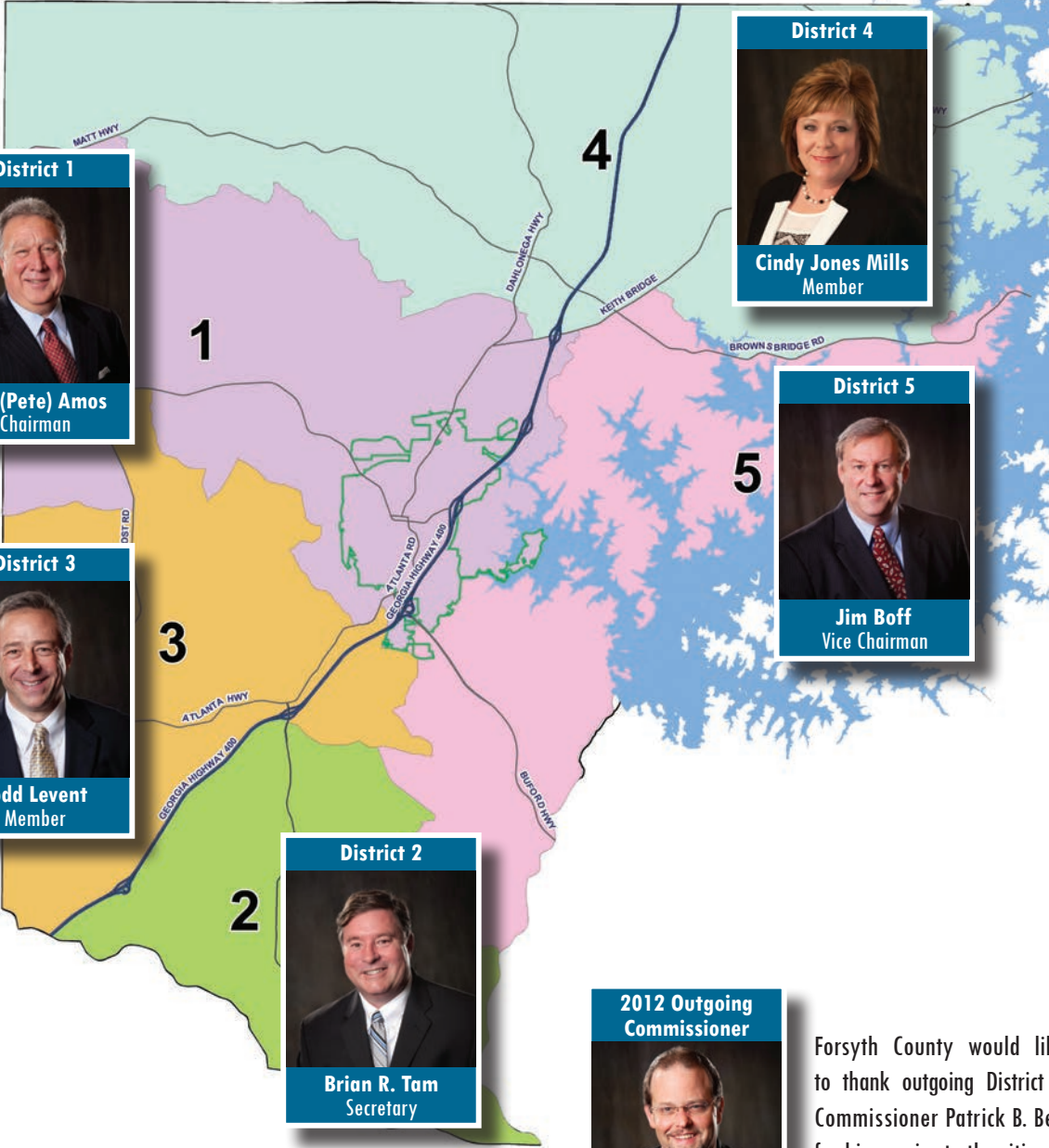
**New Fire Station 4
opened in
November**




**Fowler Park
Recreation Center
opened in
February**



Board of Commissioners

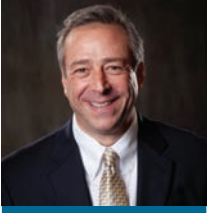


District 1




R.J. (Pete) Amos
Chairman

District 3



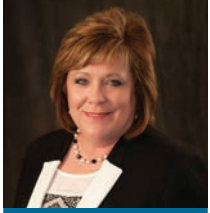
Todd Levent
Member

District 2




Brian R. Tam
Secretary

District 4




Cindy Jones Mills
Member

District 5



Jim Boff
Vice Chairman

2012 Outgoing Commissioner



Patrick B. Bell

Forsyth County would like to thank outgoing District 4 Commissioner Patrick B. Bell for his service to the citizens of this community. Bell left office at the end of 2012.

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is made up of five members, each living in a specific district and elected by district 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.


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 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 operates under the commission-county manager form of government.

Administration

County Manager



Doug Derrer

Deputy County Manager



Tim Merritt

Message from the Chairman



'Forsyth County remains a place people want to call home, evidenced by our building permit numbers.'

I could not be more proud to serve as the District 1 commissioner and chairman for the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners. This community is one of a kind, and I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to serve its residents.

As has been the case for the past several years, Forsyth County has continued to make progress despite continued economic challenges nationwide. Forsyth County remains a place people want to call home, evidenced by our building permit numbers. In 2012, nearly 2,300 new residential dwelling units were permitted, compared to the just less than 1,200 that were permitted in 2011. With our excellent public safety services, great parks and quality infrastructure projects – several of which you will read about in this report – it is no surprise we are a community to which many people are drawn. And on top of all of the wonderful amenities found here, Forsyth County also maintains tax rates among the lowest in the metro Atlanta area.

I hope you find this publication helpful in learning more about Forsyth County government and extend my sincere thanks for the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R.J. Amos', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R.J. (Pete) Amos
2013 Chairman and District 1 Commissioner

Message from the County Manager



'We recognize and appreciate the trust placed in us, and it is an honor to serve you.'

Forsyth County is pleased to provide this annual report, highlighting projects, news and events from 2012. In this publication you will read about a variety of initiatives including new fire stations, a stream restoration project and adoption of the county's Comprehensive Plan update, just to name a few. A tremendous amount of work is put in behind the scenes to these and the other projects included in this report. The staff you have working for you at Forsyth County government is dedicated, talented and committed to providing excellent service.

Throughout 2012, a great deal of planning and preparation was devoted to the county's new courthouse and jail, which were approved by voters in November 2011 as part of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) VII program. Construction is expected to begin in 2013 on this project that will dramatically change the look of downtown Cumming. As we manage this and many other projects, know that being good stewards of your tax dollars is of paramount importance to county staff and officials. We recognize and appreciate the trust placed in us, and it is an honor to serve you.

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

EXCELLENCE

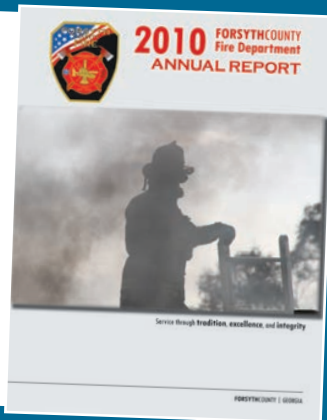
Abounds

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

For the 11th consecutive year, Forsyth County was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. The recognition was presented for the county's comprehensive annual financial report issued for Fiscal Year 2010.

Fire Department Annual Report

The Forsyth County Fire Department's 2010 Annual Report earned two awards in the National Association of County Information Officers 2012 Awards of Excellence Competition. The publication received a 'Superior' award in the competition's annual reports category and was also named 'Best in Class.'



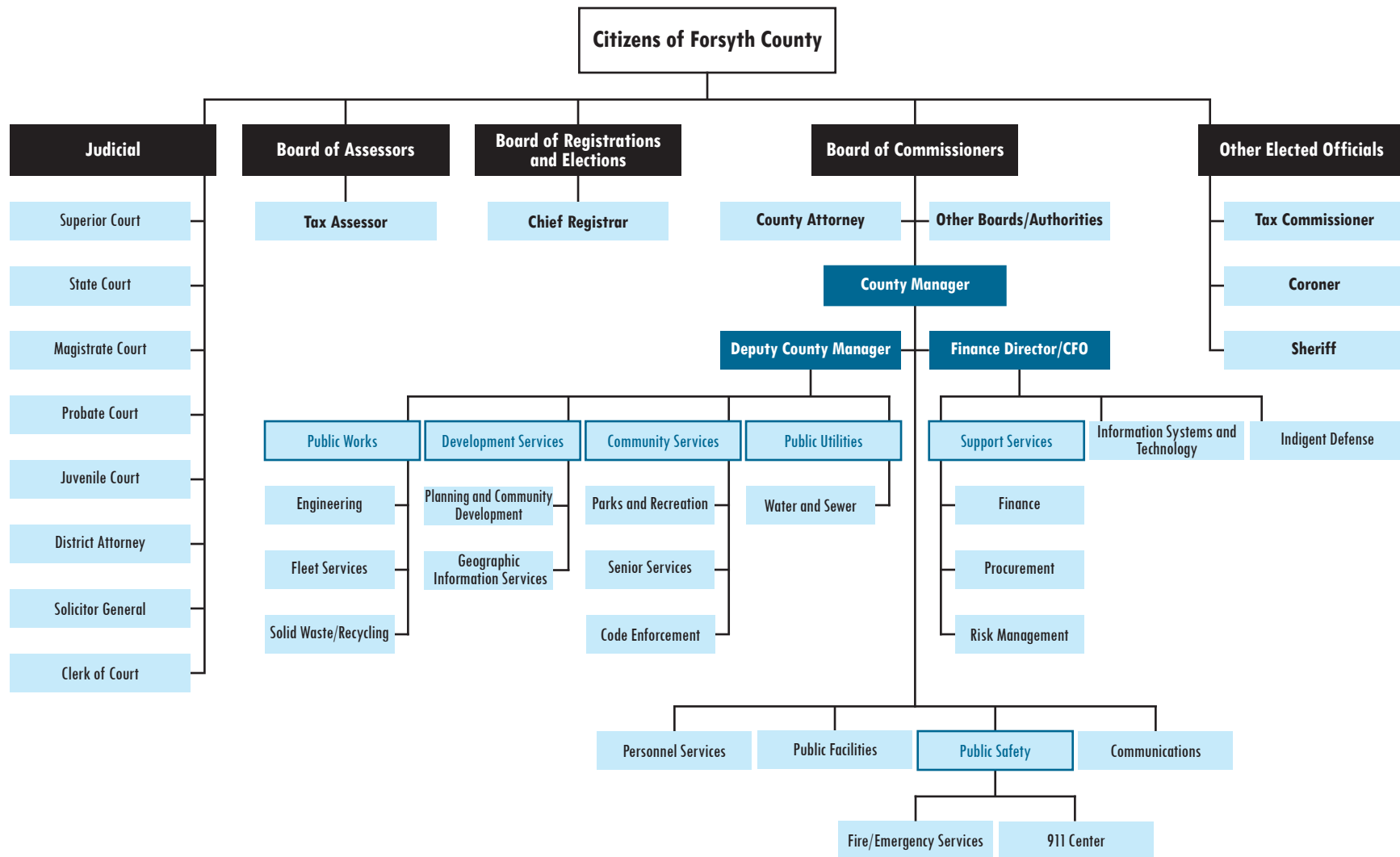
Midway Park Stream Restoration Project

Forsyth County's first stream restoration project received the 2012 Outstanding New Initiative Grand Award by the Georgia Urban Forest Council. The stream restoration project is located inside Midway Park and was completed in May. It was designed to reduce bed and bank erosion and sedimentation; improve channel stability, water quality, habitat and overall function of the stream; and restore, enhance and protect riparian wildlife corridors. The project was supported by a United States Environmental Protection Agency 319(h) grant administered by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.



Sheriff's Office Garner's Accolades

The Forsyth County Sheriff's Office received the International Traffic Safety Award from the International Association of Chiefs of Police in recognition of the agency's promotion of traffic safety. The office was also named the top overall law enforcement agency in its category by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, in addition to taking the top award in the underage alcohol and motorcycle safety categories.



FORSYTHCOUNTY Organizational Chart

2012 *in Review*

Two New Recreation Centers Open

Forsyth County Parks and Recreation opened two new recreation centers in February, one each at Old Atlanta Park and Fowler Park. The new recreation centers were made possible by the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond approved by Forsyth County voters in 2008 and by Impact Fees. Each of the new approximately 40,000-square foot recreation centers includes two basketball gymnasiums, an indoor walking track, cardio/weight membership room, fitness studio, multi-purpose/art studio, dance studio, and a community room with a warming kitchen. The centers offer a variety of athletic programs, summer camps and recreational activities including fitness, dance, art, martial arts, gymnastics, and special interest classes.



Transportation Improvements

Forsyth County's commitment to improving transportation throughout the county continued in 2012. New traffic signals were installed at SR 141 and Stoney Point Road; Jot-em-Down Road at Mayfield Road and Pea Ridge Road; and at Kelly Mill Road and West Forsyth High School. Seven intersection improvement projects were completed, helping make the intersections safer and more efficient. Widening was completed on Kelly Mill Road, from Bethelview Road to SR 371, and on Old Atlanta Road from Nichols Road to James Burgess Road.

Comprehensive Plan Update Adopted

The Comprehensive Plan update first began during the fall of 2010 and continued throughout 2011 via a full public participation program that encompassed seven community workshops and seven steering committee meetings as well as two public hearings. The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners adopted the updated Comprehensive Plan on March 15, 2012, after state review and approval. The newly adopted plan serves as a policy guide as decisions are made in relation to growth and land use change. The plan addresses critical issues and opportunities through the incorporation of a shared vision for the community's future.



Four New Green Space Passive Use Parks Open

Four new green space passive use parks totaling approximately 282 acres opened in June. Acquisition of these properties was funded by the 2008 voter-approved Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond. Construction of the parks was funded by a combination of the Parks, Recreation and Green Space Bond, the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program, and Impact Fees.

The approximately 63-acre **Caney Creek Preserve** (2755 Caney Road) features 1.2 miles of walking trails, a dog park, two pavilions, natural amphitheater and a one-of-a-kind playground with an archeological dig site and water play area. **Haw Creek Park** (2205 Echols Road), which spans approximately 85 acres,

includes an approximately 3.3-mile multi-use trail for both foot travel and mountain bikes. Pavilions and a multi-pod playground are also among the park's features. The approximately 100-acre **Chattahoochee Pointe** (5790 Chattahoochee Pointe Drive) borders the Chattahoochee River and features a canoe launch. Two pavilions, more than 2 miles of walking trails and a river-themed nature-inspired playground are also included at Chattahoochee Pointe. **Old Atlanta Park** (810 Nichols Road) is located across from Lambert High School and consists of a total of approximately 39 acres, 34 of which are for passive use space. The passive portion of the park features a natural playground, a tot-lot for children age six and under, two pavilions, a 1-mile walking trail and a spray pad.

2012 *in Review*

New Engine, Ladder Truck Put in Service

The Fire Department welcomed into its fleet in July two new pieces of firefighting apparatus – a new 100-foot aerial fire apparatus, often referred to as a ladder truck, and a new engine. New Truck 14, housed at Fire Station 14 in south Forsyth County, was funded by SPLOST VI. New Engine 7, housed at Fire Station 7 in north Forsyth County, was funded by the Fire Department budget.



Library System Continues to Grow

Forsyth County Public Library broke ground in July on the system's fourth branch. The Post Road Library will be located just south of the Post Road and Kelly Mill Road intersection. It will be a full-service, 23,500-square foot, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building, funded by SPLOST VI and a state construction grant. The Post Road Library is scheduled to open in the summer of 2013.

New Drug Incinerator

In July, the Sheriff's Office began use of a new drug incinerator. The 'Drug Terminator' is used for the safe and efficient disposal of drugs collected through the Drug Take Back Program as well as those confiscated in arrests.



Ground Broken for New Fire Station 3

Ground was broken September 26 for new Fire Station 3. The new station will be located on Wallace Tatum Road in the Matt area of northwest Forsyth County. It will replace current Fire Station 3 which is located nearby on Doctor Bramblett Road. Construction of the new two-bay facility, which is slated to open in 2013, is funded by SPLOST VI and Impact Fees.

Conceptual Design for Courthouse and Jail Approved

In October, the Board of Commissioners approved the conceptual design for the new courthouse and jail project. Known as the Town Green concept, it features a courthouse located adjacent to a large green space that serves as the entry for the building and as a gathering place for the community. A new courthouse and jail in downtown Cumming were approved by Forsyth County voters in 2011 as part of the SPLOST VII program. Construction is expected to begin in 2013.



Fire Department Commemorates 40th Anniversary

On November 1, 2012, the Forsyth County Fire Department marked its 40th anniversary. Now an established Fire Department, the Forsyth County Fire Department began on November 1, 1972 as the Forsyth County Fire Protection Committee, created in response to a residential fire claiming the life of a county resident. From that committee, the county's volunteer Fire Department was incorporated in 1973. The volunteer department served the county until 1998, when the time came to establish a modern fire department and to hire 30 full-time, career firefighters. Since those first 30 full-time firefighters joined Forsyth County, the Fire Department has continued to grow. In 2012, the department consisted of 129 full-time field suppression personnel responding out of 12 staffed fire stations, in addition to shift workers and a variety of administrative and support personnel.



2012 *in Review*

Sheriff's Office Accreditation

In 2012, the Sheriff's Office successfully completed the renewal of its accreditation. During the accreditation process, the Sheriff's Office received the Accreditation with Excellence Award from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, becoming the first Sheriff's Office in the state to receive the excellence award.



Enhancing Efficiency

With an eye on saving time for both customers and staff, the Planning and Community Development Department reviewed its processes in 2012 and identified potential changes to increase efficiency. These included a revised process for Lot Grading Plans, which was put in place in November. Another efficiency measure, allowing for the digital submission of plans, was approved by the Board of Commissioners in 2012 and implemented in 2013.

New Fire Station 4 Opens

On November 14, Forsyth County officially opened new Fire Station 4 located in the Ducktown area of western Forsyth County. New Fire Station 4 is located at 3910 Evans Road, adjacent to old Fire Station 4 which it replaced. That structure was built by volunteers in 1974 and had far exceeded its life expectancy. The new station is designed for 24-hour occupancy which the former station was not. It provides increased bay capacity better suited to house the fire apparatus stationed there, and also includes a ventilation system to clean the air, aimed at protecting firefighters' health. Construction of the new two-bay station was funded by SPLOST VI and Impact Fees.



Five New Outdoor Severe Weather Sirens

The county added five additional outdoor severe weather sirens throughout the county in 2012. The new sirens joined the county's 12 existing sirens, and are designed to notify residents who are outdoors that severe weather is in the area. The five additional sirens were approved by the Board of Commissioners to help increase the sirens' coverage areas. The sirens are activated in the event Forsyth County is placed under a tornado warning.

Service Delivery Strategy Update

The Service Delivery Strategy is a document required by the state that outlines the services that Forsyth County and the city of Cumming provide in order to ensure that service delivery allocation and funding of these services is as efficient as possible. An updated Service Delivery Strategy was ratified by the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners on November 1, 2012, and by the city of Cumming on November 20, 2012.

New Lift Station and Force Main

In late 2012, the county completed a regional wastewater lift station and force main on McGinnis Ferry Road projected to save the county's Water and Sewer Department nearly \$1 million per year in operational costs. The project, known as the Lower Big Creek Lift Station and Force Main, is sized to handle flows generated by future development projected for the south Forsyth area. In addition to enhanced efficiency, the project will also allow the county to generate more reuse water at the Fowler Water Reclamation Facility.



2012 *Financial Outlook*

Revenues

Forsyth County continued to realize some progress toward one of its primary foals of fiscal sustainability with revenues continuing their recovery in 2012 for the third year in a row.

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 2012. The Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), which responds quickly to economic conditions, increased 6 percent, or \$2 million, in 2012 over 2011. Along with continued careful budgeting, the stronger revenues enabled the county to maintain effective service levels for residents.

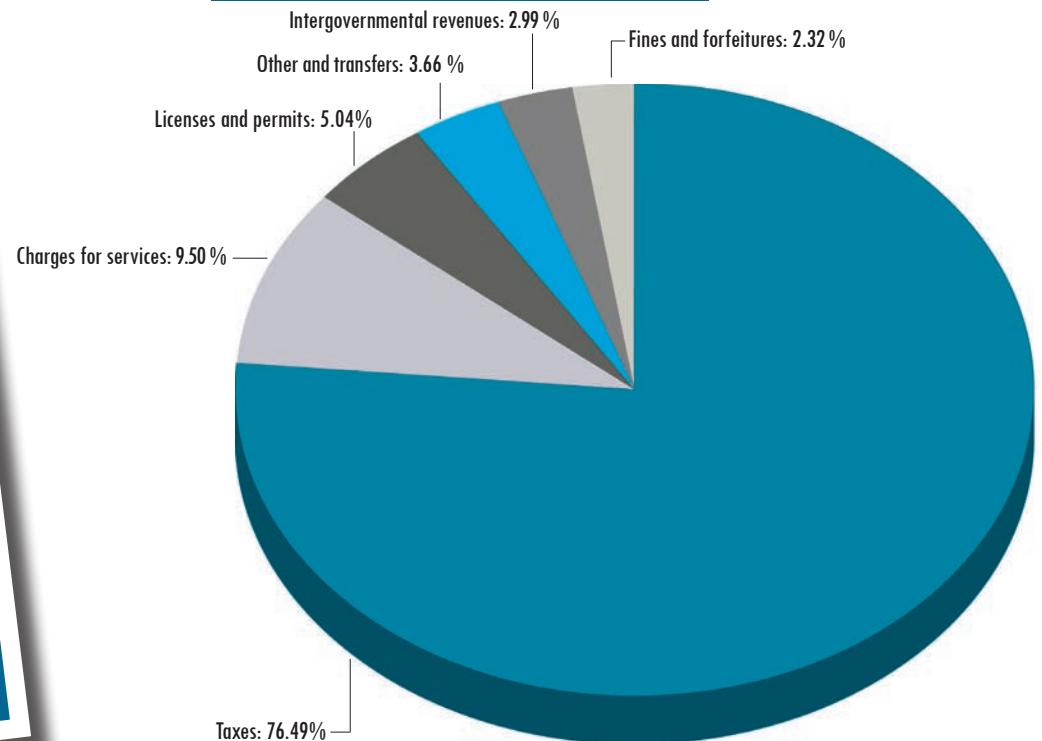
Millage Rate
Forsyth County's millage rate for Maintenance and Operations and Fire combined is 6.787. Compared to neighboring counties, Forsyth County continues to have one of the lowest millage rates.

Millage Rate Comparison (County Maintenance and Operations and Fire)

County	2012 Millage Rate
DeKalb	13.720
Gwinnett	12.780
Cobb	10.780
Cherokee	9.219
Dawson	8.138
Hall	7.900
Forsyth	6.787

Source: Georgia Department of Revenue

FY 2012 General Fund Revenues



unaudited data

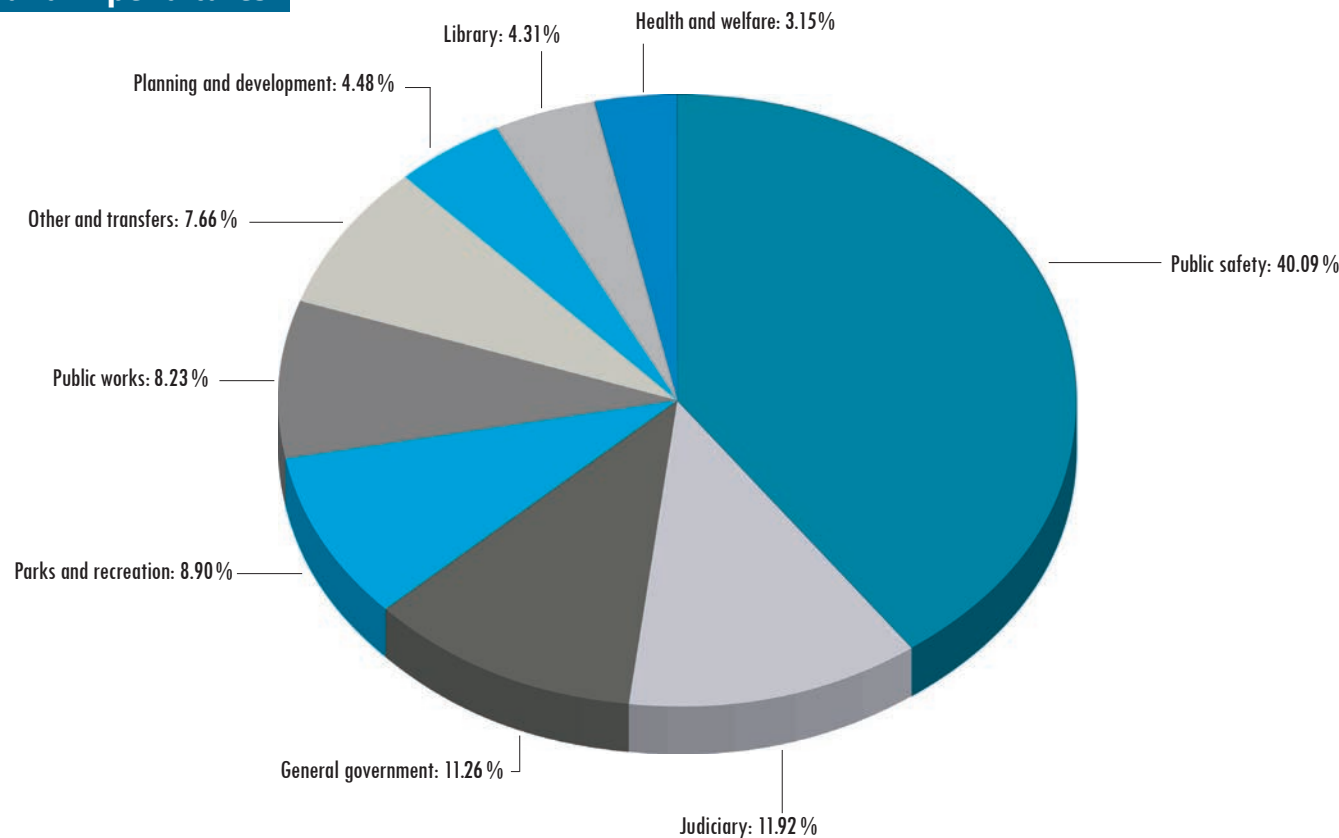
Expenditures

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; the Water and Sewer Department, which is supported by user fees; and the Solid Waste and Recycling Department, which is funded by landfill fees and user fees.

In 2012, the adopted General Fund expenditure budget totaled \$92.4 million. General Fund expenditures in 2012 came in under budget, at approximately \$90.7 million.

Public safety (the sheriff, coroner and ambulance services) utilizes the largest portion of the General Fund, representing 40.09 percent of total expenditures in 2012. 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 52.25 percent of General Fund expenditures in 2012. The remaining expenditures are for the transfer of General Fund resources to other funds.

FY 2012 General Fund Expenditures



2012 *Financial Outlook*



SPLOST

Forsyth County's Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, or SPLOST, is a voter-approved, five-year, one-percent sales tax that has been in effect in Forsyth County since 1983. For every dollar spent in Forsyth County, one penny goes into a fund devoted to certain, identified capital improvement projects. SPLOST programs have been approved by Forsyth County voters seven times since 1983, providing funding for infrastructure improvements and capital projects that otherwise may not have been possible.

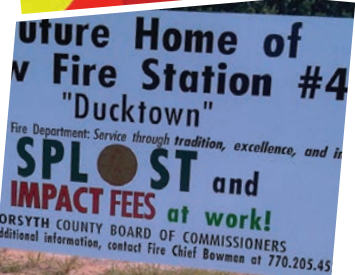
The current SPLOST program, SPLOST VI, was approved by voters February 5, 2008, and went into effect July 1, 2008. It will expire June 30, 2013. Original projections for the five-year program anticipated collections of approximately \$160 million. Through December 2012, approximately \$126 million was 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 2012 include installation of a traffic signal at SR 141 and Stoney Point Road; reclamation of Kelly Mill Road from the Cumming city limits to Bethelview Road; widening of Old Atlanta Road from James Burgess Road to Nichols Road; reclamation of Chattahoochee Road from Holtzclaw Road to Shady Grove Road; reclamation of Gilbert Road from Old Atlanta Road to Trammel Road; two culvert projects – one on Watson Road at Yellow Creek and one within the Grand Cascades subdivision; and intersection improvements at Jot-em-Down Road at Pea Ridge Road and Mayfield Drive; SR 9 at Hopewell Road; Old Atlanta Road at Gilbert Road and Northern Oaks Drive; and SR 371 at Dickerson Road, Drew Road, and Pittman Road. SPLOST VI also funded the resurfacing in 2012 of 196 roads, covering more than 54 miles.

Improvements to several county parks were funded in 2012 by SPLOST VI, including the resurfacing of a parking lot at Poole's Mill Park and additional parking spaces at Midway Park. SPLOST VI funding helped make possible the new Caney Creek Preserve, which opened in June 2012. In 2012, SPLOST VI funded the acquisition of a new 100-foot aerial fire apparatus, often referred to as a ladder truck, for the Fire Department.

SPLOST VI also helped to fund new Fire Station 4 in west Forsyth County, which opened in November, and new Fire Station 3 in north Forsyth County, which is slated for completion in 2013. The new Post Road Library, also slated to open in 2013, is receiving funding from SPLOST VI.

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 courthouse, jail and related parking facilities, transportation projects, scheduled replacement of fire engines, animal shelter, emergency raw water generator, and expansion and renovation of the Sharon Forks Library.





Bond Rating

Forsyth County continues to maintain its excellent bond ratings. In 2012, 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. Because of this exceptional rating, the county is able to bond important transportation, water and sewer, and public safety infrastructure improvements and projects at very low interest rates, enabling the county to more effectively plan and build for the future.

Grants

Forsyth County was awarded 21 grants in 2012, totaling \$3,095,361. The county received grants from federal, state and private foundations for a variety of uses including law enforcement personnel; road improvements; environmental education; environmental restoration; emergency preparedness; operations of Juvenile Court, Drug Court and DUI Court; senior services; public transportation; criminal alien assistance; and crime victim assistance.



2012 *at a Glance*

10,644

hours given by volunteers, helping the Senior Services Department serve the county's seniors



8,775

Christmas trees collected during the annual Bring One for the Chipper Christmas tree recycling event



772

traffic signs installed



41,962

meals delivered to home-bound seniors through the Meals on Wheels program, thanks to the assistance of volunteers

952

new business licenses issued



1,634

new Water and Sewer customers added in 2012, bringing the total number of customers at the end of 2012 to **48,745**



99

Adopt-A-Road cleanups removed **413** bags of litter from roadways

268

teams participated in adult athletic leagues for softball, basketball and flag football



17,575

trips provided by the Dial-A-Ride program, 5% more than in 2011



257,508

calls handled by the 911 Center

12,361

alarms answered by
the Fire Department



128,508

calls for service
handled by the
Sheriff's Office



515,000+

patrons visited
the Forsyth
County
Public Library
branches



FORSYTH COUNTY PUBLIC
LIBRARY

1.9 MILLION+

items checked out

33,000

eBooks downloaded

5,665

building permits issued by Forsyth
County, the greatest number of building
permits issued in a year since 2007



4,062,483

pounds of materials recycled
through the county's three
recycling convenience centers
and various recycling programs

241

roads covering
about **72** miles
resurfaced using
a combination of
SPLOST funds,
state grants
and collected
performance
bonds



4,600

children participated in spring
youth baseball/softball;

2,900 participated in the
fall season

395

players forming **49** teams
took part in the inaugural
season of a new youth
basketball program



654

homeowners and farmers
assisted by the Natural Resource
Conservation Service to help
address issues of natural resource
concerns and to help protect their
natural resources

110

miles of
roadways
striped

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Board of Commissioners
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