

Forsyth County Tomorrow

A Vision for the New Century in Forsyth County



At the dawn of the new millennium, it is fitting that we assess our current circumstances and envision the kind of community we would like to become in the future. What better time than the beginning of this third millennium to develop a vision, a shared set of goals for the growth and development of our community, that people find clear, inspiring and compelling, uplifting and attainable? How appropriate that we choose to be proactive in shaping our community's future rather than simply reacting to the rapid changes that will inevitably occur.

The *Legacy* Citizens Steering Committee and eight citizen Focus Groups were charged several years ago to look ahead to the year 2015 and develop just such a vision for our community. Their charge was to answer four questions—where are we now? where are we going? where do we want to be and how do we get there? The results of their effort is a community vision statement called “Forsyth County Tomorrow.” It presents an exciting picture of what our future could be—a future in which Forsyth County would be an even more special place in which to live and work. As you read the full vision statement on the following pages, try to imagine the possibilities.

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.”

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
Stephen R. Covey

Legacy is an initiative of the City-County Planning Board to develop that vision for the future of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County and an action plan for achieving it. The Planning Board appointed the 21-member *Legacy* Citizens Steering Committee, with representatives from all across Forsyth County, to guide the visioning process. Over 100 citizens were enlisted by the Steering Committee and organized into eight Focus Groups. Working within a theme, each of the groups reviewed our current situation, studied forces and trends shaping the community, and then answered the question: *What kind of community would we prefer to have in the future?*

“Forsyth County Tomorrow” is the result of their efforts, a vision of that preferred future. It includes a number of ambitious goals that touch on all aspects of community life. The vision calls for growing smarter and better managing future development, a more balanced transportation system, safer and more livable neighborhoods, involved citizens, and excellence in education. It envisions a revitalized downtown Winston-Salem, a vigorous economy, retention of our unique community character and a commitment to environmental quality.

Managing Growth and Development

Growth in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County in the last twenty years has changed the face of our community. Suburban sprawl, taking the form of low density, single family subdivisions, has become prevalent and reaches ever further into the countryside. Commercial develop-

ment follows residential development and is strung out along major roads. Traffic congestion is increasing as a result of these development patterns and our continued dependence on the automobile. The costly provision of infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads to serve these remote developments diverts tax dollars from other pressing needs. We are witnessing the rapid disappearance of our farmlands, natural areas and green spaces. Sprawl has drained the vitality from downtown Winston-Salem, caused the deterioration of older urban residential neighborhoods and helped divide us as a community. Our quality of life is being threatened by this sprawl that consumes more land and resources than are needed for a livable community.

There appears to be, however, some recognition of the need to change direction. Efforts are being made to revitalize downtown and some older commercial and residential areas. There is increasing sensitivity to the environmental and economic effects of sprawling development. What kind of future do we desire for ourselves?

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

We, the 330,900 residents of Forsyth County, like the way our community has grown. Effective management of growth and development has contributed to this feeling by curtailing urban sprawl. Our community is on its

Managed growth has helped preserve farms and open space.



way to sustainability, striking a good balance between meeting the needs of its current residents while preserving resources for future residents. Our urban areas, including downtown Winston-Salem, have been transformed into vibrant living and working environments. We take pride in new patterns of neighborhood development that promote a sense of community and provide convenient access. The character of small towns has been preserved and we have retained our rural areas which contribute greatly to the overall quality of our lives.

Our community is involved and committed to a creative approach to new development.

Our elected officials have adopted and implemented a growth management plan for the development of the County. They have also adopted policies which promote environmentally sensitive and high quality development, allow for flexible zoning, promote the multipurpose use of facilities such as schools, and provide incentives to manage growth. There is adherence to these policies

and community agreement on a balance of individual and community rights. Citizens actively participate in local development issues. The result has been a transformation of our urban, suburban and rural environments.

Our existing urban land is being used more intensively, reducing development pressures on rural areas. Downtown Winston-Salem has grown upward reducing the need for development to grow outward. Our downtown is now full of vitality because a diversity of uses and activities has reestablished it as the physical and spiritual center of our community. Commercial development along major roads has been replaced by urban activity centers and corridors characterized by mixed retail, office, light industrial and higher density residential development. These developments, all connected by public transportation, create attractive places for people to live. Our older residential, commercial and industrial areas have been rehabilitated. Our creative use of vacant land and abandoned buildings has resulted in the transformation of dilapidated areas into productive and attractive urban environments. Visual clutter has been reduced. We also use recreation and open spaces and other public facilities located in these older urban areas more intensively.

Development of communities with a balance of services, together with efficient provision of public services and facilities, is now the norm. We can choose to live in developments in new as well as older urban areas. New compact suburban developments located in areas designat-

ed for growth have taken place in an orderly manner in conjunction with cost effective and coordinated provision of transportation, water, sewer and other services. Vibrant communities with choices of housing style and densities, pedestrian friendly character, convenient neighborhood shopping, schools, parks and other services are now the standard for residential development. These new patterns of development have increased the demand for bike lanes and other facilities for cyclists, as well as facilities for transit riders and pedestrians. More people use public transportation today than at any time in the past, and traffic congestion has declined significantly as a result.



Activity centers create attractive places for people to live, work and shop.

Our rural landscape, once rapidly disappearing, has been preserved and is an important part of the community's quality of life. Farming continues to contribute to the local economy. Within these rural areas, our small towns thrive with attractive, well developed village centers. Our system of parks, open spaces and natural areas linked together by greenways

provide recreational opportunities for all and allow city dwellers to enjoy the countryside and interact with nature. There is widespread support for programs that protect natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas, and that preserve the character of the more rural areas of the County.

There is a collaborative spirit and ongoing dialogue between the various communities in the County and the region.

Approved annexation agreements countywide foster orderly growth of our cities and towns and minimize land use and political conflicts. Coordination exists between the various agencies who manage

development in the County. We also recognize the importance of working together and maintaining good relations with our neighboring counties in the Triad. A regional transportation service, success in attracting major employers and regional parks and greenway systems are among the successful regional projects that attest to our commitment to regional cooperation in planning and economic development.

Transportation Alternatives

We love the freedom and mobility that our automobiles provide! And there are more cars on the road now than ever before. Some people believe that the increased traffic is caused by population growth and new development. However, studies show that even in areas of the country where population has declined, the number of cars on the road has increased. In fact, increased traffic and congestion is due to all of us driving more than ever before. We are making more automobile trips each day and those trips are longer. The reasons are complex and involve personal preference as well as social and economic changes: increases in disposable income, growth in the number of jobs and two-wage earner families, suburbanization causing people to live further away from jobs and services, development oriented to automobiles, and more trips that are not work related.

Unfortunately, the freedom and mobility we enjoy has its price. More cars on the road mean increased air pollution, more congestion and more accidents. Dispersed growth and changed travel patterns make it harder for our public transit system to provide good service, attract riders and remain solvent. More cars require new roads and the widening of existing roads at a rate that we may not be able to afford. Those new roads disrupt and divide existing neighborhoods and spread commercial development further into the countryside. Ever widening roads invite more development and congestion, leaving some of us to question whether we can pave our way out of our congestion dilemma. Laying more asphalt may just

mean that the congestion is two lanes wider!

If you asked people in our community if they wanted Winston-Salem to become Charlotte, a majority would probably say no, citing traffic congestion in the Queen City as a main reason. Yet we can predict, almost with certainty, that Charlotte's current transportation problems will be Winston-Salem and Forsyth County's problems in the year 2015 if we don't begin planning now for something better.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

We have a much more balanced and sustainable transportation system than in the past. While the automobile continues to be a major means of getting around in our community, environmental concerns and the costs of road construction have accelerated plans already underway to revise our transportation priorities and emphasize alternative means of transportation. The preparation and implementation of a comprehensive transportation plan, with increased emphasis on transit, bicycle, pedestrian and rail systems, have helped provide the balance between different modes of transportation.

Revised growth management policies and improved coordination between land use and transportation plans have reduced our dependence on the automobile. Agreement on



High speed rail links points in the Triad.

an urban development zone has slowed suburban sprawl and produced a more compact development pattern, reducing the length of automobile trips. Policies to increase the density of residential development along major transportation corridors has increased transit ridership and reduced congestion. New neighborhood designs with a mix of uses and easy pedestrian access to shopping and services have lessened the need to drive. Increased densities in urban centers have also made a regional rail system feasible. The system, now under construction, will link urban centers with the Triad International Airport and regional rail stations. When the system is completed, high speed trains are projected to reduce traffic on I-40 and Business I-40 by twenty percent.

Our new Triad rail system is exciting but the heart of our alternative transportation system is our buses. The Winston-Salem Transit

Authority (WSTA) operates the largest bus and vanpool system in the State. The system links neighborhoods, businesses and regional rail stops offering a convenient and affordable alternative to the automobile. Providing county-wide public transportation service to jobs and new industries is a priority. Not to be outdone by rail, our bus system has some new “high tech” features of its own. Electronic bulletin boards at bus stops have made using transit more convenient. They sense waiting riders and receive satellite signals indicating when the next bus will arrive. A system of safe and well marked bike lanes, built on transit routes identified in the Bicycle Plan, provide another alternative for commuting as well as recreation. All city buses have bicycle racks, completing an alternative transportation system that includes bicycles, buses and rail.

Spurred by a movement toward local empowerment, planning for new roads is now under local control. A beltway that now rims the County opened early in the century after much discussion and debate. The controversy over the location and design of the loop road resulted in a demand for changes in the way new highways are planned, designed and approved. The Transportation Advisory Committee, with representatives from all communities in the County, is responsible for transportation planning. It has developed an open and participatory public involvement process to help guide its decisions. As a result, improved roadway design and

landscaping requirements have created many roads in our community that can truly be called boulevards.

Advances in technology have reduced the traffic on our streets, cut costs and improved air quality. Telecommuting and flex time are encouraged by local businesses and government



Compact development patterns make alternative means of transportation possible.

at less congested times than ever before. Use of alternative fuels and a gradual conversion to electric vehicles have reduced air pollution from automobiles to a minimum. Computer controlled intersections and timed signals speed the flow of

and more people work at home or commute to work

traffic. Special signaling devices on buses change traffic lights in their favor. New technology for resurfacing roads using recycled materials has reduced maintenance costs. People report traffic accidents and breakdowns by dialing *DOT on their cell phone and “quick response” patrols react to reduce delays. Individually, the benefits of these measures on traffic congestion are small.

Taken together they act to reduce congestion significantly.

Technology helps our balanced transportation system add significantly to the high quality of life we enjoy in Forsyth County.

Working cooperatively with the various agencies involved in transportation and transportation planning has facilitated the provision of a more comprehensive transportation network. Convenient rail, trucking and airport service are a major part of our industrial and business recruitment efforts.

Although our dependence on the trucking industry has not been

eliminated, rail transport of goods and services has increased. The trucking industry continues to provide reliable, real-time delivery of goods and services to the area. Smith-Reynolds Airport provides a vital transportation link for our growing economy. Increased and frequent passenger and cargo service has linked Forsyth County to the rest of North Carolina and the world. The preservation of rail lines and rail rights-of-way have

helped to promote the use of alternative modes of transportation—including community and regional rail, pedestrian and bicycle paths—which form part of the comprehensive transportation network.

Economic Vitality and Environmental Quality

In the emerging global economy, communities must now compete with each other for clean industries and high paying employers. Employers, in turn, also compete for skilled and educated workers who increasingly choose to locate in those communities which offer the highest quality of life. Although good sites and public infrastructure remain important, environmental quality has become recognized as a catalyst for economic development. Similarly, economic vitality has become a driver for environmental quality. Within a prosperous economy, more community resources can be directed toward protecting and promoting a quality environment. Twenty-first century opportunities await those communities who provide a superior quality of life.

Strategically located in the Piedmont Triad, Forsyth County will continue to grow as many people are attracted to the region's quality of life and economic opportunities. While this bodes well for our immediate economic success, this growth poses a challenge to Forsyth County's overall environmental quality. No longer can we assume a high degree of environmental quality, largely defined by undeveloped open space and clean water and air, as a "given" in our community. Today our air quality borders on not meeting federal standards and opportunities to preserve

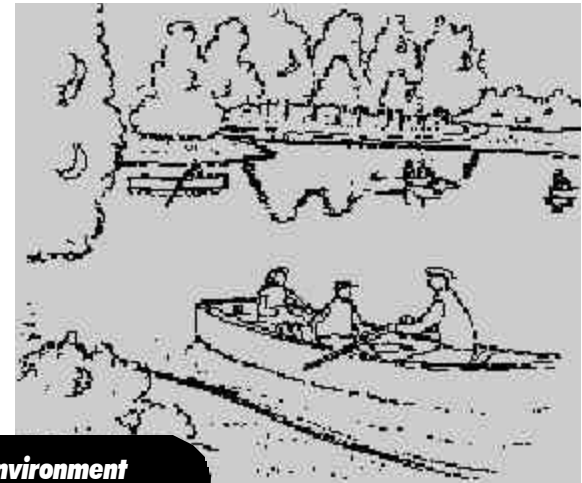
open space and maintain good water quality are diminishing due to our rapidly urbanizing landscape. This decline in environmental quality in turn hurts our efforts to attract and retain quality economic development. To improve our quality of life we must dramatically improve the quality of our citizens' education. Education is the underlying factor crucial to the achievement of both economic vitality and environmental quality. Only through improved education will the objectives of environmental quality and economic vitality come to be recognized as allies, not competitors, in our efforts to sustain a livable community.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

Forsyth County's high quality of life makes it a great place in which to live and work. It is a source of pride for its citizens and envied by its competitors. Governing bodies, business leaders, citizens and special interest groups have all recognized the critical importance of balancing the preservation of our unique environmental assets with the need for economic growth and expansion. As a result, local economic recruiters and national and international relocation specialists cite our excellent quality of life as the deciding factor in bringing new business and industry to our community. What makes Forsyth County such an impressive address?

Sustainable development, striking a balance between current and future needs, is the goal of local business and industry. Local industries

take the initiative in creatively managing processes to protect the environment. Business and industry voluntarily conduct environmental impact assessments on an ongoing basis. They find economic advantages in using recyclable and renewable resources. These practices and others result in our attaining or exceeding national and global pollution standards and recycling targets. As a result, we have received global recognition for our inno-



A high quality environment helps attract new companies and skilled workers to our community.

novative solutions in achieving an environment capable of sustaining both economic vitality and environmental protection.

We have created a strong, diverse business community centered on banking, high-tech medical research facilities, and the film and visual communication industry. We recognize that sustaining economic vitality is a "three

legged stool”: supporting expansion of existing businesses, nurturing new small businesses, and attracting employers from outside our community. Attention to all three sources of new jobs ensures the retention and expansion of our economic base in the global economy. We support our existing industrial and light manufacturing base. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to start innovative business ventures with the assistance of creative financing options. New, locally-owned businesses thrive in specialized markets.

We have revised our site location policies to emphasize industrial and office sites in downtown Winston-Salem and at existing suburban activity centers. Reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings and industrial sites in these areas is strongly supported by the community. Our redevelopment efforts have resulted in significantly reducing the need to develop vacant rural lands, and have given new life to underdeveloped areas of the community including the east and south sides of Winston-Salem.

Corporations and small businesses thrive because of our well-trained and skilled labor force. Forsyth County leads North Carolina in workforce preparedness efforts. Businesses and organizations of all sizes benefit from public-private cooperative education and training programs offered at all local schools, colleges and universities. Many excellent programs, tailored to people with little formal education, special populations and seniors, help ensure job skills training and promote lifelong learning. An incentives program for businesses that retrain employees and/or

train and hire local residents is nationally recognized. Our public and private educational system at all levels has met the challenge of the twenty-first century and embodies a curriculum spanning environment, medicine, technology, film, and business education. Our expanded local universities attract students from around the world.

We have embraced technology as a tool to sustain our quality environment and promote vigorous economic growth. Residents, local schools, businesses and governmental agencies utilize a computer network linked by fiber optics that is unmatched in the Southeastern United States. Our successful urban and rural activity centers accommodate telecommuting bases and temporary office space for our mobile workforce.

The transportation system in Forsyth County is one of the most advanced for a community of its size. Mass transit opportunities are extensive, linking major employment and activity centers throughout the County. The affordable and accessible transit system has reduced the number of cars on the road and alternative fuels for automobiles are freely utilized. As a result, our air quality is superior. Environmentally sensitive design standards have been adopted for our beltway system, protecting both wildlife and the landscape. Smith-Reynolds Airport provides a variety of air travel and cargo shipment opportunities and is also a successful business activity center.

Forsyth County is known for its pristine rural landscapes and network of open space

as well as its aesthetically pleasing urban environment. Valuable rural open space and farm lands have been acquired as special agricultural and cultural districts. Working farms are still viable and contribute to our local economy.

Our economic success is tied to the attractiveness and vitality of our community. The expansion of our economy is due, in no small measure, to the attractiveness of our community to business and people considering relocation. Forsyth County residents enjoy a vast regional system of community parks, significant natural areas, and preserved open space all connected by a network of greenways and streams. Triad Park is the flagship and hub of this system which reaches adjacent counties and beyond. Our network of waterways, including the Yadkin River and Salem Lake, are part of this system. These waterways are valued for recreation, their beauty, and protection of the landscape as well as an asset for economic development. Within neighborhoods, parks are required based on the concentrations of the surrounding population, providing local open space and accessible recreation for all. For those looking for more organized recreation, the Triad is the home of major league baseball, soccer, and roller hockey teams. And downtown Winston-Salem’s rejuvenated arts, theater and cultural districts attract local residents as well as tourists from all parts of the Southeast. Visitors are drawn to our unique and compelling attractions, making tourism an important component of our economy.

Environmental quality is a common, accepted objective among all segments of the community. Most businesses and citizens now recognize their responsibility to protect and promote a healthy and healthful environment. Environmental regulations are cost-effective and based in scientific fact. The general public and the business community share a greater scientific understanding and aesthetic appreciation for the community's air, water and land resources, and Federal, State and local governments are widely recognized as responsive and responsible partners in promoting environmental quality.

Innovative policies have resulted in a high level of environmental quality. Regional programs to control air and water pollution have proven effective. New development within floodplains has ceased and all streams now retain natural stream buffers. Improved construction and stormwater runoff management practices have lessened problems of flooding and erosion in our urban streams. Many streams have been restored to a more natural condition. Critical watersheds are clean and protected. Our exceptional recycling programs have resulted in reducing solid waste and in helping to foster a cleaner environment. Urban forests and significant natural areas have been inventoried and are protected. Community support for improving the quality of the built environment has also grown. Utilities, whenever possible, are located underground, and landscape standards, buffering, signage, and open space requirements maintain environmental quality in our more densely populated areas.

Building Better Neighborhoods

Current growth patterns that result in sprawling residential development, strip commercial corridors and separation of people and uses have changed the character of our neighborhoods. Today's neighborhoods are often homogeneous, isolated, and almost totally dependent on the automobile. Large housing lots, and a lack of sidewalks, public spaces, and nearby neighborhood services reduce the opportunities for interaction of residents and erode our sense of community. Many people, especially younger and older people who don't drive, find it difficult to function independently. Affordable housing is scarce and concentrated in a few areas, dividing us by class and income. We need to start building better neighborhoods.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

Better neighborhoods in Forsyth County are the legacy of improved planning and design over the past twenty years. Our livable neighborhoods draw upon the unique mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas our County pro-

vides, for their special character. Our neighborhoods are strengthened by an improved balance between self-sufficiency and interdependency. Neighborhoods have achieved greater self-sufficiency through new design standards, a diversity of housing types and people, better access to neighborhood services, and educational opportunities. Neighborhood associations working together to address social issues such as crime, quality of education, and homelessness have

helped us to understand and build interdependency between our neighborhoods. With careful planning, appropriate design standards and citizen empowerment, neighborhoods have become the building blocks of our community.

Our neighborhoods have been designed to encourage a sense of community. Design guidelines that encourage such things as front porches,

sidewalks, street trees and public spaces give neighbors an opportunity to meet and talk, thereby fostering a sense of belonging. Within neighborhoods, there are accessible open spaces, greenways and parks providing both passive and active recreation for all residents. Residents, including the elderly, disabled, and young, enjoy easy access to nearby neighborhood-scale shopping and services, schools, churches, and public open spaces. Design guidelines stressing compat-



We have rekindled a sense of community in our neighborhoods.

ibility between these adjacent land uses make them an acceptable and desirable part of our community fabric. Neighborhoods are inclusive of different ages, races, and income levels, enhancing interaction and understanding. The adopted design guidelines result in aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods and commercial areas that give our community a special character and livability.

Citizens can choose to live in a variety of quality residential areas. Affordable housing for all citizens is a priority of the community. Various housing designs have been developed that are suitable for different income levels, family sizes, types, and tastes. Public housing reform and increased home ownership bring a high level of neighborhood pride to all areas of our County. Many residential opportunities are provided for people who choose to live downtown. Older neighborhoods surrounding the downtowns have been revitalized, preserving older structures and providing affordable communities convenient to jobs. Shopping and services, which once had deserted these areas for the suburbs, have returned to serve the new market that has been created. Historic preservation has become a focus for Forsyth County and has saved many fine residential structures.

Our neighborhoods offer choices in the way we get around. In our self-sufficient neighborhoods, cars are not nec-

essary for day-to-day living. We can travel by bicycle, on foot or take the bus. Sidewalks and greenways connect neighborhoods to nearby parks, shopping, schools, and other neighborhoods. Attractive neighborhood bus stops and convenient bus schedules have greatly increased bus ridership. For longer trips, we use rail or cars. The promotion of ridesharing in our neighborhoods fosters more interaction between residents as well as reducing air pollution. Measures have been taken on our neighborhood streets to slow down traffic, making neighborhoods safer for children and adults alike.

Social issues are addressed by neighborhoods coming together to work out their problems. Crime, once our largest neighborhood concern, has diminished greatly. In fact, we have achieved an unparalleled level of consensus between citizens, businesses and local governmental bodies on a number of neighborhood issues, in contrast with the

1990's when special interest groups focused on singular concerns. Communication, participation, and education have become an essential part of jointly deciding the future. Reliance on incentive-based policies instead of directives and penalties encourages developers and businesses to work with neighborhoods so that everyone wins. Working together has made our neighborhoods the building blocks of a strong, successful community.

The Future of Downtowns

Over the last decade, significant efforts have been made to revitalize downtown Winston-Salem. In spite of some recent successes, the downtown area is not a consistently vibrant, people-oriented place that attracts local residents and projects a dynamic image of our community to visitors. Downtown Winston-Salem has lost many retailers and other enterprises to the suburbs, leaving buildings empty or underutilized. The activities which remain do not extend much beyond regular working hours. In addition, there is the perception that the downtown area is not safe and lacks sufficient parking.

Much of human progress has come when people gathered in cities for commerce and to exchange ideas and culture. Without a vital and growing city center, Forsyth County cannot hope to be a player on the regional and national scene in the next century. We will not be able to offer to local residents and visitors the special cultural amenities, interac-

Convenience shopping is an integral part of residential areas.



tion, and environment that an urban center can support and provide. It will become more difficult to attract new people and industry to our area. Our community's fortunes are, therefore, very closely tied to the future of downtown Winston-Salem and its complementary relationship with the other downtowns of Forsyth County.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

Downtown Winston-Salem has reemerged as a dominant focus of economic and social life in our community, a center of the community's civic and cultural activities, and a symbol of community identity. The public and private sectors recognize the importance of downtown Winston-Salem to the community and their common interest in coordinating efforts for downtown development and revitalization. Public/private partnerships utilize incentives which have resulted in successful downtown development and renovation, more and improved housing, and innovative crime prevention solutions.

Public tax money and private financial incentives have made downtown a more competitive investment location for development or relocation. New investment has produced a healthy and vital downtown. The creation of special districts, an increase in retail opportunities, growth of tourism and convention activity, entertainment and cultural events, and outdoor cafes

bring people to downtown and add vitality to the downtown's streets both day and night. Special districts for arts, medical research and entertainment have enhanced the traditional government and financial downtown uses. A successful technology district and museum now complement these uses. Quality specialty retail provides an array of unique merchandise and services that attract residents and visitors alike. The increase in retail activity, spurred by governmental and private financial incentives, has reduced storefront vacancies. Public and private enterprises sponsor outdoor entertainment events for all ages



The new downtown skyline is a source of pride.

on a regular basis. Exhibits, concerts, and ethnic festivals, in new and exciting public spaces, draw a large number of residents and visitors to downtown.

Downtown Winston-Salem is well designed and appealing. The improved quality of the downtown's physical environment makes people

feel safe and welcome. Coordinated planning and design standards have improved the appearance of streets, signage, lighting, parking, and pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow. New parks and green spaces beckon office workers and visitors. The conversion and reuse of vacant warehouses and other buildings, the demolition of some unsightly buildings, and the rich mix of old and new architecture add variety and interest to the downtown's visual character. The new downtown Winston-Salem skyline presents a strong image and is a source of local pride. Strict enforcement of regulations preserve the quality of downtown's physical appearance.

Large increases in the number of people living in and near downtown has added greatly to the downtown's vitality. Bolstered by a new public appreciation for urban lifestyles, historic architecture, renovated

buildings, and a movement bringing people back to downtown neighborhoods, construction of new residential units has

increased. Public improvements and expanded cultural, entertainment and shopping activities have helped create a desirable downtown living environment. This residential development creates a downtown retail market and contributes to the image of downtown as a vital, interesting place to live.

People find it easy to commute to downtown Winston-Salem from outlying residential areas and to get around within the downtown using public transportation. Improved public transportation, made possible in part by the new downtown residential concentrations, is convenient and inexpensive. Increased use of public transportation minimizes the need for expanded roadways and parking areas in the central core and consequently encourages a more cohesive downtown development pattern.

Smaller towns in Forsyth County have developed their own successful town centers. These “village scale” centers have preserved a small town atmosphere and historic character and serve people from surrounding residential and rural areas. Their attractiveness draws pedestrians and creates lively social environments as well as profitable downtown business settings. These downtowns project the image of safe, well maintained, stable, and livable environments, recalling and maintaining their classic small town roots.

Community Character

Increasingly, communities across the country are beginning to look the same. The entire nation is linked by look-alike monolithic highways. Cookie-cutter, treeless housing developments are the norm. Shopping malls and “big box” cement block super stores with acres of asphalt parking lots are found everywhere. Additionally, a neglected downtown with empty storefronts marks the center of too many of our towns and cities.

“How do we retain our character and keep from becoming Anywhere, USA?” is a question many communities like Winston-Salem and Forsyth County are asking themselves. Unlike some communities, we are lucky. We have many special attributes with which to work: beautiful rural areas with a terrain of rolling hills, streams, fields and forested areas; internationally acclaimed industries and schools; a rich Moravian heritage visually preserved in our present day community; and, caring and civic-minded citizens. We need to carefully guard and build upon these assets in order to retain our distinctive character and enhance our unique image.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

Upon entering our County, visitors instantly recognize our sense of pride and caring by our attractive roadways that are handsomely landscaped, well lighted, and have underground utilities. Driving is safe and enjoyable. At major entry points into our community, visitors admire specially designed gateways which blend into the landscape. These gateways identify Forsyth County, Winston-Salem and our smaller towns: Clemmons, Lewisville, Rural Hall, Kernersville, Bethania, Tobaccoville and Walkertown. Coordinated directions to attractions, services and events are provided through colorful and creative banners, flags and other media. Artwork saluting our major industries, employers, colleges and universities and sports teams is strategically located along main routes in a way that complements the natural landscape.

And all of our roadways are clean, litter-free and well maintained.

Our civic pride is displayed visually throughout the County. We treasure our rural farmlands, creeks with wide green buffers and walking trails, and lush natural areas like Salem Lake Park and the Yadkin River Scenic Corridor. Major businesses and industries show their civic pride through tastefully designed buildings and signage, and campus-like landscaping. Our urban areas are bustling, lively and clean. Historic preservation and reuse of buildings is a priority. Throughout the community, quaint historic areas and neighborhoods showcase older buildings transformed into distinguished homes, apartments, shops, restaurants, and other creative uses. Other community symbols and artwork located throughout the County reveal our pride in the arts, our Moravian heritage, and our cultural diversity.

Each neighborhood has its own special character while also blending easily into the rest of the community. Neighborhoods have tree-lined streets with utility lines placed underground. Wide boulevards with landscaping, sidewalks, and bike lanes encourage walking and bicycling and connect different areas. There are public landscaped spaces woven into each neighborhood, and everyone has a park within ten minutes of their home. Our neighborhoods are friendly, safe and clean.

Our community is unified and functions smoothly with state-of-the-art technology,

ample services, and a strong sense of unity among its citizens. Thriving smaller towns provide needed services and amenities so people can live, work, and play without having to make long commutes. The various communities, schools, and businesses throughout the County are linked by the latest communications technology and are known for their excellence and their contributions to the community. There are also gatherings and events held throughout the County which promote family and community unity. The unique tastes of the many cultures and nationalities of people living in our community are reflected and preserved in our neighborhoods and celebrated by various events.

Winston-Salem's downtown has its own distinct identity as the heart of the community. The downtown is bright, colorful, and alive both day and night. Many people live and work there, and all citizens enjoy the many cultural and entertainment opportunities the downtown consistently offers. Access to

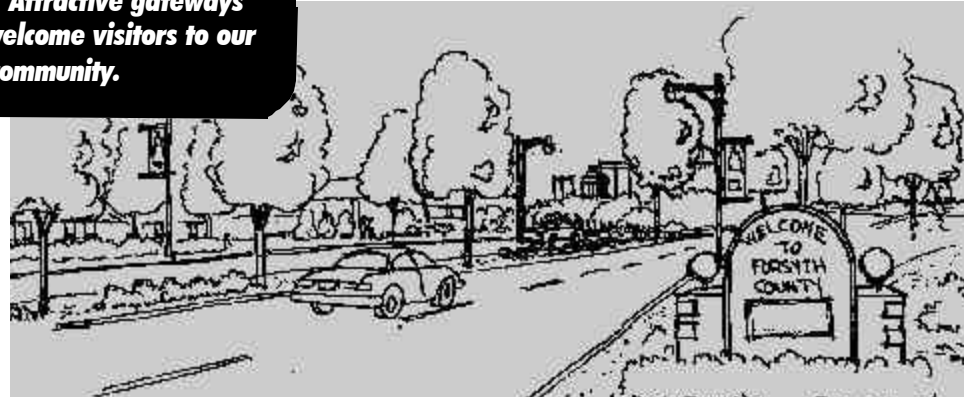


We have retained our distinctive character.

downtown stores and events is easy because parking and transit are convenient. The downtown contains the best of new architecture and design and blends it with the best of the old. It is an exciting destination, and the central gathering place of the community. We celebrate there our ethnic and cultural diversity and our love for the arts and history through special events, public works of art, and museums.

We have avoided becoming Anywhere, USA, unlike so many other communities. We have preserved our uniqueness by continuing to support the corporations, institutions, and attractions which bring us international acclaim. We have maintained our reputation of excellence in education, technology, and a high quality of life for all our citizens. And, most importantly, we show this support and pride more visually throughout our community. Our attractive highways and roadways, our friendly neighborhoods and small towns, a vibrant downtown, preservation of our special historic and natural settings, and high quality design and maintenance all demonstrate our pride in and appreciation for living in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

Attractive gateways welcome visitors to our community.



Community Life

We have shifted from our founding Salem values, those of protection of the earth, community orientation, neighborliness, and religious and aesthetic values to overemphasizing Winston values, those of economic and industrial growth. The result has been a decline in the quality of our community life. We don't know our neighbors and we don't trust people who are different from us, especially those of different races and income levels. We're losing our sense of community—the feeling of connection to the place we live and to others who live here. We work in new office buildings, while our children go to school in mobile classrooms. Some people are concerned about the safety of their children in our public schools and not all high school graduates are prepared for jobs. Crime is on the rise and some people are even afraid to go out of their homes. We're losing our unique character by not preserving our historic resources and endangering our children's future by not protecting our natural resources. Neighborhood businesses are closing

while huge nondescript retail stores are built. People have to drive long distances to shop and get services. Elderly and disabled people and those without cars have great difficulty getting services.

Fortunately, all is not negative. We have a rich history on which we can build. Our religious institutions provide people with a sense of community and are leading the way in bridging differences in our community. We have excellent medical resources and we are known as a “City of the Arts.” There are signs of redirection in our community. We are finally recognizing that we have the choice to continue in the decline of the quality of our community life or to reclaim what is valuable from our past and to accept the richness of the changes presented to us.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

In Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, we have blended Salem values with Winston values—our spiritual heritage with our economic entrepreneurship—to create a community that is a good place to live and is economically strong. Our outstanding quality of life is the foundation of our strong economic situation. Twenty years ago, we began reclaiming some of the values held by the Moravian settlers of our community, such as respect for natural and historic resources, aesthetics and spiritual values, a sense of community, and the concept of universal brother and sisterhood, in order to assure a better future.

Forsyth County is now a community where people of all races and income levels know and care about each other and work together to solve community problems. Our neighborhoods include a variety of housing types and are designed to foster neighborliness and to provide opportunities for human interaction. Our neighborhoods are ethnically diverse and people of different backgrounds live, work, worship and have fun together. We have strong neighborhood, civic and political organizations. Young people are valued and are an important part of the community and its future. People are actively involved in planning their community. Almost everyone votes!

We are a community of faith. We still have more places of worship per capita than any other city in North Carolina and these religious institutions continue to play an important role bridging differences, providing services, and maintaining a sense of community.

People feel safer in our community. We have less crime and violence, excellent fire protection, and outstanding emergency services. Part of the reason for the decrease in crime is that we have factored safety into the design of new developments and the redesign of existing developments. Drugs, which once greatly contributed

to the level of crime and violence, are no longer a significant problem. Citizens work with the police to keep their communities safe. Community watch groups are no longer necessary because people feel connected to their neighbors and automatically watch out for one another. There is a strong police presence in and connection to the community. Foot patrols are standard operating practice.



In our community, people care about each other.

Our educational system is outstanding. Over the last 20 years, we have emphasized technology in the classroom and upgraded our schools, technologically and structurally. Our children think we are joking when we talk about mobile classrooms common in the 1980’s and 1990’s. We have sought and achieved racial and ethnic diversity in individ-

ual public schools. Not only are our public schools of the highest quality, all our citizens have lifelong educational opportunities. Our libraries have been improved and are well utilized. We’ve increased support of colleges and universities, and in turn they have expanded and reached out to the community. We even have university classes at the public libraries. We have built upon efforts begun by the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools in the late 1990’s to provide schools that are safe and to assure that graduates are well prepared for both higher edu-

cation opportunities and the demands of an ever-changing workplace.

We have superb medical facilities. Our hospitals provide outstanding medical care to people in Forsyth County and the region. They are our major employers. In addition, we have medical services in neighborhoods throughout Winston-Salem and in each of the smaller communities in Forsyth County.

Our community is a friendly and accessible place for senior citizens, disabled people, and lower income residents. Our neighborhoods and communities offer a variety of housing types so people of different ages and incomes can live together. Services and shopping are available near where people live and it is easy for people to get around by walking, biking, and public transportation. We have policies and programs that enable seniors and disabled people to remain in their own homes or live in neighborhood settings whenever possible. Our social service system is well managed and coordinated and there is a high level of awareness about what services are available. We have a strong sense of community cooperation and people volunteer to work together to assist those who are less physically or economically able

Our community is a fun and exciting place for people of all ages. We have many neighborhood and community activities, including street fairs, concerts, ethnic and cultural events and sporting events. These events are not only fun, they help people get to know and understand

each other better. Every community and neighborhood has a public space for people to come together to meet and have fun. We're still known as a "City of the Arts," with the School of the Arts, the Symphony, our outstanding theaters and museums, and all our artists and craftspeople. We have protected our historic and cultural resources, providing a link to the past and maintaining a sense of character and pride in the present. People use our county-wide greenway system to walk or bike to our well-maintained parks and recreation facilities.

Active Citizenship

The typical citizens who are active in local community and governmental affairs in Forsyth County have changed over the last twenty years. They are generally older, better educated, wealthier and have the choice of several new communities to reside in outside the city limits of Winston-Salem. The larger community, to a great extent, remains segregated by race and income.

Many citizens are unaware of how their government works or of what their responsibilities are for effective government. Their government seems distant and unapproachable. As a result apathy is all too evident. The voting age population has increased significantly since 1960, but the number of people registering to vote has not increased at the same rate. The lack of faith in the power of the vote has shifted power to special interest groups. Some neighborhoods remain well "connected" to the governmental process while others experience feelings of hopelessness and disenfranchisement. They feel that government is

unresponsive and that issues important to them such as poverty, crime, affordable housing, and social equity are largely unaddressed.

True citizenship involves not only rights but also responsibilities. Less revenue means fewer services requiring more responsibility by private institutions and individuals. Government must be "...of the people, by the people and for the people." Reaching the community's goal to be one of the ten best places to live in the country will depend on our commitment to these simple ideals.

Our vision for the year 2015 . . .

Area residents are excited about their community and actively involved in making it a better place to live. Their excitement is contagious! Forsyth County residents recognize their need to work closely with elected officials to reach shared goals for the good of the overall community. Citizens are aware of city and county mission statements: "... to provide effective and efficient municipal services... with dedication to openness, integrity, equity and accountability." [City of Winston-Salem] and "... to create a community which is safe and healthy, convenient and pleasant to live in, with educational and economic opportunities for everyone ..." [Forsyth County]. They recognize that these mission statements cannot be accomplished without their participation and shared commitment.

A broad base of citizens regularly participate in community affairs. No one is excluded from the decision making process. Citizens are

encouraged to participate in the processes of government through meetings in their neighborhoods, interactive television, and printed and electronic media. The programs and services of public and private institutions reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of our community. Prejudice and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or economic status are not tolerated. Centers of cultural and ethnic heritage proudly display the origins of the people of this community. Residents share their unique and their common histories and cultural gifts with each other, uniting the community through knowledge and understanding.

High voter registration and a strong turnout of an informed electorate makes citizens powerful in Forsyth County politics. Frequent opportunities for electoral debate and candidate forums exist prior to local and national elections. The community is in partnership with elected officials so that decisions are made for the good of the entire community. Areas of public concern, such as fiscal responsibility and accountability, are clarified through budget presentations that are more easily understood and related to citizens' daily lives. Public budget review hearings are better attended because reports are better illustrated and more easily understood by citizens. Because of the strong economy and efficient delivery of municipal services, citizens feel they are getting the best value for their tax dollars. The Government Communications Center is a major resource for inter-governmental services and nonpartisan political exchange. Public forums and debates, electronic town meetings and public hearings are held at this state of the art media center.

The Council of Neighborhoods is a volunteer organization made up of the presidents of neighborhood associations. This coordinating group helps all neighborhoods participate equally in community affairs. It sets goals for our community, publicizes and celebrates neighborhood accomplishments, promotes safe, affordable and attractive housing, and encourages the good stewardship of valued community resources. Much of the mystery and intimidation has been removed from government regulations as government officials work more closely with communities to promote regulations that work for and not against citizens. Neighborhoods are recognized annually or bi-annually at neighborhood fairs that stress everything from community cleanup to the celebration of community accomplishments. The City-County Planning Board takes advantage of the pool of volunteers from the Government Communication Center. The list includes the names, addresses and backgrounds of people interested in participating in planning projects, ad hoc committees and advisory teams. These volunteers encourage and support strong political leaders as they continuously review development standards, water and sewer policies, transportation needs and various regulations in order to



We value educational excellence.

achieve the sustainable growth provisions of the plan.

Local government and volunteer efforts have combined to address pressing social problems. The unemployment rate in Winston-Salem is stable at 3%. Underemployment is in rapid decline due to innovative skill training programs that encourage and assist entrepreneurs by teaming new business ventures with seasoned and/or retired business persons. Likewise, homelessness is negligible in Winston-Salem. Transitional housing, with rents based on income or involvement in special educational programs for non-traditional students, as well as life skills training programs operated through the Urban League serve as a springboard to those who need help to start over.

Children are first in Forsyth County and Winston-Salem. A strong school system and web of public services complement the efforts of families in raising children. Public education here is second to none in the United States and following the wisdom of the African proverb, "It takes an entire village to raise a child," neighborhood, community, civic, social and fraternal organizations have come together to ensure that children

in Forsyth County are safe as well as academically and technologically competitive. Senior citizens' organizations have joined forces with Winston-Salem State University's Early Childhood Education Department and Brenner Children's Hospital to develop centers to provide assistance to parents of young children. Income based quality child day care, after school care, safe houses and parenting services are provided throughout the community by older volunteers. Infant mortality and child abuse rates in Forsyth County are among the lowest in the nation. Children are taught from pre-kindergarten through high school to respect and celebrate both their common bonds and their differences. Intolerance, among the young, is a thing of the past.

Life is good here in Forsyth County and the good life is shared by all. Success is evident in the respect and rapport between the different seg-

ments of the community and their joint efforts in addressing fundamental concerns. The vision is reality, regardless of race, gender, age, culture or financial standing—you're something special in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, North Carolina.

From Vision to Reality

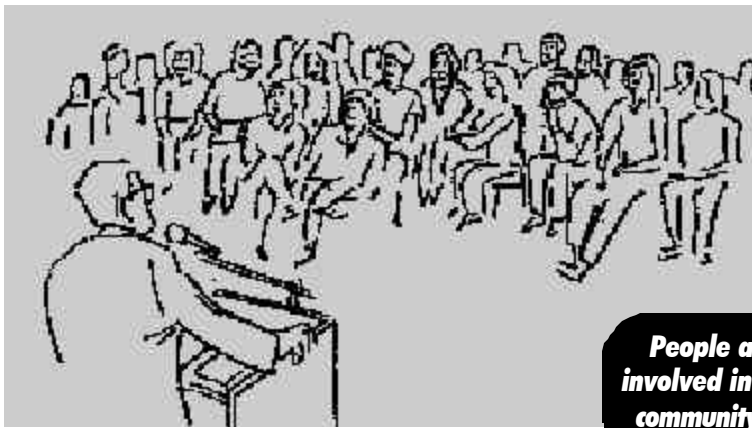
The trouble with a vision, of course, is that improving our community requires a lot more than simply raising our sights above the status quo. Achieving our vision calls for a willingness to change. It requires that we take risks and follow through. A vision that works calls for people to pay for things that may not enhance their personal lives or expand their own pocketbooks immediately. Most of all, it requires a commitment to the common good, cooperation and compromise, a coming together rather than moving apart.

Skeptics out there will say we have too many pressing problems that need immediate attention—rapid growth, traffic, crime, air and water pollution—to be thinking about what our community could and should be decades from now. But it is precisely because of these problems that we must have a clear vision for our future.

Without one, our legacy to future generations is in jeopardy.

Legacy is the road map that will move us toward

our vision. Each chapter discusses the issues around a particular topic and develops a set of goals, objectives, policies and action agenda items that are intended to turn our vision into reality.



People are involved in their community.