

Phase 2: Community Choices

Town Council's Policy Recommendations Report

May 5, 2015

This report documents the final Phase 2: Community Choices policy statements approved by the Cary Town Council at the March 3, 2015 and March 24, 2015 Imagine Cary work sessions. These final policy statements will guide development of the plan, particularly the implementation actions. Additional policy statements will be drafted for other planning topics, such as the environment, public facilities and services, historic preservation, and others. A future public open house will provide citizens with the opportunity to review and comment on the full draft plan, including the policy statements included in this report. Check the project website <http://www.imaginecary.org> and watch for news on this upcoming event. To see previous drafts of the report, including full appendices with public input details, go to <http://www.imaginecary.org/resources/> and click on "Community Directions Report."

Where Will We Live?

Policy 1: Maintain Neighborhood Character

Recognize and preserve the quality and character of existing residential neighborhoods as they mature, and as new development occurs nearby.

Policy 2: Provide for More Housing Options in New Neighborhoods

Provide a greater variety of housing types within new residential neighborhoods.

Policy 3: Provide the Greatest Variety of Housing Options in Mixed Use and Employment Centers

Provide the greatest variety of housing types and densities within mixed use centers and employment centers as designated by the Growth Framework map, and particularly within Downtown Cary.

Policy 4: Support Residential Development on Infill and Redevelopment Sites

Support residential development on infill and redevelopment sites that is designed to acknowledge the surrounding context.

Policy 5: Provide Housing Choices for All Residents

Provide high quality housing in suitable areas that can accommodate a variety of lifestyles, ages, cultures, and incomes. This includes dwellings for aging seniors and empty nesters, multi-generational households, young professionals, young families, and members of the local workforce.

Where Will We Work?

Policy 1: Reserve and Provide Employment Sites in Suburban Office Parks

Reserve and provide sites for employment and economic development—especially for major industries or employers—within Cary’s existing traditional suburban office parks and industrial areas.

Policy 2: Transform Selected Office Parks into Employment Mixed Use Centers

Incorporate commercial and housing uses into selected suburban office parks and industrial areas, evolving them into employment mixed use centers. Parks and centers selected to evolve into employment mixed-use centers should reserve prime opportunities for the development of Class A Office space.ⁱ

Policy 3: Reserve and Provide Employment Sites in Selected Commercial Mixed Use and Destination Centers

Reserve and provide sites for employment and economic development opportunities within a targeted set of new or existing Commercial Mixed Use and Destination Centers, as well as within Downtown Cary.

Where Will We Shop and Dine?

Policy 1: Facilitate Redevelopment of Underperforming Activity Centers

Facilitate the redevelopment and revitalization of Cary’s aging or poorly-performing activity centers as well as Downtown Cary. Redevelopment of older centers to more vibrant and attractive destinations is preferred over the development of new activity centers.ⁱⁱ

Policy 2: Focus Commercial Uses within Mixed Use Centers

Focus commercial, retail, dining, and entertainment uses within existing and planned Commercial Mixed Use and Destination Centers, as designated on the Growth Framework map.

Policy 3: Support the Development of a Limited Number of Premier Destination Centers

Support the development of a limited number of Destination Centers that have higher densities/intensities, are transit supportive, and have the greatest potential to be high-functioning, premier centers.

How Will We Get Around?

Policy 1: Provide Safe Travel Options for All Users and Modes

Design and manage the Town’s transportation network to ensure a high degree of safety for all, regardless of age or ability, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists.

Policy 2: Apply Multi-modal Street Designs

Apply “complete street” design guidelines for the cross-sections and intersections of all streets, collectors, and thoroughfares based on system demand and each street’s land use context.

Policy 3: Design Transportation Infrastructure to Address the Land Use Context

Incorporate transportation improvements along corridors in a context-sensitive way, balancing community character and aesthetics with transportation and mobility needs.

Policy 4: Focus Investments on Improving Connections and Closing Gaps

Focus transportation investments on bridging connectivity gaps between employment centers, neighborhoods, and mixed use centers. Improve connectivity within and between these destinations by providing opportunities for all modes of transportation: driving, walking, biking, and taking transit. This also includes improving opportunities for connectivity via greenways and trails.

Policy 5: Minimize Thoroughfare Widths

Major roads that are being developed or widened to add additional lanes should be limited to four-lanes with landscaped medians, wherever possible. Any expansions beyond this standard should be focused in areas with the highest levels of congestion and critical bottlenecks.

Policy 6: Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossings

Improve pedestrian and bicycle crossings in mixed use centers, across major roads, and where greenways cross roads to build connected bicycle and pedestrian networks that are comfortable for all ages and abilities.

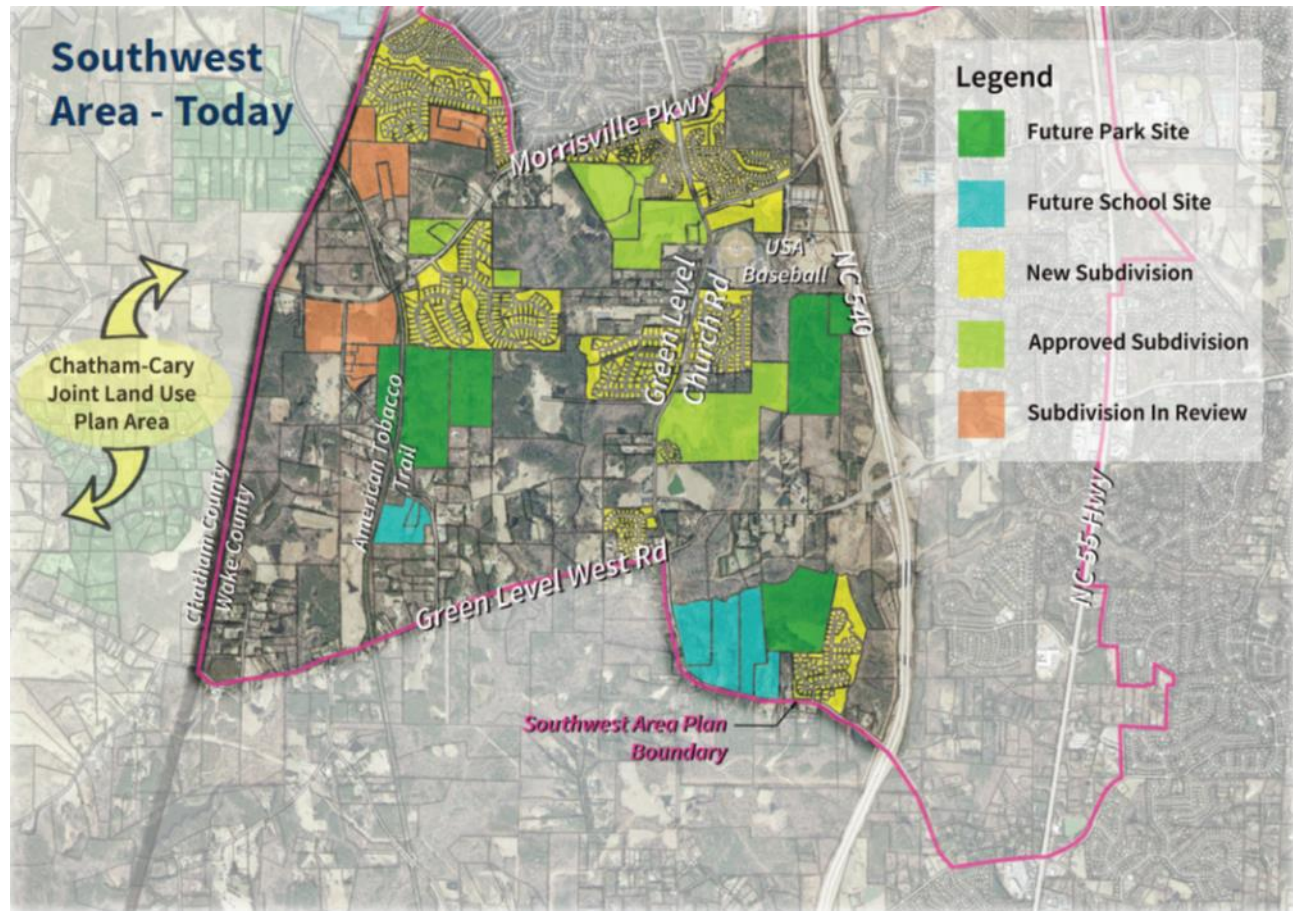
Policy 7: Target Transit Investments

Target transit investments to support and sustain mobility choice and improve the C-Tran bus system through increased frequency to major destinations, expanded service to new locations, reliability improvements to reduce travel time, and efficient interconnections with other transit systems throughout the region.

Policy 8: Ensure a Well-Maintained Transportation System

Ensure a well-maintained transportation system by emphasizing the need to provide adequate funding for system maintenance needs.

How Will Southwest Cary Grow?



Map of Southwest Cary's Existing Conditions

Southwest Cary Vision Statement

Southwest Cary will be a blend of historic, rural character and “green,” suburban neighborhoods. The area’s rural heritage will be reflected through environmentally sensitive development. New development will preserve a permanent open space system that provides water quality benefits, wildlife habitat, and recreational open spaces for citizens to enjoy the natural setting. A public greenway system will provide extensive connections between Southwest Cary, other parts of Town, and the region. New development west of the Triangle Expressway (I-540) will occur as clustered, low-density subdivisions that provide tracts of preserved open space. Environmentally sensitive subdivision designs will emphasize the preservation of trees, and other natural assets, while providing suburban amenities.

Policy 1: Maintain Land Use Transition

Ensure that Southwest Cary is characterized by the transition, east to west, from more intense suburban development patterns around the Triangle Expressway (I-540) to lower densities at the rural edge in Chatham County.ⁱⁱⁱ

Policy 2: Respect Heritage and Open Space

Organize the pattern of new development around important natural and historic features, landscaped corridors, open spaces and community gathering spaces.^{iv}

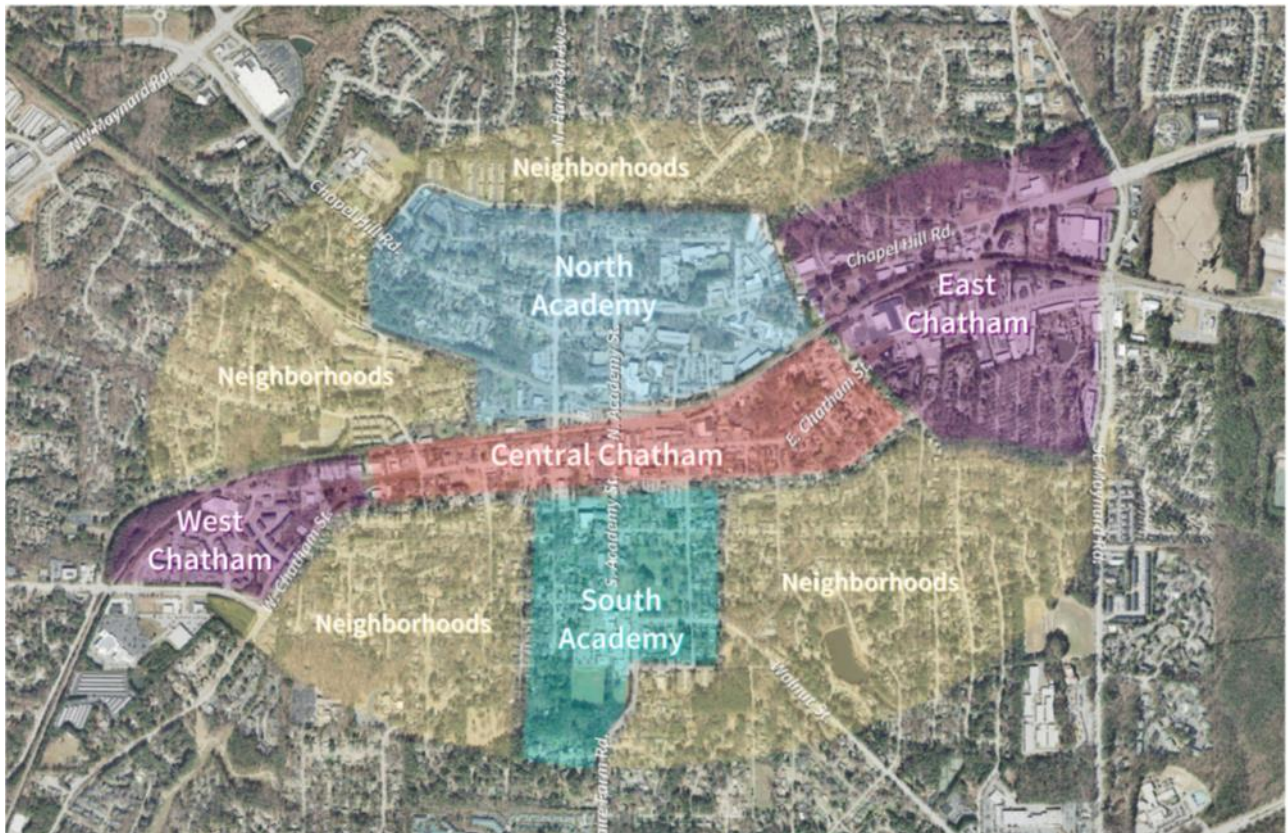
Policy 3: Require Suburban Amenities Along Roadways

Require standard street improvements (curb and gutter, sidewalks, street lighting, etc.) along roadways in Southwest Cary.

Policy 4: Support Development of a Signature Mixed Use Center

Support development of a signature Commercial Mixed Use Center at Green Level West Road and the Triangle Expressway (I-540) that incorporates special features which acknowledge its location at a major interchange in an environmentally sensitive area.^v

How Will Downtown Cary Thrive?



Map of Downtown Cary's Subareas

Downtown Cary Vision Statement

Downtown Cary will be a vibrant, sustainable, historic, pedestrian-oriented urban downtown, rich in charm and character. As the “heart and soul of Cary,” people will work, live, visit, recreate and shop in downtown. There will be an emphasis on office, residential, retail, entertainment, and civic development. Downtown will be supported by a multi-modal transportation hub serving pedestrians, bicyclists, bus transit, train and motorists. Downtown Cary will be a community gathering place for surrounding neighborhoods, all of Cary, and the Triangle Region.

Policy 1: Foster Downtown’s Authentic Character

Foster the unique and authentic character of Downtown Cary that is reflective of the Town’s long history and evolution over time. New development will both highlight and complement the character of established downtown areas. For existing buildings that are deemed important for maintaining Cary’s historic character, there should generally be an emphasis on retention and adaptive re-use, rather than redevelopment.

Policy 2: Encourage all Downtown Areas to Share a Common Identity

Encourage all areas within downtown to share, reinforce, and capitalize on a common downtown identity, while still allowing for the distinct character unique to each area.

Policy 3: Foster the Development of Connected and Cohesive Downtown Subareas

The Downtown subareas should be designed and developed to connect unique downtown subareas, provide appropriate transitions between subareas, and create a cohesive downtown experience.

Policy 4: Focus Transportation Investments to Support Alternative Travel Modes

Provide transportation facilities and services investments within the Maynard Loop that support the vision of downtown as a multi-activity destination. The transportation system should place a priority on creating a safe and accessible environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders. Necessary parking and related infrastructure should also be provided.

Policy Guidance for Downtown’s Subareas:

Central Chatham Street Area – Cary’s Main Street

Establish the Central Chatham Street Area as the commercial “main street” for downtown, serving as the principal destination for dining, entertainment, and shopping.

- Intermediate level of development intensity is characterized by buildings up to five stories depending on the location and context. Development on the edges of Central Chatham Street area may transition to the highest densities found in this subarea (i.e., highest height) as it connects to other higher density downtown subareas.
- Continuous street building frontage and lot coverage
- Emphasis on retention and adaptive re-use rather than redevelopment of older structures

North Academy Area – a Place to Live and Work

The North Academy Area should evolve into a more intense pattern of development where the primary focus will be on office, institutional, and residential uses, while still providing limited opportunities for retail, services, and dining.

- Intended to provide some of the greatest intensity of development in downtown with buildings typically ranging from three-to-five stories, depending on context
- Continuous street building frontage and lot coverage
- Retail and dining uses limited to the central blocks of N. Harrison Ave. and Chapel Hill Road

South Academy Area – a Cultural Arts Anchor

The South Academy Area should reflect Cary's small town, historic character, while capitalizing on the public, institutional, and cultural arts anchors of the district.

- New development to have setbacks, site coverage, and building massing that is contextually compatible and appropriate for the area
- Buildings typically no more than three stories in height
- Emphasis on retention and adaptive re-use rather than redevelopment of older structures

East Chatham Area – a Mixed Use Gateway

The East Chatham Area will provide a mix of office, specialty commercial and higher density residential uses, providing opportunities to live, work, and play within a walkable environment.

- Serves as the eastern gateway, an important entrance to Cary and downtown
- This area is intended to provide some of the greatest intensity of development in downtown, with buildings typically ranging from three to seven stories, depending on location and context
- Development to transition westward to buildings typically ranging from about one to three stories

West Chatham Area – a Residential Gateway

The West Chatham Area will provide downtown-supportive, higher density residential uses, while also continuing to provide limited opportunities for specialty retail, services, and offices.

- Serves as the western gateway to downtown from area neighborhoods
- Buildings will typically range from one to three stories

Strong, Supportive Core Neighborhoods

Downtown neighborhoods surrounding the five downtown areas will provide a diverse, healthy, and sustainable housing mix.

- To support a successful downtown, provide opportunities for increasing the intensity and diversity of housing within downtown neighborhoods at strategic locations to capitalize on proximity to downtown amenities and multimodal transportation options, and to support a successful downtown

- Targeted neighborhoods for increasing the intensity and diversity of housing might include redevelopment or infill in locations closest to downtown services, amenities, and public transportation
- Redevelopment of blighted or dilapidated housing stock may occur at higher densities when necessary for financial feasibility

Endnotes that Address Policy Implementation Comments from the Cary Town Council

ⁱ Potential sites to evolve into Employment Mixed Use Centers will be listed as implementation actions in the Cary Community Plan.

ⁱⁱ To facilitate the redevelopment of underperforming activity centers, incentives, flexibility to encourage redevelopment, walkable centers, “park once” designs, high quality design and character, transformative projects, and other concepts will be incorporated as implementation actions.

ⁱⁱⁱ For Southwest Cary, the actual density ranges will be provided within the Southwest Cary Special Planning Area section of the plan and will have a call out on the Growth Framework Map to alert readers to see that section for more policy direction in this area.

^{iv} Implementation actions will be included that address improving open space standards in Cary’s Land Development Ordinance.

^v Implementation actions for development of the Commercial Mixed Use Center in Southwest Cary will include specific design concepts, including a true vertical mix of integrated land uses, limitations on large format retail, and a description of the desired outcome for this area: accessible, connected, integrated, mixed use.