

TOWN of CARY

2011/2012 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Master Plan

Focus Group Notes

A series of four focus groups were held June 6-7, 2011 to get input from stakeholders on a variety of topics: indoor and outdoor athletics, community centers and special use facilities, parks and open space, and cultural arts. After a project overview of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan update project by GreenPlay consultants, community and staff stakeholders discussed a series of questions related to the focus group topic. Following are discussion notes from each of these four focus groups.

Indoor and Outdoor Athletics Focus Group

Monday, June 6, 6-8 pm

Attendees: 23 (from sign in sheet)

Indoor Athletics Discussion Summary:

Gym space is lacking, especially at the neighborhood level. There was an expressed desire for a field house type of “venue” facility where multiple non-basketball type sports could re-locate and share space; for example, table tennis, volleyball, etc. and other potential Olympic Trial-type sports. Indoor tennis courts would be a great addition to the Tennis Center. Also lacking in the system are leisure and warm water therapy pools, ice skating, and fitness amenities (weight room and cardiovascular fitness for the recreational athlete and persons who desire a workout space).

Outdoor Athletics Discussion Summary:

There was agreement that the overall quality of athletic facilities was very high in Cary and that there was a high demand in the area for these facilities. Due to this high demand, the supply of fields during peak times did not appear to be meeting the demand to serve Cary residents. There was a desire for residents to have more access to Cary’s Sports Venues (USA Baseball and WakeMed Soccer Park) and for those facilities to be generating income at least to cover expenses for regional and national tournaments. There was an interest in grouping multipurpose fields as well as sand volleyball courts to better accommodate practices as well as tournaments. There was a desire to have more multiuse fields rather than specialized fields. Other suggested solutions included adding artificial turf fields and lights to existing fields to extend play and to partner with the schools to convert some fields to artificial turf. There was also a desire for more coordinated scheduling of fields between different providers to make scheduling more customer- friendly.

In addition, there was also an interest was expressed in having a variety of trail surfaces – some participants felt there is currently a lack of soft surface (not paved) trails for runners and bikers and a location to accommodate cross county meets.

Indoor Athletics Breakout Discussion Notes:

- What indoor facilities (including tennis) in the Cary area do you or members of your organization use for athletic programs/activities?
 - Bond Park – hiking, cultural arts, Koka Booth Amphitheatre
 - Basketball
 - All indoor community centers for table tennis – wonderful but small
 - Tennis meetings
 - Community Centers – basketball, volleyball, table tennis
 - Lifetime Fitness – weights and cardio, soon they'll have an outdoor swimming pool
 - Cary Tennis park is a model for tennis per USTA – need all kinds of additional courts
 - Wake Med Soccer – outdoor soccer and support facilities
 - USA Baseball
 - Venue –style development generates significant economic impact – continue that
 - Active senior center – the building is busting at the seams
 - Other facilities outside of Cary – convention centers
- What are the strengths of the current indoor facilities for athletic programs/activities?
 - Venue style – destination facilities
 - Well maintained and attractive – clean – done right
 - Operated professionally
 - Added cultural arts and gallery space is unique
 - Layout of the tennis park for multiple events happening at the same time in different sections with the courts in bays – showcase events
 - Quick start courts – and lines at 60' – placed Cary in the forefront of youth tennis
 - Positive – “we can do it” and “what do you need” – attitude, from the Mayor down
 - Staff professionalism; they have a respect for and desire to get feedback from the public
 - Gyms are flexible spaces – not single court size – all have curtains to divide them
 - Support amenities like restrooms, etc.
- Are improved or additional indoor athletic facilities needed in the Cary area?
 - If yes, please describe (e.g., what facilities, why are they needed, where are they needed, etc.)? Don't compete pitting one sport against the other
 - Tennis
 - 10-12 indoor tennis courts (8 minimum) – Cary is the center of the state, the sport is growing, only indoor courts are at the university or are in Raleigh – place the indoor courts at or near the Tennis Park
 - Tennis Park needs meeting spaces/room and more space for public to wait and gather

- Outdoor clay courts in multiples of 6, 18 would be perfect – the only clay courts in the area are in private centers – clay is good for senior courts – can be programmed year-round – locate them west or south near a community center where they can be maintained and have constant oversight (need to sweep, line, and water daily)
 - Table tennis in the indoor tennis center or a stand-alone facility – 45-50,000 square feet – wood floor or sports court floor is great – 2012 US Olympic table tennis trials will be held in Bond Park – you can get 6-7 tables per gym so you need to build 4 times the size of a gym with dividers
 - Flex center for an indoor venue – west in new Cary – by USA Baseball Center – like a field house – 8 basketball courts, indoor turf possible, volleyball, badminton – this facility can be shared among all sports – like the Greensborough Sportsplex – mega indoor field house from a converted warehouse – this would be the missing “venue” facility
 - Have all sports participate in a design charrette
 - Indoor gyms are lacking – no shock clock, no skybox – Cary rents local schools for programming
 - Aquatics – rehab and warm water therapy pool, leisure pool (let competitive be handled by the universities)
 - Grace Christian School and other private schools needs athletics space
 - Spectator seating for indoor athletics
 - Sand volleyball
 - In your opinion, who are the best providers of these additional facilities?
 - Town of Cary – a proven provider – consistency in services – equitable services and assured funding
 - The private and non-profits are doing a good job with the aquatics, but aren’t filling the demand
- Are there opportunities for partnerships to improve or expand indoor athletic facilities and/or programs? If yes, please describe.
 - Local clubs as long term tenants
 - USTA – have funded enhancements and technical assistance through grants
 - USATT – if you can get regional training center designation, operating cost assistance comes with it
 - Sports associations and clubs
 - Schools (elementary schools are really cooperative – middle and high school use is more difficult – also most schools have site-based management which means the cooperation can vary from location to location – the schools use the Town’s tennis facilities)

- In your opinion, what is the top athletic facility and/or program priority in the next 5-10 years?
Why?
 - Aquatics, Tennis, then multi-use field house
 - Indoor tennis due to growth and demand, then field house
 - Field house with designated table tennis space (table tennis and three other Olympic sports may be willing to participate too) – this type of facility can be open and used 24/7
 - Indoor tennis courts because our national tennis presence is known, then field house, lastly aquatics
 - Field house
 - Balance between residence using athletic spaces and external users
 - Gym space lacking for both user groups
 - Internal programming conflicts – residential use
 - Tennis is self-sustaining – so grow that
- Other
 - Field house/community center on west side is a good idea
 - Small community centers – decentralized neighborhood centers
 - Location is critical – it takes 45 minutes in cross town traffic – 540 will make a difference
 - Cary uses GIS for placement of the 10 and under league play, based on team residency area
 - Use green technology and ADA in the design process
 - Things tend to become overly popular
 - Pull some of the sports out of the gyms and provide a “hub” special venue for them, this would free up gyms for basketball
 - Has Cary ever thought about an ice hockey rink? Combo with pool and fitness?
 - Indoor track?

Outdoor Athletics Breakout Discussion Notes:

- What outdoor facilities in the Cary area do you or members of your organization use for athletic programs/activities?
 - Multipurpose fields (e.g., soccer, football, etc.) – park full-size soccer fields such as Middle Creek Park, WakeMed Soccer, school fields, other municipalities
 - Sand volleyball – Green Hope and North Cary Parks, other cities such as Raleigh and Apex (but quality is not as high as in Cary)
 - Cycling – greenways, WakeMed Soccer
 - Cross Country – Green Hope, trails at Bond Park (but less desirable for running now that they are paved)
 - Other providers – use of other outdoor fields (and indoor spaces) of other municipalities including Raleigh, Morrisville, Durham; also use church fields and public and private schools

- What are the strengths of the current outdoor facilities for athletic programs/activities?
 - WakeMed amazing facility – for cross country and soccer
 - Having local access
 - Nice soccer fields next to park amenities such as playground such as in Middle Creek Park are a draw for Latino families appeal to Draw for Latinos
 - Facilities indoor and outdoor top notch, reservations are well handled, but hard to get
 - Town commitment to quality – this attitude must continue
 - Small urban parks, access to parks, greenways
 - USA Baseball
- Are improved or additional outdoor athletic facilities needed in the Cary area? If yes, please describe (e.g., what facilities, why are they needed, where are they needed, etc.)?
 - North Cary and Green Hope sand courts – quality of sand, lights good, nets; more courts together (8-12) for tournaments
 - Soccer – more fields, turf fields, lights; increase use of what you have (lights and turf) and keep quality; pretty well-distributed except for west Cary
 - Many facilities are full, hard to rent/gain access
 - Lack of transportation for kids to get to parks afterschool, schools to parks – need more buses
 - Not enough running trails, most have been paved (e.g., Bond Park)
 - Trails – disconnected due to growth patterns, dead ends, would be good to connect to American Tobacco Trail; pedestrian access; one of goals is to connect segments; have been adding trail signage; don't want to see all hard, paved trails
 - A lot of single purpose use facilities – soccer, baseball; more flexible multi-use spaces could be considered
 - Amenities – drinking fountains next to sand volleyball, water access; lack of shower facilities or changing facilities/locker room
 - No place for cross country meets; can run on weekends at Umsted State Park but cannot hold meets; need soft surface trails
 - Baseball
 - Central Carolina Men's Senior Baseball League (around for over 20 years) use USA Baseball – hard to get access; also Bond Park facilities are hard to access; have had difficulty scheduling yet majority of league participants are Cary residents
 - Lack of availability of baseball diamonds and scheduling concerns
 - Scheduling – USA Baseball coordinates scheduling several months in advance (information goes out to coaches in Nov. or Dec. and the schedule is finalized in January)
 - Need more grass infields and baseball fields
 - More demand than supply of diamonds to accommodate needs (Senior League)
 - Have sports venues that bring in revenue – we have to keep these facilities good so people keep coming

- One solution is to have more multiuse fields rather than specialized venues; need football fields (playing football on baseball fields at Bond Park); need turf fields
- Practice and game fields – schedule separately
- Would rent fields from WCPSS but groups have to cut grass and care for fields – Cary school fields
- It is better to concentrate fields than have them scattered – more fields grouped together – both for practice as well as tournaments; more efficient in maintenance (like Castle); co-locate types of sport facilities
- There is no public no golf course – a 3 hole course could introduce kids to the sport
- Are there opportunities for partnerships to improve or expand outdoor athletic facilities and/or programs? If yes, please describe.
 - Town of Cary could partner with schools to put in turf fields and Cary could get first rights for use; most school fields are already lighted
 - Example – Holly Brook schools maintained by parks and recreation department
 - Joint use agreements – have successful examples in Cary
- Willingness to pay?
 - Fees – USA Baseball fees are comparable to Durham Athletic park (and less than Wake County); Bond Park rentals are a little lower
 - Willingness to pay – yes, within reason if you’re getting something for it
 - Beach volleyball – okay if we find a sponsor for tournaments; more courts with visibility needed; recently started charging user fees
- Revenue sources
 - Tournament facilities – if WakeMed added turf fields could extend play and revenue
 - Spectator events – rent from Durham because they have seating/bleachers (indoor and outdoor); Cary could add more spectator seating to athletic facilities and generate more rental revenue
 - Is Cary willing to have a private vendor run a facility like sand volleyball (tried with Tennis Park, didn’t work)? Town would have to look at on case-by-case basis
 - In the past Town residents have had a high tolerance for bonds for infrastructure/ capital projects; can’t fund capital with fees
- Regional and local use
 - Open space policy is crucial as development occurs – protection of open space
 - Sports Venues – seems like they should cover operational costs; needs to be a better balance in terms of local access for use; public assumes that Town is making money off of big tournaments
 - Cary Academy doesn’t offer summer programs anymore because can’t access fields
 - Needs to be better balance for local needs; quality of life and facilities is the key

- In your opinion, what is the top athletic facility and/or program priority in the next 5-10 years?
Why?
 - Centralized regional booking system for sports facilities – churches, Wake County, etc. – costs, etc.; pooling resources – now everyone is separate
 - More co-located fields (e.g, to hold tournaments, to provide access to families with multiple children playing sports, ease of maintenance, etc.)
 - Add synthetic turf and lights to existing fields – partnerships with schools, kids can play in their neighborhood

Community Centers and Special Use Facilities Focus Group

Tuesday, June 7, 9-11:30 am

Attendees: 29

Community Centers Discussion Summary:

There was discussion that the gyms are overcrowded. Fitness amenities are missing at the community centers and an ice arena would be a good new special “venue” facility. Recreational and exercise swimming was identified as lacking, as well as learn to swim lessons. Affordability and access for all was discussed, as well as the Town having a role in addressing the obesity epidemic. Challenges with the cooperative relationship/use of school facilities needs to be addressed as it was expressed that schools are part of the solution to fulfilling the need for public use of space. The Town of Cary needs a county-wide policy to deal with the schools and we need to design schools for the entire community. There was lots of discussion regarding the cost/benefits of decentralized versus centralized facilities. The hub or “venue” concept for specialized facilities is great, but perhaps strategically placed multipurpose centers are a more sustainable model going forward with diverse offerings. In addition, these one-stop facilities can offer a variety of programs or amenities for different interests and age groups at the same time so the family unit can go together and play separate at the same facility. Lastly, there needs to be an emphasis on accessibility and sustainability, in the placement, design/construction, and operations/maintenance.

Special Use Facilities Discussion Summary:

New indoor tennis courts, ice rink, fitness amenities, and aquatics were discussed. In addition, more skateparks in other parts of the Town are needed and there is a general lack of available gym space. More community gardens and a focus on STEM programming or facilities are desired. The vacant Kroger facility was mentioned as an opportunity.

Community Centers Discussion Notes

- What indoor recreation or community centers in the Cary area do you or members of your family use for? What indoor recreational facilities do other people you know use?
 - All community centers and senior centers
 - Herb C. Young – convenient for work
 - PRCR Advisory Board Member – rented Bond Park and Page Walker as a gathering space for family
 - Bond Park and greenway trails
 - Live in Apex – use Bond park, community center for community meetings
 - Bond Park, shelter rentals and room rentals for Herb C. Young
 - Middlecreek Community Center

- Senior center used weekly, Page Walker for arts and plays, Herb C. Young for children's theater, Bond is too far west to use
- Bond Park and Page Walker
- What are the strengths of the current community centers?
 - Staff – easy to work with, great personalities, their experience and level of customer service
 - Overall maintenance and upkeep
 - Hours and ease of access
 - Strong programming and diversity of programs
 - Equipment condition (like basketball rims and amount of balls available)
- In your opinion, are there any indoor recreation needs for Cary residents that are not being met? If yes, describe.
 - Gyms are maxed out – Basketball and other sports don't have opportunities for playing time – everyone wants the gym space at the same time – need spectator sized gyms
 - Fitness/workout facilities – many cannot afford to join the YMCA or a private club – fees are an issue for a lot of different socio-demographic groups of people, including non-residents
 - Ice rinks (an area private facility is closing down) – there is a potential development in the Briar Creek area
 - Storage area
 - Indoor tennis courts – trying to make the Tennis Center a youth USTA training center

Do you or members of your household have a need for aquatic facilities (e.g., indoor leisure pools, outdoor leisure pools, splash pads, etc.) or programs/activities (e.g., lap-swimming, learn-to-swim, etc.)?

- Swimming – recreational or exercise – some don't live in an area with a swim club or have access to the YMCA
 - YMCA or my local pool is too crowded at certain times
 - Need senior therapy swimming access because all the lanes are used up with adult lap or family
 - No access to kids play areas
 - Lifetime Fitness – need swim lessons
 - Triangle Aquatics Center (TAC), YMCA, Lifetime Fitness and HOA's
- Are improved or additional indoor recreational facilities needed in the Cary area?
 - If yes, please describe (e.g., what facilities, why are they needed, where are they needed, etc.)?
 - What role should the Town of Cary play in responding to these needs?
 - While there are private providers doing this, affordability is a big deal – perhaps the Town would fulfill a family focus

- YMCA does provide scholarships but they run out of money quickly, and to qualify for the sliding scale or the scholarship you have to be at the bottom of the income scale
- Fitness and golf – public/private competition issue – the stratus of entry into the activities or price point prevents many people from participating – this could actually be viewed as a public/private partnership
- Obesity epidemic – Town has a role in providing fitness
- Without my involvement in public recreation, I wouldn't be where I am today
- Cary can be a role model for the nation
- Shared school/recreation co-location – positive for some of the traditional sports – challenges and issues include safety, security, access, and site-based management decisions – there is a disconnect with the schools and what they are working on; site design is not always connected to the community – walking access is not always adequate – some school partnerships are working well – gyms are often too small with storage areas not conveniently located
- What should be the future community center model for the Town of Cary? What types of spaces should ideally be included in new community centers?
 - Should the Town of Cary build a greater number of smaller community centers with fewer amenities? Or..... Should the Town of Cary build fewer, but larger, multipurpose regional recreation centers (incorporating gyms, pools, fitness, and multipurpose rooms to accommodate a variety of programming, and other amenities)?
 - Size matters – types of flooring – flexibility of spaces – storage and seating capacity – we want to get the most for every dollar we spend – want to accommodate as many different uses as possible
 - Herb C. Young is referred to as a “cafegymatorium” – multiuse rooms
 - Hub/specialized facilities = smaller costs, more travel time often by car, greater efficiency, less accessibility
 - Decentralized facilities = greater operating costs, less driving, greater aggregate costs, greater accessibility – may address aging population and those with less transportation/mobility issues
 - Long term financial viability – many small groups may make it manageable now, but what happens in the future?
 - Joint use is a key – need a county-wide policy to deal with the schools – need to design schools for the entire community – need heating and cooling control on site versus centralized controls
 - perhaps solves field use (practice)
 - perhaps solves local gym use (basketball)
 - perhaps solves some classroom uses
 - State statutes determine who and what uses

- Should the model for community centers incorporate spaces for cultural arts, seniors, teens, etc.? Or is there a need for stand-alone specialty centers?
 - Hub for specialized facilities is great, but multipurpose centers is a more sustainable model going forward with diverse offerings
- How long would you be willing to travel to get to a multipurpose recreation center?
 - 10 - 15 minutes is fine
 - Offer programming for different age groups at the same time for the entire family – I'd then drive 20 minutes
 - 10 minutes or less increase frequency of visitation
 - 20 minutes equal staying there longer – add coffee shop and lounge area for hanging out – fitness for adults with youth classes – co-locate with library –offer free wifi
- What are your thoughts about how community centers can be run most efficiently and effectively? How can sustainability be incorporated into the design and operation of centers?
 - Accessibility and transit – walking/biking and public transportation
 - Community centers using learning centers through the interpretive element for the building, gallery spaces, architecture as art, teaching on “green design” – LEED certified
 - Add daycare for youth and older adults
 - Provide evening preschool programming
 - Smithfield and Hillsborough are great facilities/models
- Are there opportunities for partnerships to improve or expand indoor facilities and/or programs? If yes, please describe.
 - Hillsborough used private/public money and had a major capital fund raising campaign
 - Asheville model – 50,000 sq. ft.
 - Active Recreation component
 - Cultural Arts component 10,000 sq. ft.
 - Community Engagement component – Culinary Kitchen, Community Garden
 - Use the Olympic training support and special groups to come together to put their money behind it to get some set space or time... during the day have Olympic training
 - Ice – US Curling Association
 - US Senior Championships – court space

Existing Town of Cary Community Centers:

- Bond Park
- Herb C. Young
- Middle Creek

Special Use Facilities Discussion Notes:

- Are improvements needed to these facilities (i.e., Nature Center, Senior Center, Boat House)?
 - If yes, please describe (e.g., what facilities, why are they needed, etc.)?
 - Stevens Nature Center lacks adequate staff, space or maintenance funding – needs improvements
 - Transportation to specialty venue facilities is needed
- In your opinion, is there a need for other special use facilities (indoor as well as outdoor such as disk golf, skate parks, dog parks, etc.)? If yes, please describe.
 - Ice
 - Transportation to skate park
 - Skate parks in other parts of the Town (South)
 - STEM – and other non-sport recreation – science center
 - Aquatics
 - 3-hole golf training facility
 - Cultural diversity events and indoor festival space
 - Community outreach efforts for the Town every other week – need space for meetings across the community
 - Indoor Tennis
 - Community gardens and farmer’s market (public/private) – connected to the greenways with a large pavilion space – senior garden has a waiting list
 - Meeting place facility
 - Field house would free up some of the current community center spaces
 - Centralized booking agency (or technology – your CLASS system should be able to do this and your computer system)
 - Regional planning approach to facility and field scheduling
 - Community center within a commercial/shopping development (grocery)
 - Vacant Kroger facility should be used
 - Creative architectural solutions for flexible spaces – gazebos which enclose in winter – build for expansion (second floor, etc.)
 - Disk golf
 - Spaces need to be designed for sheltering and disaster relief
 - As we move into Chatham County – great opportunities for environmental center, retreat center, and overnight use – could also meet corporate retreat space needs
 - Place to take injured animals – vet partnership for wildlife rehab
 - Multi-generational use to assist with the migration of seniors to the area

- Are there opportunities for partnerships to improve or expand special use facilities and/or programs? If yes, please describe.
 - REI
 - Senior services or gaps in assisted living facilities (have to typically bring programming to them due to the average age) – partnership with Town to use their pools
 - Senior services definition are broadening
 - Pay attention to the materials we have in senior centers and community centers – seating is too painful or soft, need chairs with arms, etc. – need different ergonomics – bathroom assistance
 - Partnership for wildlife displacement and injury
- In your opinion, what is the top special use facility and/or program priority in the next 5-10 years? Why?
 - No point building a facility if you don't have programs in them
 - How do we get our information in front of you – funnel info and proposals through Town
 - What's the land that has already been purchased for Cary – this would shape our thoughts of what should/could be built
 - Make whatever we build close to passive and active transportation
 - Accelerated phase 1 – instant community watch with disk golf (this service can be moved around as needed when development occurs – does not need a permanent location)
 - Economic development opportunities spurred by our development – property values impact - use banked land for a land swap for a better parcel

Parks, Open Space, and Sustainability Focus Group

Tuesday, June 7, 1:30-4 pm

Attendees: 23

Park, Open Space, and Sustainability Discussion Summary:

There is a considerable positive embrace of Cary's current parks and greenways. Despite this, there is an ongoing desire for greater connectivity to facilities, parks, and services through a well planned greenway system. This is considered a priority. In terms of future open space, some respondents recommended the Town do a better job of communicating what it has preserved and has land banked for future parks and open space. Most citizens do not know that the majority of the needed parks in west Cary have been acquired.

There is a desire to balance passive and active uses as well as define what is meant by terms like open space, natural/native, un-developed, etc. Making the downtown a parks and recreation destination including through greenway connections is desired. West Cary is lacking in amenities/components and facilities. There is considerable appreciation for the historical buildings and lands that have been acquired and a desire to utilize these for community use, but still a concern that these be appropriately preserved. The high quality of maintenance and service is a Cary expectation, so don't forget the longer term operating and maintenance funding. Keep working toward "green" park and building design and operation standards.

Parks and Open Space Discussion Notes:

- What are the strengths of the current park system?
 - Greenway system
 - Connects park to park
 - LOS is great – can live anywhere and be close to a park – by car 5 minutes – lots of people are within walking distance
 - Diversity
 - What's the one thing you would say about the Cary parks that makes you proud of?
 - I can get to Bond Park by the greenway
 - High quality – kept up, well-maintained
 - Diversity of experiences
 - Bathrooms
 - What's the one thing you would you could improve about the Cary parks?
 - Wish we could get to the parks without getting in the car – ride to the park safely
 - Seems to be good distribution of parks in the western portion of Town (based on 2003 map). Good progress on greenway network. Several large parks that seem to be designated for mixed use (submitted via email by Jon Scott from Triangle Land Conservancy)

- What is needed to improve the park system (current and future)? What are the top 3 priorities: in the next 5 years, in the next 10 years?
 - Pedestrian and bike accessibility – multi-modal access – transit too. Tie transportation to greenways
 - Diversity of use – mountain biking, etc. provides access to uses
 - At what point will the new Cary Arts Center become the cultural hub and push for the Town – the Town views it as the start – the next will be to bring more festivals to downtown – new 395 seat theater – new design for a plaza
 - Greenway access to downtown
 - Energy efficiency - New facilities built to high environmental standards – LEED
 - Parks need to be considered as part of larger watershed and be used to protect each watershed
 - Passive activities to connect to nature – how is the balance passive to active/developed – Cary has leaned toward the developed parks
 - What about West Cary – What are the pressures and how will new parks behave?
 - Schools always leave Cary for fieldtrips – we need something educational in Cary – strawberry picking, agricultural park or working farm, community garden/farmer’s market with education, Pizza Farm (Illinois), etc.
 - Advocate the significance of the White Oak Creek Greenway. Last missing link to the ATT within region. Segment of the East Coast Greenway. Partners include CAMPO, Wake Co., Apex, East Coast Greenway Alliance, etc.
 - Hemlock Bluffs does an excellent job with natural areas w/ developed spaces. Think critically about using undeveloped space. Hemlock is the model of balanced design. Greatest opportunity is to do this w/ new parks.
 - Respect historic heritage and capture the story in the design/development – structures or view corridors – develop identity. Honor heritage. Wake Co history is one of small farms.
 - Dogs off-leash areas in natural area, .on trails or along greenway.
 - Need neighborhood advisory groups to assist the town in planning.
 - People are looking for off-road greenways to get to town facilities. Various trail systems need to be connected
 - More access needed to ATT for residents living in Carolina Preserve. Improved access to the American Tobacco Trail from the community
 - Increased accessibility – safety – connect to schools Better relationship of greenways to retail.
 - Top three priorities – 1) land acquisition for new parks, expansion of existing parks, and greenway corridors, 2) completion of key greenway corridors, 3) open new parks or update facilities on existing parks (*submitted via email by Jon Scott from Triangle Land Conservancy*)

- What are ways that the Town of Cary could incorporate sustainability into park planning, design, and operations?
 - Sustainability of new Park development
 - Travel distances to parks, facilities
 - travel modes feasible to/from parks facilities
 - The biggest carbon footprint associated with parks facilities is likely to be associated with travel to and from the facilities by Cary residents and workers. Reducing that footprint should be a driving philosophy. Therefore, those impacts should be a key facility siting criteria.
 - Park, greenway, and facility siting criteria should include Transit access as a key criteria
 - Sustainable site design to facilitate adaptive re-use of facilities over time, expansion over time, etc.
 - Green and low carbon footprint building design principles
 - Low impact development stormwater management at town sites
 - ability of parks facilities to adapt to changing demographics in client neighborhoods, such as meeting recreation needs of seniors, immigrants, etc.
 - Adjacent and nearby economic development opportunities and synergies should be another key facility siting criteria; put facilities in areas where the facility can either stimulate symbiotic future development, and/or where future growth will place users in close proximity to parks facilities
 - Low impact development for long term operations - The Black Creek has been impacted by runoff. Trail is damaged. Low impact development that efficiently deals with storm water runoff is needed. Work w/ nature. Don't fight it.
 - If LID, use for educational purposes. Take advantage of opportunity.
 - Recycling – future benchmark. Encourage in parks
 - Strategic design purposes needed for facilities. Do so from the outset. LEED for neighborhood design. Measures connectivity for parks. Building design/orientation – zero waste design, LEED standards
 - Deliberately setting up the projects with budget dollars for decision points for connectivity. If constructing a park, add in cost to add in connectivity.
 - Consider how people get to the parks in a green manner. Locate parks so people do not have to drive.
 - Cary Parks – Positive aspects
 - Can ride a bicycle to Bond Park from house
 - Quality of the parks
 - Diversity of experiences
 - Most have bathrooms
 - New – landscaping is nice
 - If changed....
 - Wish more parks were accessible by bike

- What's the status on the Town's decision for LEED requirement (we are a design/build Town)
 - LEED certifiable but perhaps not ready to certify (add \$45K to a recent project)
 - Issue of LEED for facilities – Council agreed to fund to make fire station Leed certifiable. Was not ready to make decision to mandate all bldgs.
 - Need to get more experience with the process
- Other thoughts
 - MP can discuss amortization/payback period that the community may be willing to consider, and cost/benefits, and recommend that new development of parks look at the LEED opportunities – design standard language
 - Do a better job of communicating what we own/have
 - Overlay density with development planning
 - Define what is meant by terms like open space, natural/native, un-developed, etc.
 - Misconception that developed means we will remove the trees, or that an open grassy area means it can have an organized activity or free play
 - Collaborate with a real estate group for the value of Cary Parks and how to communicate this
 - Use Trust for Public Land info for the value of parks
- Maynard Loop Redevelopment
 - Large medians like the Maynard Loop are nice too
 - Two lane road with bike/walk emphasis
 - Change the transportation plan from 6 to 2 lanes
 - Urban gardens/community gardens in the downtown
 - Light Rail stations with mixed use – 5-15 years out
 - Commuter rail from Durham to Raleigh
 - Framework plan without transit to support it yet
 - Do we go higher density?
 - Do we add buffers?
 - What will bring people to downtown?
 - Downtown park
 - Gravel walks in loop
 - Linear Parks – link to larger and smaller places
 - Intense walkability
 - Pocket parks
 - Rest and shade along walks
 - Keep the Rude House – keep what we have – don't make a downtown with parking lots and skyscrapers – have the development fit in
 - Use technology – tweet your location
 - Need places for kids to play

- The Town Green
 - The expanse of downtown – reach – connection
 - “In the Loop”
 - Little shops with green spaces out back to sit/socialize
 - Eat and drink spaces
 - Period houses and museums
 - Incompatible sidewalk materials need to change (brick spacers and cobble stones)
 - Gaps in sidewalk development
 - Stated preferences for businesses that use our planning standards – encourage businesses that support the community like grocery stores, etc.
 - Rain gardens and storm water ponds for community to walk around
 - Plan for the other wildlife issues that some of our designs will attract
- Evaluate opportunities for connectivity beyond greenways – sidewalks, bike routes and bike lanes, providing citizens the opportunity for alternative transportation within the park system (submitted via email by Jon Scott from Triangle Land Conservancy)

Natural Areas and Habitat Corridors *(the following comments were submitted via email by Jon Scott from Triangle Land Conservancy)*

- What are the strengths of Cary’s current open spaces and natural areas?
 - Greenway network including American Tobacco Trail and regional nature of greenway system. Several large parks which are or will be connected by trails. Some remaining rural sections, which capture the past bucolic nature of the area.
- What are opportunities to improve Cary’s green infrastructure to facilitate greater connectivity (e.g., wildlife habitat and corridors, greenways, etc.)?
 - Wildlife corridor along White Oak Creek; connectivity to Jordan Lake Lands from multiple points; connectivity between existing parks; closing existing gaps in greenway corridors; continue work with developers to set aside important open space that provides trail connectivity, wildlife habitat corridors and water quality protection.
- What are priority areas for open space land preservation in Cary?
 - White Oak Creek, Swift Creek, protection of Jordan Lake watershed and drinking water supply, corridor along American Tobacco Trail (preserving viewshed and rural character), National Register Historic Districts (Green Level, Carpenter). Explore ways to protect remaining productive farm and forest land.

- What strategies should the Town use to preserve open space?
 - Purchase of land, conservation easements, promotion of conservation tax benefits (Federal and State of NC) for donation or bargain sale of land or conservation easements, partnership opportunities (grant writing, acquisition, stewardship) with Triangle Land Conservancy, Wake Soil and Water Conservation District and other conservation organizations in Wake County. Evaluate open space requirements for future developments and ensure developments are providing adequate open space that maximizes public benefit (water quality, recreation, wildlife). Evaluate zoning within open space priority areas (e.g., land within National Register Historic District that is zoned as commercial could be rezoned to residential or another designation to reduce property tax burden). Consider new fees or ways to generate revenue for open space acquisition – example would be the Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative where Raleigh recently introduced a 1 cent per 100 gallon fee for all water users to raise money for acquisition of land and conservation easements along stream and river corridors to protect water quality.
- What are ways that the Town of Cary can improve environmental stewardship and care of its open space lands?
 - Perhaps develop a volunteer program where citizens can become involved in caring for open space; contract with Triangle Land Conservancy or other conservation organizations on management of nature preserves or monitoring of conservation easements. Work with NCSU or other organization to develop management plans for properties or portions of properties that will be maintained as nature preserves or will have minimal development to maximize conservation benefits. Invasive species management.
- What are ways that the Town of Cary could incorporate sustainability into open space planning, design, and operations?
 - Explore LEED certification for new park structures, develop prioritization system for future open space acquisition, partner with Wake Soil and Water Conservation District to implement best management practices (e.g., rain gardens, cisterns, riparian buffers, etc.).

Cultural Arts Focus Group

Tuesday, June 7, 6-8 pm

Attendees: 38

Cultural Arts Discussion Summary:

There was a desired expressed to define Cultural Arts in the broad sense. A larger 1,000-1,100 seat performance venue and the digital arts center may still be lacking. There may also be a need for a convention center type of facility to handle all the diverse groups wanting festival/event space. There is interest in the Page Walker Art and History Center and Cary Arts Center “bookending” the downtown art hub, as well as offering cultural arts programs and experiences in a decentralized way throughout the parks and recreation system. An Arts Incubator and artist studio space were also discussed, in addition to the need for storage spaces for the many cultural groups’ equipment and supplies. Many new cultural arts festivals and event ideas were shared and some more immediate repair needs at Sertoma Amphitheater were identified.

Public Art Discussion Summary:

Public art ideas were shared including free expression spaces, themed art initiatives, and bus wraps. Celebrating our cultural diversity through public art as well as incorporating art in signage was discussed.

Historic Preservation Discussion Summary:

The Carpenter area (Ferrell Store/Ruritan Park/AM Howard Farm) provides incredible opportunities for historic preservation, education, and restorative/adaptive uses of the property and buildings. These sites could provide the venue for artisans and artists to “tell the story of Cary’s history” through period arts and crafts, story-telling, re-enactment and living history, a working farm and farmer’s market, while marrying art and history through the balance of preservation and restoration.

Cultural Arts Facilities Discussion Notes:

Existing Indoor Cultural Arts Facilities

- Page Walker Arts & History Center
 - What are the strengths of this facility?
 - Intimate setting
 - Historical aspect of the facility
 - Festival and show space with multiple rooms
 - Staff and setting is great
 - Lovely wedding venue
 - Meeting space and AV needs
 - Parking is convenient
 - Museum is wonderful but small

- What improvements are needed?
 - Expand the museum space
 - Space limitations
- What are the top priority improvements: in next 5 years, in next 5-10 years?
 - Be sure PRCR master plan uses the broad definition of culture and arts
 - Coordinate a year-long international art effort
- Cary Art Center
 - How do you envision the CAC meeting your needs?
 - One bookend of the downtown art walk
 - Enhance the arts and galleries in between
 - A lot of juggling will need to be done to meet all the needs of the interested parties
 - Many groups would love to come back to Cary and use the CAC
 - Need someone to help the groups organize and work together

Future Cultural Arts Facilities & Programs

- Are there any cultural art facility needs (current or anticipated in the next 10 years) that are not already being met by the current facilities?
 - Interest expressed in bringing back the old Cary Town bandstand as part of the downtown revitalization efforts
- What are possible opportunities for existing Town buildings (Old Library, HR Building, Jordan Halls Arts Center)
 - Larger 1,000-1,100 seat venue is needed and is a gap in the market (2006 art study) – with a flexible design footprint
 - 11-12,000 day festival for an indoor weather backup venue – like the Raleigh Convention Center
 - Cary is central in the triangle and would draw from the entire area
 - Digital art center downtown – positive response
 - Arts incubator – some space at Cary Arts Center is available
 - Studio space to help emerging artists get started
 - Artists in residence – audio art – music studio – writer space
 - Storage space for theater pieces and props, festival equipment
 - Jordan Hall or the old library building could become a Cary History Museum and display what is currently being held in storage due to lack of space on the 3rd floor of the Page Walker Art and History Center (Page Walker would continue to display history exhibits as well). *(Submitted by Kay Struffolino via email.)*

Existing Outdoor Amphitheatres & Festivals/Special Events

- What festivals and special events in Cary have you attended (e.g., Town of Cary and other groups)?
 - Spring Daze, Diwali Celebration (held at Koka Booth), many others discussed
- Are there any gaps in festivals and special events? Are there others that could be held downtown? What spaces are needed to accommodate these events?
 - Asian New Year
 - Cary Heritage Festival
 - Double capacity of Lazy Daze by expanding over 2 days
 - Literature Festival
 - Cycle of Festivals – needs to be communicated
 - Cary Idol
 - Dance competition
 - Wedding Festival or Expo – celebrating diverse cultural wedding ideas with local vendors and services
 - Rock and Roll Bands performance Festival – local talent of teens – JamFest (competition) and Band Nights (have ended and were held at the Senior Center)
 - Gaming Festival
 - Local schools string festival
 - Robotics Festival
 - Farming Event
 - Seniors and Senior Center naming competition (to promote younger seniors to participate)
 - Dance Festival
 - October Fest
 - Celtic Fest
- Koka Booth Amphitheatre
 - What are the strengths of this facility?
 - Koka Booth Rocks!
 - Expanded programming is wonderful
 - What improvements are needed?
 - Backstage lighting
 - Fireworks floating on water
- Sertoma Amphitheatre
 - What are the strengths of this facility?
 - What improvements are needed?
 - Backstage dressing rooms, storage, bathrooms
 - Larger
 - Center seating is a desert with no shade shelter
 - Better communication about how nice it is

- Flooring is dangerous – especially for dance (pressure treated lumber)

Public Art

- How would you assess the state of Cary’s current public art program? What public art in Cary has caught your attention?
 - Mural on Chatham street
 - Gate at Koka Booth
 - Walkway bridges
 - Sculpture on the corner of Tryon and Kildare Farms
 - Horse (metal) is the worst
- What future opportunities exist for Cary’s public art program?
 - Putting art in the walkway is a new concept for Cary
 - Themed art initiatives like rain barrels, rocking chairs, fire hydrants
 - Need a Cary animal for a public art project
 - Free art expression wall/tunnel
 - Busts of prominent people – technology leaders
 - Using technology in public art
 - Adapting signage to include public art
 - Incorporating cultural diversity in the public art identity
 - Rotating displays – some of them become permanent – “art on the move”
 - Bus wraps for the Cary van
 - Public auditory art – moving water, soft conversations

Historic/Preservation Discussion Notes:

Background: Cary has three historic districts – Downtown, Green Level Church Road, and Carpenter. Have the beginnings of a historic inventory and preservation plan. What we’re most focused on tonight is the Carpenter area.

Ferrell Store/Ruritan Park (Carpenter Area)

- What is the program and vision for this site? What are unique historical and site features to preserve?
 - Restore it to a general store
 - Quilt shop
 - Local artisans home art “older” crafts
 - Architectural interior preservation
 - Plus an international flavor/business
 - Farm equipment as art
 - Like the rural nature of the site
 - Farmer’s Garden
 - Across from the site are several Cary landmarks which provides a nice intimate character
 - Warehouse storage building for train loading – keep

- Pumpkin patch/meadow
- Like the triangular line of site
- What are known constraints (e.g., environmental, cultural, physical, design budget/financial)?
 - Traffic issues, potential road widening
 - Okay not to do more and keep the space more passive

AM Howard Farm (Carpenter Area)

- What is the program and vision for this site? What are unique historical and site features to preserve?
 - Archeology digs
 - Tell story of site – oral histories
 - Relocate buildings together – have writers write the history of this site and use it as an writer’s residence
 - Preserve buildings as they are contributing buildings to the historic registry of the site
 - Heritage Festivals – re-enactors, storytelling, medieval festival
 - Driving by site makes us reflect on Cary’s history
 - Not complete and seems out of context – need continuity between the sites
 - Community gardens
 - Integrate West Cary Farmer’s Market
 - Farming and business heritage – family spaces too
 - Working sustainable farm (not with tobacco, but this is historically correct) – make it a historic town
 - Do both restore and preserve – a living place not a museum – store front music.
 - Sea Grove. Keep history alive but modernize it.
 -
 - This can provide a deep sense of history of Cary
 - Monticello on a smaller scale
 - School education component like Fairfax County
 - Steeplechase event
 - Integrate the history with a celebration of those who migrated here
 - Could be a working heritage arts compound (sort of like John Campbell Folk School concept) –teaching classes year round, including organic farming (herbs, etc) and the store could sell the goods made. This would help with financial sustainability and enable the community to participate by buying the items. Could do back porch music series and maybe a folk festival. *(Submitted by Linda Depo from Meal on Wheels of Wake County via email.)*

General – Cultural Resources

- What are partnership opportunities?
 - Coming together of the performing and visual arts – Cary Arts Center begins the conversation
 - Art weekend “drawing to the music “
 - Outdoor air/water walls, sculpture garden, place to gather and visit
 - Outdoor Bandstand/Gazebo downtown
- What are top 3 priorities?
 - Sertoma improvements - floor is a safety issue and dressing room space
 - Preservation
- Other
 - What’s going to happen with the old Jordan Hall and the future new and old Libraries – more discussions to come

Greenways Focus Group

Tuesday, August 2, 3-5 pm

Attendees: __ *(from sign in sheet)*