

**STAFF REPORT**

Town Council, February 12, 2015

**Orum Property Comprehensive Plan Amendment PL15-023 (14-CPA-06)**

Consider action on proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Speaker: Mr. Scott Ramage

From: Jeffery G. Ulma, AICP, Planning Director

Prepared by: Scott Ramage, AICP, Principal Planner

Approved by: Benjamin T. Shivar, Town Manager

Approved by: Russ Overton, P.E., Assistant Town Manager

**REQUEST**

This is a Comprehensive Plan Amendment request for two properties totaling 26.04 +/- acres located on the north side of High House Road, approximately 1,400 feet east of the intersection with Davis Drive, and 500 feet west of the intersection with Prestonwood Parkway. The property is currently designated on Cary's Land Use Plan as part of a mixed-use Community Activity Center (CAC), with an underlying base land use designation of Low Density Residential (LDR). The applicant proposes to amend the Land Use Plan by removing the two properties from the Cornerstone mixed-use Community Activity Center.

There is a Rezoning Application (14-REZ-29) associated with this case.

*NOTE: The purpose of a comprehensive plan amendment is to evaluate the appropriateness of a proposed land use and/or other issue, need, or opportunity for the subject parcel(s) of land. Technical design standards of the Land Development Ordinance are addressed during review of the site or subdivision plan and can be found at <http://www.amlegal.com/library/nc/cary.shtml>.*

**SUBJECT PARCELS**

Property Owner	County Parcel Number (10-digit)	Real Estate ID	Deeded Acreage
Kathy Orum, Trustee 1600 High House Road Cary, NC 27513	0744648136	0206402	21.08
John Edward Orum 1600 High House Road Cary, NC 27513	0744730917	0103896	4.96
<b>Total Area</b>			26.04

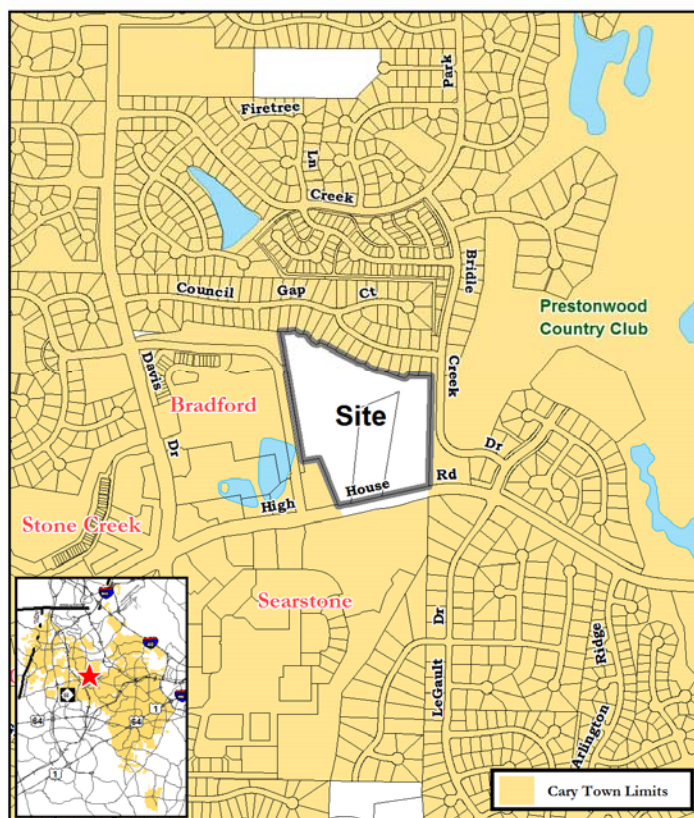
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Applicants	Kathy Orum, Trustee, and John Edward Orum		
Agent	Glenda Toppe, Glenda S. Toppe & Associates 4139 Gardenlake Drive Raleigh, NC 27612		
Acreage	26.04 ±		
General Location	1600 and 1720 High House Road		
Schedule	<b>Town Council Public Hearing</b> October 30, 2014	<b>Planning &amp; Zoning Board Public Hearing</b> December 15, 2014	<b>Town Council Action</b> February 12, 2015

Current Land Use Plan Designation	Part of a mixed-use Community Activity Center (CAC), without a specific use recommendation
Proposed Land Use Plan designation	Low Density Residential (LDR) with removal from the mixed-use Community Activity Center (CAC)
Existing Zoning District(s)	Residential 40 (R-40); Mixed Use Overlay District, Cornerstone sub-area. <i>An associated Rezoning Case (14-REZ-29) has been submitted, requesting that the property be removed from the Mixed Use Overlay District.</i>
Town Limits	The subject property is located outside the corporate limits but inside the Town of Cary ETJ.
Staff Contact	Scott Ramage, Principal Planner (919) 462-3888 scott.ramage@townofcary.org

## Vicinity Map

Orum Property  
14-CPA-06



### SITE CHARACTERISTICS

#### Existing Uses on the Site:

The two parcels include a 180-foot telecommunications tower on the 21-acre property, and a single-family home and an outbuilding/barn on the 4.96-acre parcel.

#### Adjacent Land Uses and Streams:

North: The northern boundary of the site is delineated by a stream, subject to 100 foot buffers on each side of the stream bank. North of the stream is the single-family Georgetowne Subdivision (*Minimum lot size: 12,000 sq. ft.; median lot size: 14,200 sq. ft.*).

South: South of the site, on the opposite side of High House Road, is the Sears Farm PDD (residential portions), being developed as Searstone.

East: Immediately east of the site is open space associated with Prestonwood Country Club (golf course).

West: Immediately west of the site is the 41-acre mixed-use development "The Bradford," consisting of a mix of retail/commercial, office, multifamily housing, and townhomes.

## **SUMMARY OF PROCESS AND ACTIONS TO DATE**

### **Notification of Town Council Public Hearing**

Consistent with NC General Statutes, notice of the public hearing on the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment was mailed to property owners within 800 feet of the subject property, published on the Town's website, and posted on the subject property.

### **Town Council Public Hearing (October 30, 2014)**

Two citizens spoke at the hearing, and both spoke in support of the plan amendment. One of the speakers expressed concerns about traffic.

### **Notification of Planning and Zoning Board Public Hearing**

Consistent with NC General Statutes, notice of the public hearing on the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment was mailed to property owners within 800 feet of the subject property, published on the Town's website, and posted on the subject property.

### **Planning & Zoning Board Public Hearing of December 15, 2014**

Staff summarized and presented the staff report and early findings related to the request from the Town's Imagine Cary project. This included a preliminary assessment and inventory of the remaining supply of office land within **Planning & Zoning Board Public Hearing of December 15, 2014** the area of the Cornerstone Activity Center, as well as for a larger surrounding area encompassing about 14 square miles in central Cary. Two of the applicants' representatives spoke on behalf of the application during the hearing, with one representative stating that he felt there was a lack of market for office at the site.

Two citizens spoke in favor of the request at the hearing. Concerns raised centered on traffic, the current size of the activity center, and concerns about potential nonresidential uses.

During board discussion, considerations, questions, and concerns raised by board members included:

- A concern that people in the area may actually want and expect doctors' offices and other office-based services in the area.
- Questions were asked about the timing of the land supply inventory being developed for Imagine Cary, and the differences between a land inventory versus a market study. Discussion considered the degree to which the site was, or was not, suited for office.
- Questions were asked about the planned circulator road system. A board member felt that the road system was very well-planned for the activity center, and that the town might "short itself" by under-utilizing this site.
- A board member raised concern about the political history for this part of town, and citizen preferences. Another board member felt that the role of the board should be to look out farther into Cary's future and its long-term good, rather than considering short-term political issues.
- A board member questioned whether Medium Density Residential (MDR) might be a more appropriate transition than either office or single family on this site.

- A concern was raised about a perceived lack of consistent policy direction from council regarding the retention of future office sites.

The board recommended in favor of the plan amendment, by a 7-1 vote.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY

### A. Townwide Land Use Plan

#### Existing Plan Recommendations

For this site, the governing land use element of the Comprehensive Plan is the town-wide Land Use Plan. That plan currently designates the site as being part of the mixed-use Community Activity Center that is situated around the four quadrants of the intersection of High House Road and Davis Drive. Chapter 6 of the Land Use Plan defines activity centers as physically and aesthetically unified, concentrated mixed-use areas containing commercial, office, institutional, and high- and medium-density residential uses, arranged in a walkable, compact, pedestrian- and transit-friendly manner. A community activity center is typically anchored by one or two large shopping centers, and is intended to supply significant amounts of office space, plus ample amounts of high-density and medium-density residential.

The Land Use Plan Map also designates the site with an underlying land use designation of Low Density Residential (LDR), but that is used simply as a “holding classification” within activity centers, to designate that the actual activity center use might be any of a number of uses typical of activity centers. In cases where there is an LDR holding classification, future development of the site is expected to provide the land use types and amounts recommended in Land Use Plan Chapter 6, Section 6.2. These metrics, and the most appropriate land uses for the site, are discussed later in this report.

#### Requested Plan Amendment

The applicant proposes to amend the Land Use Plan so that the subject parcels are removed from the mixed-use Community Activity Center. The parcels would then be designed for LDR uses, outside of an activity center. As such, the expectation would be for future development conforming to the conventional definition for LDR, namely single family residential development at one to three dwellings per acre. It is also accepted that a variety of neighborhood-compatible and complimentary institutional uses may also be considered, such as churches, schools, and daycare facilities.

#### Planning History for the Site

- 1996. At the time Cary's town-wide Land Use Plan was adopted in 1996, the Plan Map designated the subject parcels as “Low Density Residential or Traditional Neighborhood Development.” The parcels were also identified as being on a quadrant of a Neighborhood Activity Center. However, in 1996 the Plan Map did not specify precise boundaries for activity centers.
- 2003. The town-wide Land Use Plan Map was amended (case 02-LPA-12) in conjunction with rezoning approval for the Riggsbee PDD (Stone Creek Village). This amendment changed the classification of the mixed-use activity center from a Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) to a Community Activity Center (CAC).
- 2006. The Land Use Plan Map was updated to show delineated boundaries for each of the activity centers, corresponding to the boundaries of the associated Mixed Use Overlay Districts.
- 2009. The Land Use Plan document, Chapter 6, Section 6.2, was fully amended and updated to provide new metrics and guidelines for mixed-use activity centers

#### Land Use Analysis

An extensive analysis of the CPA request in the context of the land use recommendations of the Land Use Plan is provided starting on Page 5, under the heading “Staff Analysis”.

## **B. Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources**

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan contains no recommendations related to greenways, trails, or parkland that affect this site. In terms of access to nearby parks and recreation facilities, Bond Park is 1 mile east of the site, and both Davis Drive Park and the Cary Tennis Center are about 1 ½ miles away.

A recreation fund payment or park land dedication will be required for residential development in accordance with the Land Development Ordinance.

## **C. Growth Management Plan**

The Growth Management Plan includes the following Guiding Principles that are relevant to this case:

- Guiding Principle A1: Increase permitted densities in preferred growth areas to encourage desired forms of development.  
Analysis: The Cornerstone Community Activity Center is by definition a preferred growth area. The proposed plan amendment would work against this principle, by removing the possibility for office and employment growth from this preferred growth area. The existing plan recommendations, however, conform to this guiding principle.
- Guiding Principle R1: Ensure that adequate infrastructure and services are available concurrently with new development.  
Analysis: The area is served by utilities and bus transit, and water and sewer are available. The site is abundantly served by nearby shopping, dining, and services.
- Guiding Principle L1: Concentrate growth near existing and planned employment centers and available and planned infrastructure to minimize costly service-area extensions.  
Analysis: The area is served by utilities, and is within an area intended to provide significant employment, namely the Cornerstone Community Activity Center.

## **D. Affordable Housing Plan**

The Affordable Housing Plan includes the following goals that may be relevant to this case:

- Provide for a full range of housing choices for all income groups, families of various sizes, seniors, and persons with special challenges.
- Facilitate the creation of a reasonable proportion of the Town of Cary's housing as affordable units through additional homeownership opportunities for individuals and families earning between 60% and 80% of area median income and affordable apartments for individuals and families earning up to 60% of the area median income.
- Encourage the location of high density housing within walking and convenient commuting distance of employment, shopping, and other activities, or within a short walk of a bus or transit stop, through "mixed use" developments, residences created on the upper floors of nonresidential downtown buildings, and other creative strategies.

Comments: The proposed amendment would be unlikely to further any of the above-listed housing goals.

## **E. Comprehensive Transportation Plan**

### **High House Road**

**Road Classification:** Major Thoroughfare

**Existing Section:** Approximately 58 feet of roadway widths in a varying 92 feet of right of way

**Future Section:** 4-lane section with 18-foot median in a 78-foot back of curb to back of curb section within 100-foot right of way

**Sidewalks:** 5-foot sidewalk required

**Bicycle Lanes:** 14-foot-wide outside lane

**Status of Planned Improvements:** N/A

**Activity Center Ring Road:** At the Planning and Zoning Board public hearing, staff presented a map that depicted the plan for distribution of trips within the Cornerstone Activity Center via a “ring road” and a total of five time-coordinated signalized intersections. This map is repeated in Appendix C. The intent is to provide access alternatives, and to divert turning movements away from the intersection of High House Road and Davis Drive. While many of the road segments are just now in place, the ring road system is not yet operating at full potential, due to active site construction at Searstone and The Bradford.

**Transit Service:** The site is served by C-Tran Route 4, with service along High House Road. The future long-range service expansion plans for C-Tran also envision a future route along Davis Drive, approximately 1,400 feet west of the site. However, the future timing and funding of such a service expansion has not yet been determined.

**F. Open Space Plan**

According to the Open Space Plan there are no significant natural resources on this site, other than some bottomland hardwood forest associated with the buffers along the stream on the site’s northern boundary.

**G. Historic Preservation Master Plan**

This site has no identified historic resources.

**APPLICANT’S JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT**

Attached are the applicant’s responses to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment justification questions as contained in the application form (see Part 6.B. on the lower half of the page). Please note that these statements are those of the applicant and do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Town of Cary.

**CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION IN REVIEWING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS**

Section 3.2.2(B) of the Land Development Ordinance states that proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan shall be evaluated based upon whether the amendment is necessary in order to address conditions including, but not limited to, the following:

1. A change in projections or assumptions from those on which the Comprehensive Plan is based;

Analysis: No changes have been identified, however projections and assumptions regarding land supply have clearly changed since originally developed in 1996, as have assumptions regarding market preferences for economic development.

2. Identification of new issues, needs, or opportunities that are not adequately addressed in the Comprehensive Plan;

Analysis: As part of the Imagine Cary project, the project team has just begun work on developing a comprehensive and prioritized inventory of remaining developable land, particularly land suitable for economic development business recruitment uses, and expansion of employment. Office sites are typically reserved with a long time horizon, as evidenced by the continued availability of sites in Research Triangle Park, Weston, and other office locations.

3. A change in the policies, objectives, principles, or standards governing the physical development of the or any other geographic areas addressed by the Comprehensive Plan; or

Analysis: The policies and objectives governing mixed-use activity centers were wholly updated in 2009. These policies are currently undergoing review as part of Imagine Cary, the project to update and develop a new comprehensive plan for Cary.

4. Identification of errors or omissions in the Comprehensive Plan.

Analysis: No errors or omissions have been identified.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

This section provides analysis of the land use and economic development implications of the plan amendment request.

**Part 1. Analysis of Impacts on Metrics for the Cornerstone CAC**

At present, with the exception of the subject parcels' 26 acres, almost the entire activity center is either developed, "in the pipeline" under construction, or has approved development plans. Constructed and approved development totals for the overall activity center are shown in Table 1 below, by quadrant and in total:

**Table 1. Nonresidential and Residential Statistics for Cornerstone CAC (Exclusive of Subject Parcel)**

Land Use Type	Quadrant of the Activity Center				Total
	SW Quadrant (Cornerstone)	NW Quadrant (Stone Creek)	NE Quadrant (The Bradford)	SE Quadrant (Searstone)	
Multifamily units (apts., condos)	302		370	256	<b>928</b>
Townhomes, duplex units		127	20	85	<b>232</b>
Commercial/Retail floor space (sq. ft.)	107,785	128,495	96,000	78,000	<b>410,280</b>
Office floor space (sq. ft.)	104,095	56,271	27,000	68,000	<b>255,366</b>
Institutional floor space (sq. ft.)	32,946			21,000	<b>53,946</b>

Table 2, below, evaluates how the total developed and approved (pipeline) development compares to the Land Use Plan's recommended metrics for various uses in a Community Activity Center.

**Table 2. Comparison of Recommended Metrics with Cornerstone CAC (Exclusive of Subject Parcel)**

	Land Use Plan Recommended Ranges	Cornerstone CAC
commercial/retail floor space (sq. ft.):	250,000 to 600,000	410,280
office/institutional floor space (sq. ft.):	250,000 to 650,000	309,312
office share of total nonresidential floor space: <sup>1</sup>	30 – 70%, with ideal minimum of 40%	38.4%
No. of residential units per 1,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential space:	0.5 to 3.0, with ideal minimum of 1.25	1.74

Analysis

At present the amount of commercial/retail space in the activity center is almost at the middle of the recommended range. The amount of office space, however, is at the low end of the recommended

<sup>1</sup> Only commercial/retail and office space contributes to the metric, per the Land Use Plan.

range. Similarly, the share of total nonresidential space apportioned to office is at the low end of the recommended range, and below the ideal minimum of 40%.

Similar to commercial/retail uses, the number of dwellings within the activity center is almost precisely in the middle of the recommended range (1.74 dwellings per thousand square feet of office and commercial, versus a precise median of 1.75 – a negligible difference).

**Part 2. Evaluation of Development Yield for Subject Parcels**

Based on the preceding analysis, the activity center is most deficient in office space. Table 3, following, depicts some hypothetical development yields for this 26-acre site, using factors from other office areas in town.

**Table 3. Hypothetical Development Yields for Subject Site**

Hypothetical Scenario	Estimated Office Yield
A. Developed as suburban office, at density similar to MacGregor Office Park	190,000 sq. ft.
B. Developed as suburban office, at density similar to office sites in Crossroads Office Park	260,000 sq. ft.
C. Developed as suburban office, at density similar to Commonwealth Court and Executive Drive (off of Kildaire Farm Road).	340,000 sq. ft.

**Part 3. Market Demand for Office**

At the Planning and Zoning Board hearing, one of the applicant’s representatives stated that the site was unsuitable for office, since no office buyer had emerged in recent years. Staff does not feel that that argument is supportable, for the following reasons:

1. The site was not on the market until the last year or two.
2. Office sites tend to operate in a much longer time frame. Some examples include:
  - a. The site in Weston selected by Met Life had been vacant and available since 1985, taking almost 30 years for demand to emerge.
  - b. Developable sites in the Crossroads Office Park have existed since 1985, and remaining sites continue to sell. For example, Epic Games was not recruited to Crossroads until 2004, and they later expanded to an adjacent remaining tract in 2009.

Had sites such as the above been converted to non-office uses in their earlier years, economic development opportunities would have been lost to Cary.

3. With regard to the subject site itself, its marketability is also dependent on the creation of a critical mass of nearby services, housing, and – most critically – transportation infrastructure. In this case, the Bradford mixed-use development is still under construction, with some of its housing and retail elements just coming on line. The circulator “ring” road system within the activity center is also just emerging, and the Western Wake Expressway – 2.5 miles west of the site – did not open until 2013.

**Part 4. Analysis of Employment and Economic Development Implications**

The Town of Cary is currently in the process of updating and consolidating its comprehensive plan, as part of the Imagine Cary project. This effort includes the creation of long-range employment and economic development strategies for the Town of Cary. These current planning efforts need to be



considered since the plan amendment includes a request to remove 26 acres of potential office and employment development from one of Cary's most attractive activity centers.

To date, the following findings from Imagine Cary bear directly on the request:

1. The national and regional office market is changing dramatically, with a shift away from single-use office parks, and towards the siting of office space within mixed-use areas.
2. Research Triangle Park, the regional leader in employment trends, is itself in the midst of a major shift in its market approach, with its new master plan incorporating walkable mixed-use areas.
3. Technology and "creative class" employees of the Millennial generation (ages 22-35) are demonstrating a preference for seeking employers that are located within walkable mixed-use areas, and sites that are served by alternative travel modes such as transit, bicycle, and walking.
4. While national and regional trends show a marked shift towards mixed-use office sites, there will still be a market for suburban office park locations in Cary.
5. Cary has a very limited remaining land supply for office within its mixed-use activity centers, and critically so for those prime sites most suitable for economic development – e.g., sites having (a) at least 10 acres, (b) good transportation access, (c) suitable topography, (d) single ownership, and (e) within walking distance of services, dining, and amenities. The project team has just begun its analysis of available land within activity centers.
6. Cary has a very limited remaining land supply outside of its activity centers, particularly within its suburban office parks (Weston, MacGregor, Regency, Crossroads, and SAS). Further, sites of large acreage with suitable topography and transportation access are quickly becoming exceedingly rare. The project team has just begun its analysis of such available land.
7. Not all available, developable sites are in fact suitable for office and commercial development. The project team anticipates developing a ranking of site suitability.
8. The Imagine Cary project team will be sharing its findings and recommended policies for employment and economic development with Town Council at work session(s) planned for February and/or March 2015. One outcome of the work session(s) will be endorsement of a policy direction for future employment areas.

Considering these findings in the context of the subject parcel and amendment request, staff offers the following observations:

1. The site is extremely well-positioned to attract the emerging market for office space and employment in mixed-use areas:
  - a. The site is immediately adjacent to the mixed-use Bradford center, and in walking distance to shops, dining, services, and housing there, as well as at nearby Stonecreek Village and the Cornerstone Shopping Center area.
  - b. The site is served by bus transit, and has direct sidewalk and greenway connections to all adjacent development. Thoroughfares serving the site accommodate bicycle users.
  - c. The Cornerstone Community Activity Center is one of Cary's highest-functioning activity centers, conforming to the principles for activity centers to a higher degree than many other centers.
2. The site exceeds 10 acres, making it viable for a major employer. For example, Epic Games in the Crossroads Office Park includes hundreds of employees in over 97,000 square feet of office space on 9.4 acres. The subject site is 2 ½ times that size.
3. This is the last prime office site remaining in the Cornerstone CAC. (See in Appendix A)
4. This site is in fact the last prime office and employment site available along the entire High House Road corridor between NC Hwy 55 to the west, and W. Chatham St. to the east – a distance of over 4 ½ miles. There are no available sites of 10 (or even 5) acres or more available at any of

the other activity centers along this stretch of High House Road (i.e., the Westpark, Preston Corners, Maynard Crossing, and Cary Plaza activity centers). (See Appendix B)

5. The site has direct access to two major boulevards, providing direct connections to Research Triangle Park, less than 4 miles away.
6. The planned road network for the Cornerstone CAC area provides superior trip distribution when compared to other mixed use centers. Employees working at the subject site can access three shopping centers and all four quadrants without ever having to travel along either High House Road or Davis Drive. The site offers significant opportunities to minimize trip lengths, capture internal trips and transit trips, and reduce vehicular trip generation to a degree not possible in many centers.

### **Part 5. Distinctions from Recent Activity Center Cases**

**Distinctions from case 14-CPA-01 High House.** This case, approved in July 2014, removed a sizeable area from the Westpark NAC (Neighborhood Activity Center). In this case, staff recommended in favor of the amendment for two reasons: First, the amendment offered a chance to save the historic Baucom House in a more contextually-sensitive setting. Second, the area removed from the activity center was *not* well-connected with the commercial and services portion of the activity center, nor with the surrounding community. That is, the removed area lacked the physical connections that are vital to the functioning of an activity center. Neither of these considerations apply to the current case.

**Distinctions from case 14-REZ-18, Alston ACCP Amendment.** This case, approved in August 2014, concerned the reconfiguration of uses within the Parkside Neighborhood, and not the wholesale removal or even reduction of the amount of allowed employment and nonresidential uses. In fact, the amendment actually established a required minimum amount of nonresidential development.

### **Part 6. Land Use Compatibility and Transitions**

The following observations are made with regard to the extent to which the plan amendment does or does not conform to Town policy regarding land use compatibility and transitions:

1. **Existing telecommunications tower.** The site currently includes a 180-foot-tall telecommunications tower, near the border with Bradford. Single family might not be the most compatible adjacent land use.
2. **Single family adjacent to High Density Residential and Commercial.** Town policy is to provide gradual transitions in densities and land uses (see Chapters 6 and 7 of the townwide Land Use Plan), and conversely to avoid abrupt transitions – such as placing single-family immediately adjacent to high density residential or commercial, and vice versa. Recent precedent cases, such as for placing multi-family near single-family neighborhoods, have generated opposition and/or required the use of extensive buffers between the uses, with some buffers even exceeding 140-300 feet in depth.
3. **Typical policy approaches for a transition at this site.** There are two different approaches that are typically used to establish an appropriate transition between uses and densities.
  - a. The first approach is to provide a gradual transition in types and intensities of land uses. With this approach, the subject site might provide a transition by developing with intermediate uses such as office or medium-density residential. That approach could be strengthened by also providing a gradual transition *within* the site – for example by (a) placing office uses adjacent to The Bradford and High House Road, and then transitioning to townhomes or single-family next to Georgetowne and Preston; or (b) placing townhomes adjacent to The Bradford and High House Road, and transitioning to single-family detached adjacent to Georgetowne and Preston.
  - b. The second approach is to apply a generous separation between uses, such as via a vegetated buffer. Past cases might suggest a buffer of at least 100 feet or more.
4. **Specific observations regarding transitions at the site.** North of the site is the Georgetowne Subdivision, which is separated from the site with a 100-foot stream buffer. There are no future road

stubs or connections to Georgetowne. The subject site itself is also large enough to allow for a more generous vegetated buffer (or other treatment) adjacent to Georgetown than the minimum required by ordinance. The result is that it will be possible to provide separations and buffers between the subject site and both Georgetowne and Preston, regardless of future land use.

## **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION**

The most significant observations are:

1. The proposed amendment is inconsistent with the Growth Management Plan, while the existing Land Use Plan recommendations are consistent.
2. The proposed amendment would create a rather abrupt change in land use types and intensities next to The Bradford, inconsistent with Town policy and precedent.
3. The activity center is currently under-served with office space, and the proposed amendment would remove all opportunity for addressing this imbalance.
4. The Cornerstone CAC is already served with sufficient housing.
5. Both Searstone and The Bradford are still under construction. It won't be until after the full completion of those projects that traffic patterns in that area will settle out, allowing a clear understanding of roadway capacity in the area.
6. The site is one of a very limited number of remaining prime, large developable sites in activity centers, and the only one along a 4 ½ mile stretch of High House Road. This site may be an important resource for Cary's future economic and employment growth. The Imagine Cary project team has just begun work on developing a comprehensive and prioritized inventory of remaining developable land, particularly land suitable for nonresidential uses and expansion of employment. Preliminary survey results regarding future office land supply in the vicinity of Cornerstone and environs was presented to the Planning Board at their December 15 meeting.
7. Town Council will review the findings and recommended policies for future employment areas at work sessions tentatively planned for February 24 and March 3, 2015. A result of the work session(s) will be council endorsement of draft goals for employment areas and economic development.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Based on the preceding analyses, staff recommends against the requested comprehensive plan amendment *at this time*. In particular, staff feels that a shift in land use designations is inadvisable given that:

- a) Single-family uses on the site might not provide a reasonable transition in uses next to The Bradford and the telecommunication tower.
- b) There are significant concerns about the limited remaining supply of land for office and employment, particularly for prime sites within activity centers, especially as this issue becomes more critical for our future.
- c) The subject parcel is located within an activity center that offers significant locational, design, and land use mix advantages in meeting anticipated demands for the shifting office market;
- d) The comprehensive analysis of remaining land supply for Imagine Cary is not yet complete; and
- e) Town Council will not review and articulate the preliminary policy direction for future employment areas until it holds its next Imagine Cary work sessions, currently planned for February 24 and March 3, 2015.

Staff's recommendation for denial is informed by the belief that, for this site, it would be better to defer consideration of such an amendment until (a) after development of the new Cary Community Plan and its

policies for economic development (via Imagine Cary), and (b) after completion of work on The Bradford and Searstone, to allow time for traffic patterns to settle out.

As an alternative, staff advises that action on the case be deferred until after the aforementioned council work session.