

**Town of Cary**  
**2012 Biennial Citizen Survey**  
**Focus Group Report**

**Methodology**

In January 2012, the Cary Biennial Citizen Survey was conducted examining numerous issues relating to the overall citizen satisfaction with the functioning and operation of the Town of Cary as well as current issues related to the Town. The results of this survey were followed-up by two focus groups conducted by BKL Research that examined specific issues from the survey in order to gather more detailed insight. Respondents to the citizen survey were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group session (35.5% of the sample agreed to participate) and this was the pool from which the participants were selected.

The composition of the groups was controlled with respect to the factors of age and gender seeking an appropriate balance for both in each session. All the participants owned homes and none lived in apartments. A total of seven participants were in the first session and eight in the second session. Appendix A has the roster of participants for both sessions including their age groups. Appendix B contains the seating charts for each session. The participants were compensated for their involvement.

The focus groups were held on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in Cary. The first session lasted approximately 1 hour and the second session lasted approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. All participants were also given instructions regarding focus groups prior to the sessions. A relatively structured set of questions was used for both groups (Appendix C). This ensured that both groups were asked the same core questions, although discretion was allowed to explore other areas of importance during the sessions. Appendices D and E contain the transcribed text of both focus groups.

## Summary of Results

### Growth in Cary

- 1a. Growth in Cary showed up again in this year's survey as a concern, even though the population and tax base growth rates are way down compared to the recent past probably due to the recession. What about growth do you think concerns folks? For example, is it the byproducts of growth such as traffic or waiting in line at stores?**

#### Session 1

The participants first mentioned traffic as a major concern and this was agreed upon by the other members. They felt that commuting or just going across Town could be difficult. It was mentioned that the Town has grown significantly and the infrastructure to support it must be maintained. Traffic and congestion into RTP was a significant topic of discussion. There was a perception that roads (e.g., Davis Drive) and access into RTP have not been significantly improved over the years. Holly Springs Road was also mentioned as an area of high traffic congestion. The school situation was discussed by the participants; although, none of the focus group members had children in the school system at present. The participants focused in on the major concern which was school redistricting. One member indicated she moved her children to private schools due the redistricting and service level offered by Wake County schools. All the participants recognized this as a Wake County issue, not Cary. However, the growth in Cary was acknowledged as contributing to the issue.

#### Session 2

The participants mentioned several issues related to growth as their concerns. One member indicated traffic was not as much of a concern as the schools and their overcrowding. Others quickly agreed that schools were a major concern to them as well. Another participant noted a previous problem with the water supply in Cary but did not know what the situation was now. Building and development was also a concern in that greenspace was lost. Tryon Village was cited as an example and the resulting loss of the small-town feel of Cary. The growth in commercial stores was also viewed to be damaging the downtown area and older malls. The number of abandoned buildings on Chatham Street was cited as a good example. It was also indicated that the building of new homes and residential developments was damaging the real estate value of older homes.

- 1b. How much of the concern is growth in Cary, growth in Wake County, or growth in the Triangle?**

#### Session 1

The participants agreed that it was growth in Cary that was the major concern to them. One participant pointed out that the growth in Cary was generally positive for the community. It was mentioned by one member that the Town does not lend much support for seniors, especially in regards to housing. Other members agreed with this assertion. With the aging population, the need for more senior communities with first-floor master bedrooms was suggested. They felt the Town should support more planned development for seniors as more

residents move into that phase of life. The conversation briefly shifted to bicycling in Town. Several participants indicating bike travel was dangerous in Town and the bike lanes were too narrow. It was also mentioned that people driving cars need more education as to the rules of the road for bicyclists to improve overall safety.

#### Session 2

The participants mentioned the issue of schools while recognizing this was a Wake County concern. However, the issue of development was seen as more of a concern in Cary but also western Wake County (i.e., Apex, Morrisville, and Holly Springs). One member discussed the rapid expansion of condominiums in Morrisville in what was previously farmland. The maintaining of the infrastructure with growth was also viewed as important. Several participants discussed that the majority of the growth was mostly in West Cary while some sections such as Chatham Street area were not seeing growth, only increased traffic. They felt 540 and new roads will continue to spur more growth in all areas. Finally, there was a discussion of the differences in the style of development in older planned neighborhoods versus newer planned ones. The main issue for the participants was the lack of sidewalks in the older planned developments and how this impacts safety.

### **1c. When you think about what the Town government has done regarding growth over the last two years, what comes to mind – either positively or negatively?**

#### Session 1

One participant indicated concern for efforts to block growth and felt growth helps a community if the infrastructure is in place. Several positive actions the Town had taken were mentioned including concern of greenspace and trees. Another participant noted newer shopping malls were not over lit with bright lights and signage. It was mentioned the Town seemed to be careful with planning for growth and the area was not a concrete jungle referring to the greenspace once again. The participants also mentioned Hemlock Bluffs, Koka Booth Amphitheater, and Bond Park as well planned projects. There were only a few negatives mentioned by the group. Most of the comments centered on road maintenance. The construction of Davis Drive to RTP was considered slow in completion due to disagreements or coordination issues with other surrounding communities. There was also concern that older neighborhoods are neglected, especially roads, in favor of newer developments.

#### Session 2

The first discussion was centered on annexation and the fact it has not always been on friendly terms. One participant discussed the Maynard expansion and its impact on property owner's land and driveways as a negative. The participants commented favorably on the greenways and parks in older developments. However, they were concerned that the developers in newer communities were not making efforts to connect to the greenways. It was also an issue that older neighborhoods did not always have sidewalk connections to greenways such as Lochmere or Kildaire or Weston. Another participant was concerned about the cost of the greenway walking bridge that crosses US 1 North. He felt the money would be better spent on crosswalks and sidewalks needed in neighborhoods.

**1d. What do you think the Town should be doing to better manage growth?**

Session 1

The participants suggested more cooperation and joint projects with other communities such as Morrisville and Apex. Again this was derived from the conversation on Davis Drive. The issue of senior communities was the focus of much of the discussion. They would like the Town to be more involved in developing and promoting senior communities. They would like more planning for the population as it ages mentioning even the half-backers will get older.

Session 2

One of the respondents was not sure what Cary was doing presently as related to growth but noted the outcomes of roads and greenways. There were concerns raised as to the building permit situation in regards to the present economic realities. One member perceived that any new developments at this time would hurt the turnover of existing homes and felt the Town should be careful in issuing permits. The participants also discussed how newer commercial developments were hurting older ones. They noted how Waverly Place had to renovate because of the pressure from Triumph Village. They liked the fact developers had to contribute to infrastructure aspects with developments. However, one member noted this was challenged in court and may no longer be applicable. It was recommended Cary explore other methods to make developers continue to contribute. The issue of developers improving existing neighborhoods was discussed. The participants would like to see the Town offer incentives for improving older neighborhoods instead of focusing on building newer developments. Transportation with growth was discussed as it relates to helping the senior population get around Town. The members felt there will be a future need to improve it. The discussion turned to traffic lights. One participant suggested the automated traffic light project was not very effective especially on the Maynard loop. Other members thought the loop was still timed and streets such as Kildaire were automated. The street lights going into flashing mode at night for turns was seen as positive and a couple of participants would like this to occur earlier in the evening.

**1e. What would be the ideal situation in Cary?**

Session 1

The participants discussed several areas they would associate with the ideal situation. They suggested better mass transit in the area especially for the senior population. One member mentioned his parents were moving down from New York and did not drive. However, the stops for mass transit needed to be close so that walking to them was not an issue. The members felt the perception that Cary only annexes affluent areas should be countered by the Town. The “Stop Cary” signs outside of the Town were mentioned as examples of this perception across the region. The participants liked the way the Town has been promoting the establishment of new businesses for both work and shopping opportunities. New retail stores and restaurants were pointed out and the fact this helps the Town by paying tax dollars. The participants also mentioned renovating and helping Cary Towne Mall. They wanted this mall to stay viable and believed the Town could assist.

## Session 2

The participants mentioned several aspects in the previous conversations (see 1e). These include judicious use of building permits, not allowing newer commercial developments to hurt older ones, finding ways for developers to contribute to the infrastructure, giving incentives for improving the infrastructure in older neighborhoods, and considering the future transportation needs of seniors. The participants also discussed the need for a vision for future growth.

## Safety

- 2a. A new concern expressed by the respondents in this year's survey was safety, even though Cary remains the safest large community in the state and southeastern United States. Can any of you shed light on what you or your neighbors might have safety concerns about?**

### Session 1

The participants mentioned break-ins in the area, especially smash-and-grabs. This refers to breaking in quickly and taking only a few items such as televisions or laptops and leaving quickly before the police arrive. They also mentioned garage doors are left open by those with children and this has contributed to break-ins recently. This included people being followed home from places like the grocery store knowing the garage would be opened. The participants also mentioned vandalism in Kildaire Farms area while one member had their community pool vandalized. The issue of traffic was also brought up as a significant safety concern for the Town. The area of West Chatham and Cary Parkway was mentioned in regards to two deaths from an automobile accident and the need for a traffic light. The participants also mentioned the police were very proactive by coming into areas when a crime occurs and helping residents improve safety.

### Session 2

The participants mentioned vandalism in older neighborhoods involving car break-ins. They noted that complacency plays a role in not locking house doors, leaving cars unlocked, and garage doors open because residents feel safe in Town. All participants agreed there are no major safety issues and they felt safe personally in Cary. Several members stated their children and/or wife felt safe walking at night. One member indicated the areas they did not feel as safe were outside of Town. As with the first session, the issue of traffic was mentioned as a safety concern with speeding on High House cited as an example. One participant suggested the significant crime issues appear to be spousal in nature.

- 2b. How many of you have had your safety threatened in Cary in the last two years?**

### Session 1

(No hands were raised)

### Session 2

(No hands were raised)

- 2c. Outside of any personal experience, how do you think you or others have come to feel concerned about safety; that is, where would you hear about safety issues?**

### Session 1

Many of the participants indicated the Cary Police are an excellent source of information and this is where they first hear of crime in their neighborhood or in the area. The police came

door-to-door and gave out handouts on how to improve safety in neighborhoods with recent crime incidents. They also liked the increased patrols after incidents but noted they decreased over time and would like them to continue.

#### Session 2

The participants named several sources including crime notes from Cary, police blotters, neighborhood mail list, emails, Cary News, and neighborhood watch flyers. One member's neighborhood that had break-ins indicated the police were very proactive and came to their meetings and increased patrols in the area for a period. One participant indicated most of the crime he hears about was in other areas, especially Durham.

### **2d. Raise your hands if you subscribe to the Town's news or safety email lists or Twitter feeds.**

#### Session 1

(One participant)

#### Session 2

(Two participants) – Several other members indicated they were not familiar with this service. When asked how to communicate the details about this service, the participants agreed that BUD is the best method with detailed information provided on Cary's website.

### **2e. Over the last two years, can you think of any safety related news story or event that stands out in your mind as something that might cause you or others to feel unsafe in Cary?**

#### Session 1

The participants mentioned specifically burglaries in Lochmere Highlands, vandalism in Kildaire Farms area, and a traffic accident at West Chatham and Cary Parkway with fatalities. They also mentioned a bank robbery in the area and also assaults and drug issues in the McGregor region.

#### Session 2

One member discussed a bank robbery in West Cary where an individual was shot. Another member indicated he only remembered spousal crimes. The major sources for this information were Cary News and emails. One participant indicated an email from Cary alerted him to break-ins in Cary last year. This individual appreciated the crime notice was reported as informational, not as a scare tactic. Traffic safety was also brought up again and in regards to a speeder who killed someone on Cary Parkway. The Parkway was seen as dangerous due to the hills and banking including tricky exits.

**2f. Finally, what advice do you have for the Town on what kinds of things they can do to help citizens feel safer?**

Session 1

The participants would like the Town to promote the police services that help citizens to be safer by having the police going into neighborhoods and making presentations. Several participants did not know the police provided this service to residents. They also would like the police to increase patrols in their neighborhoods. The group felt that emails would be the most effective way to inform citizens of safety issues and crime prevention. One member suggested a top ten list of things residents could do to improve crime prevention. Most of the participants did not know about the safety email list. They felt BUD or possibly Cary News would be the best way to communicate the availability of this service. Cary's website was also mentioned as a good place to publicize safety and crime prevention.

Session 2

The participants felt partnering with homeowner's associations to get their email distribution lists could help disseminate the information more effectively. One member suggested having a full-time staffed presence at police substations where drug activity with teens takes place such as Cary Towne Mall. Another member felt drug busts are not as publicized as break-ins. It was suggested that details be given on the locations of these types of crimes as well. It was also recommended more information be given out on non-violent crimes; although, other participants indicated it was published by the Cary Police on their GIS system. Greenways were also mentioned as a possible area for crime and foot or bike patrols were suggested to monitor those areas. Other members believed the Town already has bike patrols on the greenways. Other ways to make the participants feel safer were to add sidewalks to neighborhoods and improve leaf collection to avoid large piles of leaves on the street. One participant felt that personal safety was not the issue, it was safety issues with traffic/driving and for young children on the roads. There was also a call for more of a continuing police presence after incidents occur.

## Leaf Collection

- 3a. The Town's solid waste services overall continued to get very high marks. However, the one exception was satisfaction with leaf collection. That score went down significantly, and we'd like to understand why. First, how many of you participate in curbside leaf collection, that is, you live in a home or multifamily community where you can take leaves to the curb for the Town to collect.**

Session 1

(6 out of 7 participants raised their hands)

Session 2

(6 out of 8 participants raised their hands)

- 3b. What was different about the service in the past two years than in previous years? {Probe – were the leaves picked up by the Town when they said they would? Did the leaves get picked up often enough? Was the street left clean enough? Were there customer service issues with Town staff? Did you have trouble finding leaf collection information?}**

Session 1

The participants focused on the frequency of the leaf collection as the main issue. They suggested more frequent pick ups in November and December when the leaves are piled on the streets and create driving hazards. One participant indicated the collection intervals in their neighborhood were 6-8 weeks while every week would be feasible with the volume of leaves. One participant complimented the Town for a third sweep in their neighborhood. All agreed the streets were left clean, there were no customer service issues, the Town came on schedule, and they had no trouble finding the information needed on leaf collection. The participants showed concern about the growth in the Town and the difficulty in leaf collection with the larger area. They suggested subcontracting to help with collection or storage of the leaves during higher volume months.

Session 2

There was a great deal of discussion on this topic by the participants. One member indicated they knew when the collection would be in their neighborhood by reading BUD, but the Town did not come when they said they would be there. Another participant from the Kildaire Farms area indicated the Town switched the pick-up windows for their area. They came a week early for one of the collections and 1½ or 2 weeks late for another. This participant also noted that some residents will gather leaves at the street well in advance of any collection time and just leave them on the street. Another member stated the collection was on time but the Town left debris on the street. This person noted the timing seems to be off on occasion. The collection can be too early or too late based on the actual fall off from the trees. It was suggested that bags should be used with the recycling bin to stop having to put leaves on the street. This would eliminate the obstacle courses leaves create on the street and the hidden dangers of what is buried in them. Other participants indicated due to leave leaf volume it

may not always be practical. It was stressed that leaves should not be on the street but on the curb and this was causing some of the problems. There were also issues with yard maintenance firms that gather leaves for residents. It was felt they do not consult the Town's collection schedule when they pile the leaves to the street. It was also advised that the Town add more frequent collections because the time frame of 1½ or 2 weeks between pick ups may be too long considering residents will put the leaves out as needed to keep their lawns clear. All the participants agreed that customer service was good and they can find the dates for collection easily.

**3c. So, what advice would you give the Town on how to improve on leaf collection?**

Session 1

The use of subcontractors to assist with collection and storage was again mentioned. Another suggestion was to move the January collection to later (possibly March) or add another collection. This participant felt residents don't gather leaves as often in January due to temperature then will pile them up after January for collection and they are left on the streets for extended periods. The participants would also like the Public Works Department to publicize their point of view. They should discuss how many subdivisions they now service, the maturing of trees in the area, cost to provide the service, and how many pounds they collect each year. This will give the residents a better understanding of the process.

Session 2

The participants mentioned several improvements during the discussion including more frequent pick-ups, better timing with the fall off, and having yard maintenance firms follow the Town's collection schedule. It was also suggested that the Town get homeowner's associations involved to have residents (and yard maintenance firms) follow the Town's collection schedules. The participants wondered if there was an ordinance preventing residents from piling leaves at the street too early before collection times similar to the ordinance on letting a resident's lawn get too high. One final comment from a member indicated the Town had always done a good job for them. They indicated the main issue was that residents put out leaves too early and then will park cars on them hindering effective collection.

## **Bond Referendum**

- 4a. One of the questions on the survey asked you how much more you might be willing to pay each year in property taxes to help afford projects such as widening roads, building new parks & greenways, extending sidewalks, adding fire stations, and revitalizing downtown. Since we conducted the survey, the Town Council voted to hold a bond referendum in November so that citizens can vote for or against these types of projects and the associated property tax increase that would go with them. If you vote yes, then the projects move forward and taxes will increase; if you vote against, then you don't get the projects and don't have the associated tax increases. The Town can't advocate one way or the other on the bond vote, but it has a responsibility to educate citizens about the issue so that you will be informed when you do vote in November. With this in mind, we want your opinion on communication about the bond referendum. How should the Town reach out to citizens – which communication tools (direct mail, television, web, Facebook...)?**

### Session 1

The participants thought BUD was a very good method to get the information out to them. They suggested adding a sticker or notice on BUD directing them to the website for more complete details. Cary News was also a primary information source for the group but the information should not be buried in the paper but on the front page. There were questions among the group if the paper was free to all residents or paid subscription. Television was also mentioned but there were concerns for what stations to use. A news conference on WRAL was seen as a possible option. However, Cary Channel 11 was seen as a good compromise to use. Overall, BUD and Cary News were viewed as the two preferred methods to disseminate information on the referendum; although, multiple sources were desired.

### Session 2

The participants mentioned several sources to get the information out to them. Most agreed that email or BUD that directed them to the Town's website could be effective. However, they did not want the information buried in the website but a link to the information on the front page. Other suggestions by the participants were direct mail and informational booths at Town events. There was concern that not all residents get email or go to the website so it was suggested that flyers and Cary News be utilized as well. As with the first session, the participants were not sure if Cary News is free to all residents. It was also suggested that meetings with Town officials in various neighborhoods could also be effective.

- 4b. Any tools the Town shouldn't use?**

### Session 1

The only information sources mentioned to avoid was direct mail due to cost, buried articles in the Cary News, and television except for news conferences on WRAL and Cary Channel 11.

### Session 2

The only information sources not favored were robo-telephone calls and Cary Channel 11. It was felt that not enough residents watched this channel to make it effective.

**4c. What information do you think is most important (project info, timing, tax information...)?**

Session 1

The participants wanted specific information on each area of the referendum they will vote on. For example, they would like to know which streets will be affected by the transportation aspects of the referendum. They also mentioned the amount of the tax increase should be given in detailed. For instance, what will this mean in a dollar amount or percentage for the resident overall? The group also liked the idea of showing a sample ballot so they can see where and how the referendum will be placed on the ballot as a result there will be no surprises or hidden fine print.

Session 2

The session members indicated the main information desired on the referendum was the value given to residents and the cost. They wanted detailed information on what separate aspects of the referendum included. For example, don't just say expanding the water treatment plant or adding sidewalks. They desired specifics and a justification for the spending either for present or future needs. The participants also wanted information on how much the tax bill will increase and also a comparison to other towns in the area as a benchmark. When given a handout with details on the referendum, the participants liked the way it gave specifics. One member wanted information on when the tax increase ends as related to the term of the bond.

**4d. Staying with this for a few more minutes, do you generally agree or disagree with the things the Town is spending taxpayer's dollars on. Do you think the Town is spending money wisely and appropriately?**

Session 1

There was general agreement by all the participants that the Town is spending taxpayer's money wisely and appropriately.

Session 2

There was also general agreement that the Town is spending taxpayer's money wisely and appropriately. One participant noted Cary was operating at a surplus while Durham and Raleigh were not doing as well. There was one comment that any new parks and fire station should not be a bond referendum item but come from the taxes presently paid.

**4e. Is there anything that sticks out in your mind as something you wish the Town hadn't or wouldn't pursue?**

Session 1

The participants did not recall any areas of spending the Town should not have pursued in their opinion. The electronic signs the Town purchased was mentioned briefly. One participant did point out the walking bridge over 1 and 64. He noted the bridge does not appear to have much use.

## Session 2

There was only one comment by a participant concerning any item the Town should not have pursued and that was putting signs on the greenways. They could not understand the need for them. Other members thought it could be related to legal issues. Another participant requested the Town add signs on the greenways to direct people on how to get to the next section when that section of greenway ends.

## Communications

- 5a. The Town is very interested in having citizens participate in the governing process. They want to create, implement, and make good decisions on programs, projects, policies, and laws. They want these decisions to reflect the wants, needs, and values of the community. They want you to be happy with how things are going. One of the questions on the survey asked you to identify barriers to becoming involved. While “don’t have time” remains the number one response, once again, “didn’t know about it” rated very high, so we want to explore this finding a little more. What kind of Town-related things have you looked for and not found? Where did you look? How long ago?**

### Session 1

The participants mentioned several items or activities they had difficulty finding. All of it related to the Town’s website. One member indicated they looked for a map of the greenways in Cary on the website and could not find it by using key words in the search function. Another member wanted to attend an event off James Jackson Avenue where rain barrels and compost bins were being sold. Information from the event told him to search for “spruce” on the Town’s website and details will come up. He could not find the event by using this key word. One other participant tried to find information on who to talk to at the Town for permits needed to add riprap and dredge a community pond. He could not find it on the Town’s website and had to eventually go to Town Hall to find the right engineers. Others in the focus group agreed with these individuals that information is available on the website but not always easy to find.

### Session 2

There was a consensus that the website was somewhat difficult to navigate. They would prefer it was arranged by function and not by department. They felt the public does not understand bureaucracy and what department items should be listed under. They also indicated the website contained too many layers. A participant indicated he had to dig to find building permit information for a shed he was constructing. Several participants suggested it is hard to know what is offered in Cary in terms of classes and events, especially adult activities. They felt that Cary only advertises Cary-sponsored events and did not publicize the non-sponsored ones. As one possible solution, a participant noted that after he signed his child up for sports activity in Apex he was added to an email list that told the events in Town. Another member indicated she lived in the north part of Town and knew more about Morrisville events than Cary events.

- 5b. Are there any Town opportunities you regretted missing because you didn’t know about, couldn’t find information on them**

### Session 1

There was limited discussion by the participants and no missed opportunities were brought up by the members because they could not find information. It was stated if people want to attend the event they will look for information and find it. A participant noted committing to the focus group reflected more involvement than most residents.

## Session 2

The participants did not name specific events. However, the responses in 5a show most of the missed opportunities were events not sponsored by Cary which were assumed not to be publicized by the Town.

- 5c. When you think about things either from the Town or elsewhere, that have gotten your attention, what were they and more importantly how was the information delivered so that it did get your attention? What did it say?**

## Session 1

The participants did not mention specific events that got their attention but did discuss what would be most effective at getting their attention. Email was viewed as one of the most effective methods indicating they tend to pay attention to them. Cary was complimented for not sending excessive emails and keeping them concise and informational. It was suggested by one member to tie the information to “Likes” on Facebook so information tailored to her tastes would be sent directly to her. BUD was again mentioned as effective. In addition, Cary News and Independent Weekly could be useful to inform on events and activities in Town, possibly in a pull-out section. Also discussed was weather on News Channel 14 and the community activities section as information sources, but it was suggested the Town keep the notices up longer. Regardless of the source, the participants wanted information on the weekend activities in Town with at least one month’s notice so they can make plans.

## Session 2

The widening of US 1 stood out to one participant. This member noted the emails sent by Cary and the information from the NCDOT on the Town’s website kept her informed throughout the construction. No other events or items were mentioned.

- 5d. Finally, what ideas do you have for ways the Town might improve citizens’ knowledge of Town opportunities.**

## Session 1

See previous comments in 5c. Email and BUD were viewed as effective information sources. Linking the information to “Likes” on Facebook, print media (i.e., Cary News and Independent Weekly), and News Channel 14 were also mentioned. The participants especially wanted information on weekend events and activities with at least one month’s notice.

## Session 2

The participants felt the Town should be more proactive to reach residents not searching for information. One suggestion was to disseminate information at cultural events in Town whether Cary sponsors them or not. They would also like Cary to publicize all events in Town regardless of sponsorship. The participants mentioned Facebook as a good way to give out information to residents. One member mentioned a website called ParkGeek.com that compiles information on events in parks across North Carolina. It was suggested the Town develop a similar type project for Cary.

## **Other Comments**

- 6. In closing, is there anything else about the Town of Cary government that you'd like to share with us before we close today?**

### Session 1

The participants thought Cary was doing a very good job and appreciated that the Town gathered feedback from them. Several of the members indicated their interactions with the Town had all been positive and the response from the Town was quick. The only negative concerning the Town was the reputation of the building inspectors in Cary. Several of the participants indicated they were difficult for contractors to work with.

### Session 2

One participant suggested the Cary website provide more shortened links on the homepage to find important information instead of having to dig for the right place within the website.

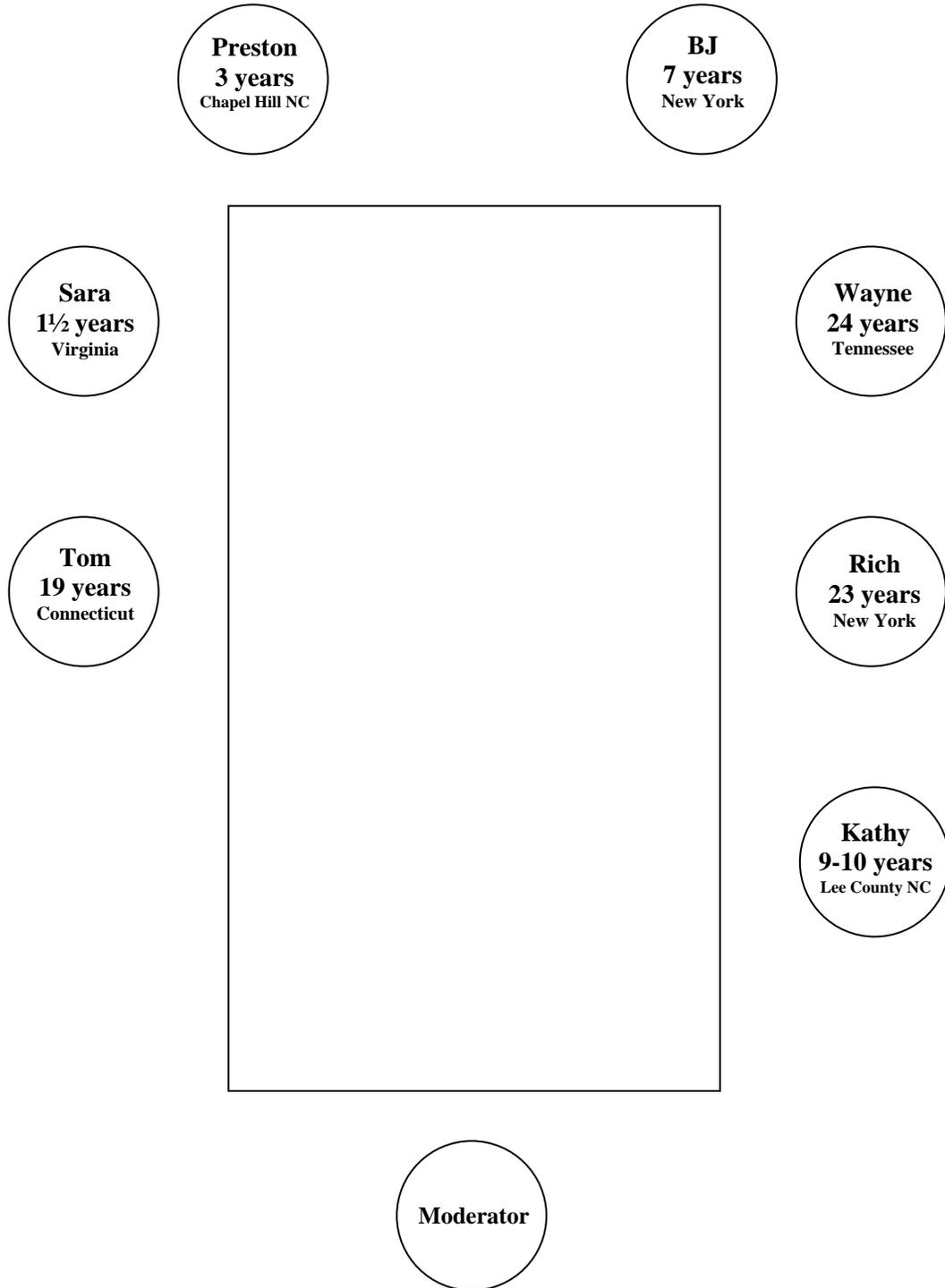
## **Comments from Notepads**

(None were given)

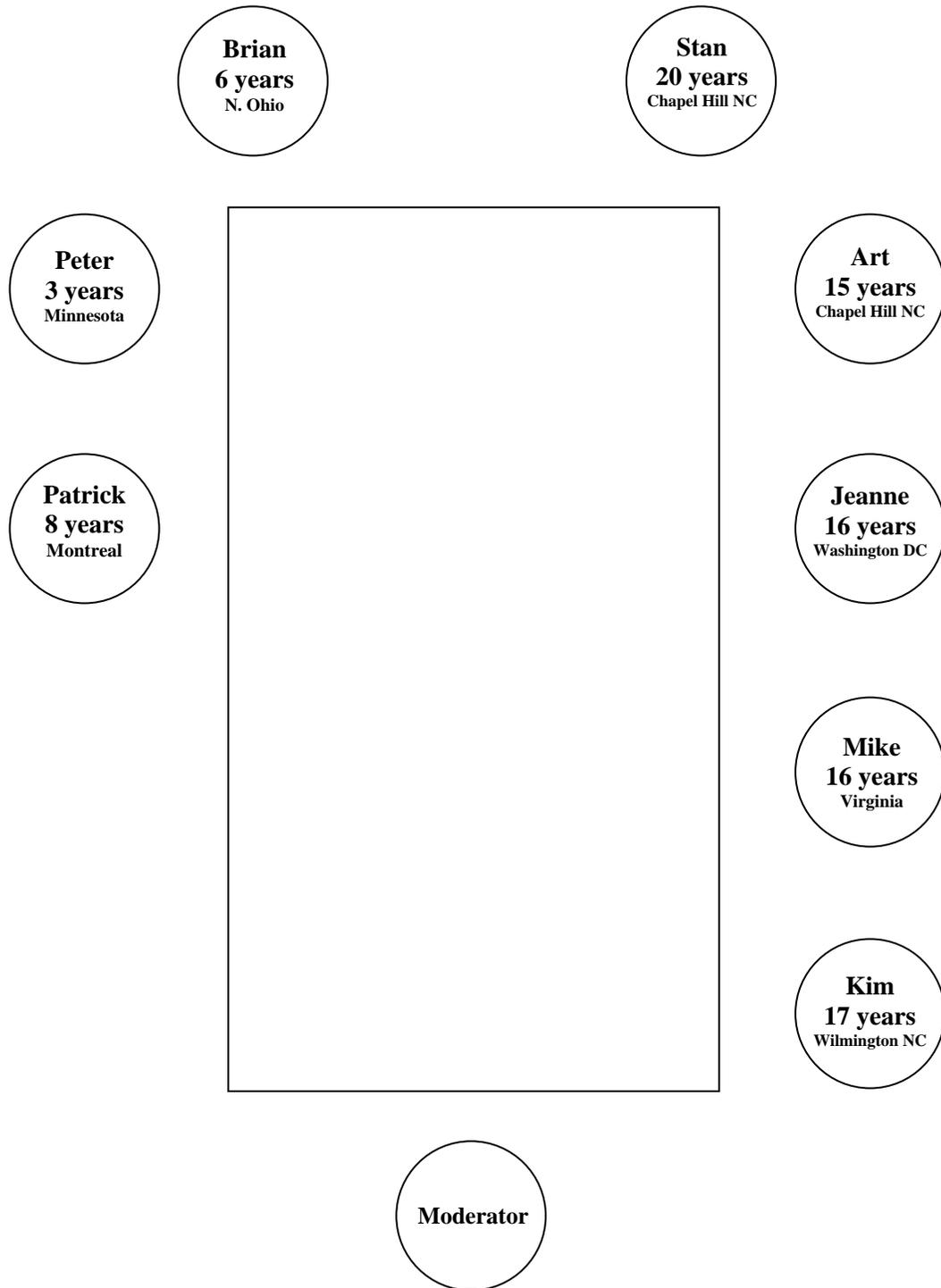
**Appendix A**  
**Session Focus Group Participants**  
**2012 Biennial Citizen Survey**

<b>Session 1</b>		<b>Session 2</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Group</b>
Kathy	36-45	Kim	36-45
Rich	46-55	Mike	46-55
Wayne	46-55	Jeanne	66-75
BJ	46-55	Stan	36-45
Preston	36-45	Art	46-55
Sara	56-65	Brian	26-35
Tom	56-65	Peter	36-45
		Patrick	36-45

**Appendix B**  
**2012 Biennial Citizen Survey Focus Group Seating Chart**  
**(Name, Years in Cary, Where Lived Before Cary)**  
**Session 1**



**Appendix B**  
**2012 Biennial Citizen Survey Focus Group Seating Chart**  
**(Name, Years in Cary, Where Lived Before Cary)**  
**Session 2**



**Appendix C**  
**Focus Group Questionnaire**  
**2012 Biennial Survey**

**Introduction**

Our goal today is to get your opinions about how the Town might move forward in improving upon its scores on specific items in the survey and to discuss in more detail issues and concerns residents like you raised in the survey.

How many of you ever participated in a focus group before? *Facilitator explains how it works. Asks folks to capture extra or extended thoughts on the paper and turn in before leaving.*

Just to get an idea of whom you all are, let me ask a few demographic questions.

**Demographics**

Do all of you live within the Town limits?

How long has each of you lived in Cary?

Where did you live before moving to Cary?

How many of you live in apartments?

**Growth**

- 1a. Growth in Cary showed up again in this year's survey as a concern, even though the population and tax base growth rates are way down compared to the recent past probably due to the recession. What about growth do you think concerns folks? For example, is it byproducts of growth, such as traffic or waiting in line at stores?
- 1b. How much of the concern is growth in Cary, growth in Wake County, or growth in the Triangle?
- 1c. When you think about what the Town government has done regarding growth over the last two years, what comes to mind – either positively or negatively?
- 1d. What do you think the Town should be doing to better manage growth?
- 1e. What would be the ideal growth situation in Cary?

## **Safety**

- 2a. A new concern expressed by the respondents in this year's survey was safety, even though Cary remains the safest large community in the state and the southeastern United States. Can any of you shed light on what you or your neighbors might have safety concerns about?
- 2b. How many of you have had your safety threatened in Cary in the last two years?
- 2c. Outside of personal experience, how do you think you or others have come to feel concerned about safety; that is, where would you hear about safety issues?
- 2d. Raise your hands if you subscribe to the Town's news or safety email lists or Twitter feeds.
- 2e. Over the last two years, can you think of any safety related news story or event that stands out in your mind as something that might cause you or others to feel unsafe in Cary?
- 2f. Finally, what advice do you have for the Town on what kinds of things they can do to help citizens feel safer?

## **Leaf Collection**

- 3a. The Town's solid waste services overall continued to get very high marks. However, the one exception was satisfaction with leaf collection. That score went down significantly, and we'd like to understand why. First, how many of you participate in curbside leaf collection, that is, you live in a home or multifamily community where you can take leaves to the curb for the Town to collect.
- 3b. What was different about the service in the past two years than in previous years? {Probe- were the leaves picked up by the Town when they said they would? Did the leaves get picked up often enough? Was the street left clean enough? Were there customer service issues with Town staff? Did you have trouble finding leaf collection information?}
- 3c. So, what advice would you give the Town on how to improve on leaf collection?

## **Bond Referendum**

- 4a. One of the questions on the survey asked you how much more you might be willing to pay each year in property taxes to help afford projects such as widening roads, building new parks and greenways, extending sidewalks, adding fire stations, and revitalizing downtown. Since we conducted the survey, the Town Council voted to hold a bond referendum in November so that citizens can vote for or against these types of projects and the associated property tax increase that would go with them. If you vote yes, then the projects move forward and taxes will increase; if you vote against, then you don't get the projects and don't have the associated tax increases. The Town can't advocate one way or the other on the bond vote, but it has a responsibility to educate citizens about the issue so that you will be informed when you do vote in November. With this in mind, we want your opinion on communication about the bond referendum. How should the Town reach out to citizens – which communication tools (direct mail, television, web, Facebook...)?

- 4b. Any tools the Town shouldn't use?
- 4c. What information do you think is most important (project info, timing, tax information...)?
- 4d. Staying with this for a few more minutes, do you generally agree or disagree with the things the Town is spending taxpayer's dollars on. Do you think the Town is spending money wisely and appropriately?
- 4e. Is there anything that sticks out in your mind as something you wish the Town hadn't or wouldn't pursue?

### **Communications**

- 5a. The Town is very interested in having citizens participate in the governing process. They want to create, implement, and make good decisions on programs, projects, policies, and laws. They want these decisions to reflect the wants, needs, and values of the community. They want you to be happy with how things are going. One of the questions in the survey asked you to identify barriers to becoming more involved. While "don't have time" remains the number one response, once again "didn't know about it" rated very high, so we want to explore this finding a little more? What kind of Town-related things have you looked for information about and not found it? Where did you look? How long ago?
- 5b. Are there any Town opportunities have you regretted missing because you didn't know about it, couldn't find information on them?
- 5c. When you think about things either from the Town or elsewhere that have gotten your attention, what were they and more importantly how was the information delivered so that it did get your attention? What did it say?
- 5d. Finally, what ideas do you have for ways the Town might improve citizen's knowledge of Town opportunities?

### **Closing**

- 6. In closing, is there anything else about the Town of Cary government that you'd like to share with us before we close today? *Facilitator closes by thanking participants and other "housekeeping" issues.*

**Appendix D**  
**2012 Biennial Survey Focus Group**  
**Session 1 Transcript**

Moderator: I'd like to thank all of you for coming today to the Town of Cary Focus Groups. Before we get started, let me learn a little bit more about you. Do all of you live in the Town?

(All agree)

Moderator: Okay. Anybody live in apartments?

(None)

Moderator: Now, let's go around for just for a second at the table. Just give me your first name, how long you've lived in the Town, and where did you live before you came here. Okay, Kathy?

- Kathy. I've lived in Cary 9 or 10 years, and previous to that we lived at Lee County, between Fuquay and south Raleigh.
- Rich. I've lived here 23 years. Before that I lived in New York City.
- Hi. My name's Wayne. I've lived in Cary for 24 years. Prior to that, I lived in Tri-Cities, Tennessee area for 7 years. And then I was raised in Winston-Salem in North Carolina.
- B.J. I've lived here about 7 years and came from Westchester, New York.
- I'm Preston. I've been here for about 3 years. And I lived in Chapel Hill before that.
- Sarah. Lived here 16 years. Moved here from Roanoke, Virginia.
- Tom. I've lived here for 19 years. I moved from Connecticut. And also lived in Ohio, Florida, Arizona, California, Maryland, among others.

Moderator: All right. Thanks so much. Let's go ahead and get started with the first set of questions, and this is on growth. Growth in Cary has shown up again in this year's survey as a concern even though the population and the tax base growth rate are way down compared to previous years. And that's probably due to the recession. Okay. First question I'm going to ask you: What about growth do you think concerns folks? For example, is it the byproducts of growth such as traffic, waiting in line? What are your concerns?

- I would say that traffic is one of the big ones because most everyone I'm sure works either towards the Park or in Raleigh or someplace like that, so you're driving. And you're always worried about that commute and how long that's going to be. At least I do.

Moderator: Everybody agree?

(Agreement)

- The other thing that I think we have to be careful of is, while we promote growth in many cases, we have to be sure that the infrastructure is there to support it. It's not good to allow development to happen if you're not going to have the infrastructure prepared for it. Okay. And I know when I first moved here that was a problem, where they allowed communities to develop without the roads, without the schools.
- Schools, sewage.
- So we have to be careful with on how we manage that.

Moderator: Okay. So infrastructure. What else?

- The roads especially. For 20 years I traveled to RTP to work from Cary. When I moved to Cary, there were 35,000 people here and there were three major roads to get to RTP. Now there are about 140,000 people here, and the only new road in all those years has been Davis Drive. 54 hasn't been widened. So they really haven't kept up with the capacity compared to the number of people that live in this area.
- Holly Springs Road.
- I'm sorry?
- Holly Springs Road.
- Out to RTP?
- No, is another artery that's clogged.
- Clogged, yeah.

Moderator: Okay. So we've got traffic, infrastructure, maybe the roads. Anything else?

- So a pet peeve of mine obviously is growth and this ridiculous Wake County school issue. I bought my house specifically coming here from New York, looking at the SAT scores, the propensity to go on to college. Bought specifically for that school. And my son personally suffered a redistricting in a very narrow section of where I live in eleventh grade. And thank God we're out of it and he's in college now, but just absolutely devastating, both fiscally, emotionally in so many ways.

Moderator: Do any of you guys have kids still in school?

(None)

- Mine's in college, but I want to add to that. We actually put our son in private school because we were tired of the redistricting and the level of service that the schools just cannot provide just because kids are in and out and moving, and there's no consistency.

Moderator: Is that a Wake County or Cary issue?

- That's a Wake County issue, but I'm certainly concerned about it. Although obviously my kids are grown, but I see it all around me, so. But it's definitely not a Cary, Town of Cary issue.
- Right. It's not a Town of Cary issue, but as a citizen of Cary, we live in Wake County, so by default.

Moderator: You want the Town to know.

- We move here because of the schools, but then our children don't end up in the schools.
- Right. If the Town of Cary grows too much and doesn't provide enough additional school capacity, then the schools in the Cary area or that part of Wake County can become overcrowded.

Moderator: That leads to my next question too. How much of a concern is it growth in Cary, growth in Wake County or growth in the Triangle?

- Well, so you take myopically, we live in Cary. We came to Cary. So our universe begins in Cary. Whatever happens outside of Cary, my taxes are paid based on Wake and Cary. My universe begins and ends in Cary.

Moderator: So is it mostly Cary is the biggest concern?

(Agreement)

- As a cyclist, I see signs in western Chatham County that say "Stop Cary." That's across the county line, but near Jordan Lake area many times I ride by signs hanging on the bottom of mailboxes that say "Stop Cary," but that's actually in eastern Chatham County, across the county line.
- I ride as well, and I see the signs, but safety is a huge issue for bikers, for cyclists, that there's no shoulder on the road. We have three inches, and most of that is erosion of pavement. And we have no place to go. So it's a huge concern in Cary and in the county.
- Right. Because I noticed near where I live there's actual bike route signs. There's one foot between you and a car. So if you're on a bike, you're taking your life in –
- It's scary. Some days it's scary to ride.
- So I don't think they should post oh, this is a bike route unless they're going to provide enough width on the road to support it because it's just dangerous.
- And it's not just dangerous for the cyclist; it's dangerous for the motorist as well because they're trying to pass and it's just congestion. And a lot of people either don't know the rules of the road who are riding a bike, but then the people who are driving the car also don't

know the rules of the road for bicyclists. So there is a lot of confusion on who has the right of way. And so just as a side note, growing up in Jersey, we had the police come in like fourth or fifth grade and teach all the children here are the rules of the road. Here's how you make a hand signal. And I didn't see any of that in the schools, so just an idea for future generations.

- But also communication to motorists would be a good thing too.
- But we have hand signals.
- Possibly, I don't know all the things I should know about encountering a bike, which I do quite a bit. I think we're overlooking – back to the growth question, I think we may be overlooking some of the benefits we've gotten from the growth. I've seen in the 16 years I've lived here there's just a lot more opportunities of every kind, cultural. There's more retail. There's more restaurants. There's a lot of good things that come out of growth, and I think we just need to be careful about the growth. And looking around, I guess I'd like to see more communities for seniors. Because we've been looking and there's just not that much.
- Yeah, that's another thing too. Compared to a lot of places in the country, the number of first-floor master bedrooms in the Town is like almost non-existent. You can hardly find one. Whereas in other places, like I've looked in Florida, just about every house has a first floor. Down in Atlanta same thing. Just here for some reason the developers just decide well, there's no marketplace for it, but as the population begins to age, I think the Town needs to promote it.
- Yeah.

Moderator: Let me ask you another question here. And this is related to what you guys are talking about. When you think about what the Town government has done about growth in the past two years, what comes to mind? And let's go positive and negative, either one.

- Well, it disturbs me when I hear no growth; we don't want any more growth. We want Cary to block development basically. That disturbs me. I don't think that's healthy for a community, okay. But on the other side, I see all the negatives of, as you say, growth without the underlying infrastructure. If we don't have any growth at this end of the county, we'll never get another school. But there's positives and negatives. We just need to be careful about it.

Moderator: Can you think of something the Town has done positive or negative?

- When they do do the growth and put in sidewalks, they're very conscious of the greenspace and making sure that there are trees. And when shopping malls come in, it's not all bright lights and signage. They're very careful about the planning. So when you drive by, it just doesn't look like a concrete jungle.
- Right. There's a lot of greenways. I know there's still more in planning, which I think is a really good thing because I use them all the time. And things like Hemlock Bluffs and the improvement on that facility, coupled with the amphitheatre, the improvements to that

facility out at Bond Park, and all the stuff since I've been here that they've developed over there, I mean there's a lot of positives I think the Town has tried to do on behalf of its citizens. And I think that they need to take that positive note as an example. The Town isn't making money, from what I understand, at Koka Booth. And the argument is that it's not there to make money; it's there to entertain the population of Cary. And so it's kind of like a cost, but it's a good cost to bear. And I think that's a good thing that the Town has done, and they've done other things similar to that, like the greenways and things like that. And I think there's all positives.

Moderator: Any negatives you can think of?

- Some of the road maintenance is kind of seemingly falling behind. I mean if you drive near the lot near Main Drive there, the potholes that are in the road there are dangerous. I mean you can hardly see them, but when you hit them, you're up in the air. So I just think they need to be a little bit more vigilant on maintaining the road since we do have a lot of traffic. The other thing is my understanding is a lot of people work up in the park. And it took a very, very long time for the Davis Drive to get widened even though a lot of people in Cary work there. And it was always a dispute between RTP, Cary and other communities who was going to bear the cost. And since they couldn't agree on it, they never did anything. And I think the Town needs to work on partnerships that will help that type of situation in the future because we are continuing to grow. Morrisville still is growing. Apex is growing like crazy. I mean the whole surrounding area. And I think we just need to work with our fellow communities to make sure that the right kind of development is done on behalf of all the citizens.

Moderator: Another question is what do you think the Town should be doing to better manage growth? One of you said work more partnerships. What else?

- I sort of want to go back to his question or add on that we talk a lot about growth and how to manage that. I live in like a 35-year-old neighborhood, one of the original ones. And sometimes we feel like we're forgotten with our road maintenance, with the storm drains that are concrete and old and crumbling. So even though growth is good, you have to maintain what is already there, and that needs to be considered as well because we're old, but we're still part of Cary.

Moderator: Okay. Anything to do better to manage growth at this point in time? You mentioned a lot of positives; anything they still need to do?

- I think to the point made earlier, also in terms of the demographics. I mean for a while there it was 32, married, 2.1 kids. I think we're seeing that change and morph out of the darn Yankees coming down, half-backers going down to Florida, coming back up. I sure would like to see and I've not seen the advertisement or the focus of the next gen of living. I think would be really viable for everybody. We have so many planned communities, like way too many. I don't understand how they keep popping up. But I don't see anything towards that next phase of life, which I think would be very valuable.
- Yeah. I think that is something that the city has to look at, is because they have to stay in their planning like ten years down the road. And the way the population is aging, like you said before, is a lot of the houses and such and the plans that are set right now are just not

viable for the older population. And a lot of the half-backers, as she said, they're going to be older, and but they're still very viable members of the community. And a lot are going to be a lot of the stuff like in the parks, going to the theaters and such as that. And so there needs to be a plan in place to look after those people as well.

Moderator: The last in this area, and I think I've heard part of this answer, what would be the ideal growth situation? I think one of you said infrastructure should keep up with the growth. Anything else?

- Mass transportation needs to keep up as well. My parents are older and, while they don't live here yet, they probably will at some point in time have to. And they live in New York City now and they can pretty much walk to everything. My mother doesn't even drive. She's never even had a driver's license. But I would like to see if they came here that there would either be a part of Town where they could walk to a supermarket and could walk to the major things that they need, or that the mass transit is available to get them to the different little corner shopping centers and strip malls and stuff like that. And is not also too far from the residential area so that they don't have to walk too far to pick up a bus.
- The other thing I know we used to joke about, but when I was at NC State is that when Cary grows there needs to be – well, there's a perception that Cary grabs this community because it's affluent. Cary grabs this community because it's got something. And so it became, and for a while there, almost like a tumor. And that's why you see signs "Stop Cary" in other counties is because there's this perception that there are fingers of Cary that are stretching out throughout the county.

Moderator: Do you mean annexed sections?

- Yeah, when it's annexing and the growth through annexation and such. And so that's something kind of growing into the spaces we have now might be a good way to kind of counter that perception.

Moderator: Okay. Very good.

- One last thing on that growth topic there. I think Cary has probably promoted the development of business in Town and I think they should continue to do that for a couple of reasons. One, it's nice to be able to work locally. And two, it subsidizes our tax dollars, okay. And I think those two things are important to focus on as well.
- That's really good. I didn't think about office parks and stuff like that, business in Town.
- That's very good.
- Yeah. And I like to shop local, but sometimes it's not possible so I have to go to downtown Raleigh.

Moderator: So local business development.

(Agreement)

Moderator: You mean retail or maybe –

- Well, retails or restaurants, things like that.
- And in that same vein, I just thought of Cary Towne Mall. I think we need to be sure to support it. It appears to be declining a little bit. A little bit. There's still some really good stores there, but I think it needs – I try to support it. I hope others do.
- Yeah, I think it does need a little bit of a do-over on that as well.
- Of course, it's privately owned, but if there's any way the Town could –
- There's a lot of competition with the new malls that have come up, and it's going to be hard for it to stay viable without some type of improvements to it.

Moderator: Okay. Let's move on to safety. Now this is a new concern. It was expressed by the responses to your survey. Now Cary remains the safest large community in the state, and actually in the southeastern U.S. But it came up as a slight concern this time. Can you shed any light on what you or your neighbors might have safety concerns about in Cary?

- My neighborhood we had a recent rash of break-ins, and they were what the police were kind of calling smash-and-grabs. So they would just break in your front door, grab a TV and a laptop and they were out in five minutes. So they were in and out before the police came and in and out before security. And it was a big concern, so we went ahead and created our community watch. But it is a concern.

Moderator: Okay. Anything else?

- Yeah. I know one of the concerns we had in our community was we're all single-family homes; most people have kids. So it's very common for us to leave our garage doors open during the day and your kids are in and out and running around. And in the neighborhood right next to ours, there was a crime committed where somebody came home, opened their garage door, walked into their house, someone followed them and assaulted them. And then all of a sudden everybody in our neighborhood was worried about leaving their garage doors open, or people following them into their garage when they're driving in. And it's just when you see a random crime like that happen, it's something that really gets to people because you see yourself in that same situation. We've all gone home and you open the garage door automatically; you pull in. Well, there's plenty of time for somebody to follow you in a situation like that. Or you take your groceries, you go into your house, you don't typically lock your door between your garage and your house. And the door's open and the kids are running in and out. When you see something like that happen, that really sort of brings it home that just random crime.

Moderator: Theft and burglaries and what other things?

- Well, I know in our community about once a year we'll have a speaker come in either from the police department or the Town to talk about things that we as a community can do to try to minimize the safety factors. But I think the Town needs to promote that more. It shouldn't have to be the community asking them to come. They should seek out the

communities and offer to come because I think the education part of it's very important. We had, like you said, we had vandalism going on. Why would they wreck the sign at the entrance to our subdivision? Some kid just came by and basically stole a sign or destroyed it. And that wasn't only on ours; it was all the way down Kildaire Farm Road to a lot of different ones. So I know everybody incurred expense to have that replaced. And I don't know how you prevent that, but I think you're always going to have that kind of stuff going on. Same thing with our pool. We had to gate our pool because people were jumping the fence and vandalizing the pool. So we had to put in not only the gates, we had to put in cameras to deter it. So it's just stuff like that.

Moderator: Let me ask another question. Have any of you had your safety threatened in Cary in the past two years? No, none of you. Okay. Outside of any personal experience, how do you think you or others have come to feel concerned about safety? In other words, where do you hear about safety issues?

- Can I just go back, though?
- Moderator: Sure you can.
- West Chatham and Cary Park, that happens to be my complex. Two people were killed. I'm going to tell you because I go in and out of West Chatham, it's becoming a major thoroughfare even though it's technically not. And it's smack dab around sort of a corner. And these people come speeding on Cary Parkway and I understand there has to be eight significant incidences before they'll put a light.
- I think there ought to be a light there.
- Yeah. It's a horrible, dangerous –
- I read they studied it again and they didn't want to put a light there, but it's very, very dangerous.
- Chatham and Cary Parkway?
- Yes.
- West Chatham and Cary Parkway.

Moderator: Okay, so a little bit of traffic issues too then.

(Agreement)

Moderator: Now, can you tell me, this question here, where do you hear about safety issues, things that have concerned you?

- Well, on a good side, apparently there was a rash of snap-in-the-windows or people not locking their cars. And I came down to – on West Chatham there was a barricade of police that were handing out information proactively. So that's where I learned about it. And I

was like wow. I felt a little safer because there was proactive knowledge of something I hadn't been impacted yet for me personally. So I really appreciated that.

- We had that with our burglaries. I'm very lucky. We have really good communication among our neighbors, but the police did come door-to-door with flyers to let us know that there have been burglaries. Here's some things you can do to make sure you're better protected, and that was very well received in our neighborhood.
- And they were really responsive when we had a rash of burglaries a couple years ago in Lochmere Highlands. They were very responsive.

Moderator: So you said police are one big source of information?

- Yeah. It used to be, when I first moved into my subdivision, there would always be a patrol car coming through, maybe once or twice a week, and I haven't seen one for years. So I don't know if they stopped patrolling neighborhoods and are only out on like the big roads or what, but I think it's nice to have that presence there because I think that is also a deterrent.
- I was going to say I knew that's one of the things my next door neighbor has a son and daughter that are policemen. And so there's a police car by our place very often. And we haven't felt unsafe at all.

Moderator: Let me ask you another question. Raise your hands if you subscribe to the Town's news or safety email or the Twitter feeds. Okay. One of you. Okay. Now here's a question. Over the past few years, can you think of any safety-related news story or event that stands out in your mind as something that might cause you or others to feel unsafe in Cary? You mentioned the burglaries. Anything else?

- Just some of the road maintenance can create a safety situation. We talked about the bikes already, but that's a safety situation both for the motorist and the cyclist. And I think just some of the condition of the roads are not well-maintained in all cases. And I think that in of itself can be a safety issue as well.

Moderator: But you can't think of any news stories besides the ones when the police would come to you that stood out in your mind in the past few years? Okay. And then the last thing, I've got some answers down here and you tell me if I'm right. The Town would like to know what advice you would give the Town on the kinds of things they can do to help the citizens feel safer. One, the police come in and give information. Two, more patrols.

- Yeah.

Moderator: Okay. What else?

- Perhaps even like a direct mailing or something like that. Even if the Town doesn't have the information for all the community watches and such as that, they can do a mailing out to the citizens and say the police are there for your – to help serve as well. If you have any concerns or questions, please call this number or email us here.

- Or here's the top ten list of things your community can do to improve safety in your community or something like that.
- An email is cost effective to the Town.
- Do they have a database of our emails? I doubt it.
- That's the thing. I don't think they have a database of emails.
- You mentioned some sort of a safety news list serve you can get on or something.

Moderator: There is one.

- There is one? See, I didn't even know about that. Maybe it was in the BUD and I missed it because I do look at the BUD when I'm opening the utility bill. But I missed that somehow.

Moderator: What would be the best way to reach you to tell you about that list, in BUD?

- Yeah. Of an existing thing, yeah. It's my bad that I don't go to the website more often, but the website would be another way if those of us would go there.
- If you sign up for the Cary email, I mean I get an email probably every two days from the Town of Cary about, you know, you get the one on the weekend that says all the weekend stuff going on. Especially if there's like two or three car break-ins in a neighborhood the Town of Cary sends out an email and says the last few days we've had like three break-ins in this neighborhood.
- So all we need to do is get on the Cary email.
- Yeah, just get on the Cary email list and you get a lot of that stuff in the mail. If there's a bank robbery in Town, there's usually an email that comes out pretty quick to let people know that it's happened, things like that, so.
- Yeah, that's about the only thing I can remember is that I think it was one murder and one or two bank robberies over the last couple years, and that's about it.
- But certainly not at a level that made me feel –
- Right. Because they're not personal, like more break-ins in the neighborhood.
- The ones that have bothered me, because there's been two in the neighborhood next to us in McGregor, the one where some guy on drugs broke in the front door and assaulted the – sexually assaulted the wife and beat the husband. And the other one was where the guy followed the person in through the garage door and assaulted them in the house. And those are both in that general area. And I live just the next street over from them, so when it's that close, when it's a house that's like right behind yours, it really, really bothers you.

Moderator: Okay. Let's move over to leaf collection. Now the Town's solid waste services overall got very, very high marks. However, there was one exception and that was the satisfaction with leaf collection. That's gone down significantly and the Town wants to know why. First of all, how many of you participate in curbside leaf collection? And that is if you live in a home or multi-family home or if you put leaves in the curb and the Town of Cary picks them up. So, one, two, three. All of you over here, right? Okay. Now, what was different about the service in the past two years to previous years? So questions like were the leaves not picked up when the Town said they would? Were the leaves not picked up often enough? Was the street less clean enough? Were there customer service issues with the Town staff? Or did you have trouble finding information? What's the issue here?

- Well, I think it's frequency for one thing because when people have these big piles of leaves on both sides of the road, your road is now half as small. And so the traffic getting through is tricky. So if they let it stay that way for too long, it becomes an irritant. So I think they do have to be timely about how frequently.
- We had our first pickup in November and the piles of leaves were just absolutely huge. But it wasn't two weeks after the pickup that the piles were all back again. I mean literally they could almost come every week during that November and December time frame when the leaves are coming down. I live in a neighborhood that is totally woods. I mean there are like 80 trees just on my property. And I mean I could literally go and put piles of leaves out there almost every weekend through November and December. But you can only make the piles so big because then they start to blow around. They start blowing back on your lawn or they just creep too far out into the street. So everybody's waiting for the piles to get picked up so the next weekend they can go and build a new pile. But now it's another two months or another six weeks before the city's coming back again to pick up the leaves.

Moderator: So frequency is one issue.

- Yeah, frequency is an issue.

Moderator: Did they leave the streets clean enough?

(Agreement)

Moderator: That's good. Any customer service issues when you call? Did you get the information when they were going to be picked up?

- Yeah, they came exactly the first week they said they were going to be there. They were there right on Monday morning.

Moderator: So it's just frequency.

- Yeah.
- But I mean the resources to do that on a temporary basis are going to be huge and the trucks and everything. I mean think about it.

- Yeah. As the city's gotten bigger, it's longer and longer between collections. Back ten years ago when the city was half the size, the collections were probably a little more frequently than they are now that they've got a much larger area.

Moderator: You tell the Town what you want. That's the key. If they can accomplish it, I'm sure they'll try.

- I mean I commend the city because actually they added a third sweep. In previous years I remember two sweeps, but this year there was actually a third scheduled pickup in my neighborhood. So that's better service. I don't think the Town – the problem with the mound of leaves, the bolus of leaves all fall all over Town at one time. You can't – if you're sweeping Zone A, the other zones are going to accumulate more until they return to those areas. So logistically, I don't see an easy fix to increase the frequency.
- The only thing I can think of is the possibility of maybe – of course it's happening all over, so it's expensive, but maybe like pre-contracting someone to add extra capacity at that time. It may not mean that they need extra vacuum capacity; it may just be storage. To have a couple extra trucks to carry away the ground leaves from the people picking it up. I don't know if there's a machine issue there or how that would work, but.

Moderator: So that's the next question, advice you would give to improve on leaf collection. So in an ideal world, more frequency or maybe contract. Now it's just too much.

- And the other thing about that is I don't know if it's manpower or if it's equipment. I don't understand the frequency issue or if it's a combination of both. But the contract idea is a pretty good one because that eliminates potentially both of those.
- And for my neighborhood, since it's older, there are a lot of grown oak trees. And I get three pickups, so it's November, December and January. January's cold and no one is out raking their leaves. I would much prefer to skip the January if they can move it to March because there's tons of spring debris that ends up in the yard.
- Those oak trees don't shed until the new leaves come out, so in March you get a separate fall.
- That's true.
- And there's just tons of yard waste for our neighborhood and probably for others that people put out in the street thinking someone's going to collect it. And it sits there for a month or two and it just becomes a hazard of walking and dogs.
- Well, maybe they could publicize what it is from the sanitation department's point of view. Because all these subdivisions have gotten older; the trees have gotten more mature. I'm sure there's just tremendous more load than there used to be. Maybe they could defend themselves, explain the problem.
- The Town itself gets bigger, so there's more neighborhoods that need to be picked up too.

- Maybe they could even publicize how much it's costing.
- I'm like you; I have probably a hundred trees on my property. And I've got a small lot, a third of an acre, but there's a lot of trees.
- Exactly.
- And that's the thing, like you said, they could put something like last year we collected or we distributed a hundred thousand pounds of leaf collection over a certain time, an average of a hundred pounds a house or something like that.

Moderator: So have the sanitation department give their viewpoint.

- Give their viewpoint, yeah.
- And that's another thing that relates back to growth because I think if they were mapping the amount of collection as the Town develops, they're going to have increase the resources to do that. And if they haven't done that, they're not managing the growth. So I think they have to think about that a little bit and come back with how much are we really collecting now compared to what it was.

Moderator: Okay. Let's switch gears a little bit. One of the questions on the survey asked you how much you would be willing to pay each year in property taxes to afford projects such as widening the roads, building new parks and greenways, extending sidewalks, adding fire stations, and revitalizing downtown. Remember that? Okay. Since the survey was conducted, the Town Council has voted to hold a bond referendum this November so citizens can vote for or against these types of projects and the associated property tax increase that will go with it. If you vote yes, then the project will move forward and the taxes will increase. If you vote against, then you won't move forward with the projects, but you won't have the associated tax increase. It's pretty simple there. Everybody understand? Now the Town can't advocate one way or the other how to vote on the bond referendum, but it has a responsibility to educate citizens about the issue so that you'll be informed when you do vote in November. Now with that in mind, we want your opinion on communication with that referendum. Now how should the Town reach out to the citizens to inform them? What communication tools work, such as direct mail, television, web, Facebook? What do you think would be the best way to give information on the bond?

- I read the BUD. I read it there.
- Yeah, the BUD. And Cary News.
- Cary newspaper.
- And I would highly suggest the front page because if it's buried, I usually don't get too far into The Cary News. I usually read the front page and that's it.

Moderator: Anything else?

- Television would be good.

- They have the Cary TV station, so they should definitely have it there.

Moderator: Cary's own channel you mean?

- Yeah.
- But also like a news conference that may be picked up by WRAL or one of the other places.
- That's good. And maybe put the facts and figures and supporting data and stuff on the website where it could say in the BUD for more information about why this is necessary.

Moderator: Multiple sources I'm hearing.

- Yeah. And it would be good to put things like – because it's the negative is people are going to put up no new taxes, no more taxes; we pay enough. But to actually put out something saying vote yes for a school; vote yes for –
- A fire station.
- Fire station, yeah.
- And if they bundle it all together, I think that would be a harder sell than breaking the referendum up into smaller –

Moderator: It will be broken up.

- Okay.

Moderator: From what I understand, you'll vote on each area, as it stands right now.

- And it's important for the city to let people know what projects specifically are in – if it's a bond for road construction, let people know specifically what projects are included in there so that they know that if they vote no it's the road that goes past their neighborhood or the road that's on the way to their kid's school and they realize that –

Moderator: Exact details.

- Yes, exact details so that people are aware of what they're voting or what they're not going to get if they vote against it.

Moderator: If you were to pick one of these sources as the one you think you would prefer, what would it be, just if you could throw one out? BUD, the newspaper, which one would be the one you receive primarily as one you'll go to first?

- Probably The Cary News in my case because I get it. I don't pay for it; I think pretty much the whole Town gets it and you don't pay for it. So it's a free information dispersal.

Moderator: So newspaper's really an important first step.

- Well, it's nice to read it too.

Moderator: All right. Anything else?

- That and BUD because that's something I look at.
- Because probably if they're already paying for it, I mean if there's a cost component to this, then they may only have a certain amount in the budget to communicate this. So you want to try to get the most bang for your buck.
- Right.
- The other thing is, if they could, on the bill that the BUD comes in to put a little sticker saying important referendum news inside or something like that just to make sure that people –
- And I don't know where – from a political standpoint, I don't know where people stand with that, but that's probably something that if the Town really wants to – I don't know if there's a bunch to oppose it, but if they're going through the referendum idea, then they must have a reason to do that. And I think they need to have some political backing to make it more viable.

Moderator: Okay. Sorry. I'm writing these down as we go; that way later on I'll remember what you guys said. Any tools that the Town shouldn't use that you probably just wouldn't pay much attention to?

- I mean I question how valuable TV is because we're all listening to different stations. That's probably not a very highly watched – and I would perceive that to be more costly.
- Yeah, I wouldn't suggest an advertisement.
- Direct mail, if it's too –
- That's expensive.
- It's expensive, and you pick something up and it looks like it cost a lot to produce, that's irritating.

Moderator: So possibly TV and direct mail. Another question on that. What types of information, what information do you think's most important to put out? Like project information, timing, tax information. One thing I know you mentioned was it should be specific and tell what's involved in each one. Anything else?

- Maybe an estimate of what the approximate tax increase would be so that if it's a nominal amount, that people realize that it's a nominal amount. Everyone's taxes are different, but

they might say for an average person who's paying \$2,000 a year on their property taxes, your property tax might go up \$50 a year or \$100 a year or whatever the case might be.

- Or they could put it on a percentage basis because that's probably what it's going to do, to increase the tax rate to cover the referendum. So they can just say we're planning on a 2 percent increase in your taxes and people can calculate what that means.

Moderator: Very good. What else?

- I'd like to see exactly what's going to be on the ballot. A sample ballot ahead of the election because we're going to be overwhelmed with other elections as we move into November. So if this is going to be in fine print at the bottom of the November ballot, I'd like to preview that ahead of time if possible.
- And I'd like to add to that my son is a new voter, and when he voted in the May election, his first comment was where did all this other stuff come from? I didn't even know it was on there. And so, yeah, a sample ballot is great because then he can preview it and know what to do.

Moderator: Great. Another question, staying with this just a couple of minutes, do you generally agree or disagree that with the things the Town is spending the taxpayers' money on; in other words, do you think the Town is spending money wisely and appropriately?

- Yeah.
- It seems that way.
- For the most part, yeah.
- For the most part, yes.
- Generally speaking, yes. Perhaps with the exception of the signs.

Moderator: Okay. What else? Anything else you can think of? I mean that's pretty good. You're only saying one thing.

- Even though the bridge is really nice, the bridge that goes over 1 and 64, that's a walking bridge, even though it's decorated really cute and it's pretty, I just don't know what the traffic is that uses that bridge. I don't know how much it cost, but well, it's pretty. I'm just not sure about the usefulness of it or not.

Moderator: Okay. Anything else? Let's finish things up with communication. The Town is very interested in having citizens engage in the governing process. They want to create and implement and make good decisions on programs, projects, policies, and new laws. They want these decisions to reflect the wants, needs and values of the community. In other words, they want you happy with the way things are going on. One of the questions in the survey asked you to identify barriers to becoming involved. What keeps you from becoming involved? While I don't have time remains the number one response, once again, didn't know about it rated relatively high. So we want to explore this a little bit more. What kinds of Town-related things have you looked for information

about and not found? In other words, did you look also and how long ago? Are there any things that come to mind?

- One thing I knew of that you were talking about before, my wife was trying to get a map of the greenways. And she looked on I think the park website, but when she did her search, she couldn't come up with a map. And I've noticed a couple of times with other things, like when you go onto the website and you're looking, I don't know if the search function just isn't quite right or if the key words aren't there or what, but sometimes when you search the Town website, you don't get immediately what you're looking for. It might get you to the right page, but then what you want is like another branch off of that page.

Moderator: Have you felt that way too?

- I have an example just today. They had an event going on off of James Jackson Avenue from the Town of Cary. And when they sent out information a while ago, they had said go to the Town website and search on the word Spruce. And you search on Spruce and you get a whole bunch of articles, but none of them were about the event that was going on today.

Moderator: What was the event again?

- They were selling rain barrels and compost bins and things like that. And they said for more information just go to the website and search on Spruce. But Spruce gave you a lot of articles, pages and pages of articles, but it would be nice if the first one at the top was the event that was coming up, rather than I think it was three or four pages back.
- Wow.
- Yeah.
- For my subdivision, I'm the pond committee chairperson. And we had this major project to do on our pond to put riprap in and to get rid of muskrats and have it dredged and all that stuff. And just to find the right people in the Town to work with because you need permits and all that stuff, it took a while. It wasn't easy. I actually had to go down to the Town Hall.

Moderator: Did you try the website?

- Yeah. I had to go to the Town Hall and find out who the responsible engineers were because I couldn't find it on the website, at least at that time.

Moderator: So the website at times may not direct you where you want to go.

- Yeah.

Moderator: Okay. Are there any opportunities that you were missing because you didn't know about or couldn't find information on; you mentioned one.

- Yeah, I went anyway, but I did find the information, but it wasn't easy.

Moderator: Anything else that you may have missed some activity because you couldn't find information? Okay. It's just hard to find the information is what you're saying. It could be easier to find information, though you can eventually get it.

- You can eventually get it.
- Right.

Moderator: Okay. Now here's another one. When you think of things either from the Town or even elsewhere that have gotten your attention, and let us know what they were, and more importantly, how was that information delivered that made you pay attention to it? Or what did they say? So it doesn't have to be Town information, anywhere. Some event or something, how did it get your attention; can you think of anything?

- Email. The Town emails that I get I read pretty much every single one of them because usually they're pretty short, just a few sentences or whatever. And then usually they give you a link or somehow to get more information if you want more information. I think that's pretty effective. And I like I said, I get email sometimes two a day, sometimes one every two days from the Town. And it's great. I get an email like every Thursday which has all the weekend's events and things like that that are going on, so it's pretty effective.

Moderator: Okay. So email's been effective. What else? Can you think of anything else, even an event or something that comes to mind?

- Right now email is kind of like the way to get information and it does grab people because you sit down maybe every evening or once a week and you look through your emails. And if there's something there that kind of grabs you on the subject line, you click on it and look.

Moderator: So the way to go is email for all of you pretty much?

- I'm in the technology field and email is snail mail in my world, and I'm inundated, absolutely inundated both professionally and personally. So I don't know and I see that I need to take a lot more ownership about finding out about the Twitter feeds and stuff like that. But technology like Facebook where it finds your likes, so if it's Town of Cary and it knows I like jazz fests or I like arts and crafts or whatever, I mean maybe there is some because it's Web 2.0 it comes to you versus it just being downloaded, downloaded, downloaded. It learns who you are and what you tend to like and so it can begin to push that stuff to you. It might be interesting.
- I think it's important also that like the junk a lot of people get, and a lot of times there'll be events going on in Town that are not anywhere to be found in that paper. So they need to make sure when they are sponsoring events that –
- Maybe they actually get up on that green board that Wayne doesn't like.

Moderator: What can they do to improve that? And you said email's one thing, but it's not just email; it's also Facebook and likes.

- Well, it's stuff that ideally you don't want – you want it to learn you and push to you based on – eventually that's where the wave is versus having to decipher out of kind of an analog email fashion.

Moderator: So if they had an event and they needed to advertise it, how would you tell them to do that? You said email, of course it would get to your likes eventually; what else? Any other way?

- I mean I still read the BUD.
- And the newspaper.
- It'll have all the activities for the month.

Moderator: BUD, okay.

- So I'm not a big TV watcher, but when I do watch it, often news, I look for weather sources. And one of them is like the News Channel 14 certain parts of the hour they have like a community page or an event page, so I find things listed there. But it's not a primary source of information.
- I was about to say that one has been like I've seen several things there, but sometimes it's almost like they use that to fill time or something because it'll be up there for like a half a second. They'll flash it on and it's gone. So I don't know if the Town has any way to kind of say put it up there for more than half a second.
- Or maybe in the Cary paper maybe have like The Independent has here are the things that are going on, and it's all over the Triangle, but here are the things that are going on in Cary. And it's broken down by music or sports, so you can find your category. Maybe a little pull-out section, something like that. You know it's there every Thursday or something.
- Right. What's going on this weekend.
- And another thing is to list things far enough in advance so people can make plans.
- Yeah, that's a big one.
- It's hard to make plans when you're just finding out about things a day or two before they're happening. It would be nice if you sort of, like now in the beginning of June or middle of June if you could get like July's listing of events so that you could plan for things that are coming up.

Moderator: Very good. Well, in closing, anything you want to tell the Town of Cary? Anything else?

- I think they've been doing a pretty good job overall.
- Yeah.

- And I'm glad they're taking what people think seriously enough to have you come in and host these sessions to get feedback to them. So I think that's a positive thing.

Moderator: And they do the surveys also. Anything else you think that you want to tell them?

- Yeah. All my interfaces have been very positive. It's not us/them. I've had to call Town Hall for a number of things. They've been very helpful, supportive. I actually thought I had an erosion issue that I could sort of have the Town of Cary take the responsibility of, but so they sent out their experts. It was quick. It was responsive. Very communicative. And so I was really, really impressed because I had never had to call upon the services of my towns before. So every interaction I've had has been very, very positive.

Moderator: Good.

- Yeah. I mean the same thing that every interaction I've had is good. The only bad thing, and it wasn't really my interaction, it was my contractor's interaction, was with building permits, the inspectors that came out. Apparently it was not a good experience for either side. And the contractor was just very vocal in saying that the inspectors in Cary are different than in the rest of the county, that they're not – just he wasn't too happy with them.
- I have to second that. And that does concern me as I look to do repair on an older house.
- Yeah.
- That reputation is very pervasive, is the – and I'm not sure what's at hand there because I haven't had firsthand experience, but that – by many people I've had in my house say oh, my God, the Town of Cary, these inspectors are just awful, awful, awful.
- Yeah. My contractor actually threw an inspector off my property.
- I know my neighbor expanded his deck, his backyard wood deck. And because the inspector missed one inspection, he had the deck taken down and then he had to have it rebuilt. So I just think it's –
- I mean I understand the need for regulations and making sure that we have hurricane safety and everything and that the foundations here with the clay have to be to spec, but it seems to be very awkward and troublesome going through construction.

Moderator: Okay. We'll put that in there. Anything else? Excellent. Great focus group. I appreciate all of you coming today. Thanks so much.

**Appendix E**  
**2012 Biennial Survey Focus Group**  
**Session 2 Transcript**

Moderator: I'd like to thank everybody for coming today to the Town of Cary focus groups, and we're going to explore several issues today that came up in the Biennial Survey. But before we get started, I want to learn a little bit more about you guys overall. All of you live in the Town limits.

(All agree)

Moderator: Okay, all of you do, very good. Anybody live in apartments?

(None)

Moderator: All of you are homeowners?

(All agree)

Moderator: Okay, good. Now before we get started, can each of you just say your first name, how long you've been in Cary and maybe where you lived before you came to Cary, okay? Kim?

- My name is Kim. I've lived in Cary 17 years, and we moved here from Wilmington, North Carolina.
- And my name is Mike, lived in Cary 16 years and lived in Richmond, Virginia prior to Cary.
- I'm Jeanne. I've lived here 16 years. I lived in Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia before that.
- I'm Art. I've lived in Cary for 15 years, moved here from Chapel Hill.
- I'm Stan, been in Cary for 20 years, 2 years in Chapel Hill before that and then moved to North Carolina from Indiana.
- I'm Brian. I've lived in Cary for 6½ years, and we lived in Northern Ohio previous to that.
- Peter, I've lived in Cary for 3 years. Prior to that, Minneapolis for 2 years and before that, Queens Borough.
- My name is Patrick, and I've been living in Cary for 8 years, 4 years part-time. Commuted between Cary and Montreal, but before that, I lived in Raleigh and before that, in Brazil.

Moderator: Okay, alright, very good. Let's go ahead and get started and talk a little bit about growth first. Growth in Cary showed up again this year, in this year's survey as a concern, even though the population and the tax based growth rate has actually gone down compared to previous years. Now that's probably due to the recession, okay. What about growth do you think concerns folks? For example, is it the byproduct of growth like the traffic or waiting in line at stores? What do you think?

- Not so much traffic for me. Schools and most every school has trailers, not enough space for the kids to be in the classroom.

Moderator: Schools, alright. What else? Do all of you agree? Schools.

- Overcrowding in schools.
- Water was a problem. I don't think it has been in the past few years, but I remember that.

Moderator: Water concerns.

- If we are – I don't know what is the situation really, but that's something that would come to mind to me.

Moderator: What else?

- For me, it's sort of building and development. If you take Triumph Village, for example, if you take a bunch of places like that and build those kind of things where it was very green, and now it's totally ripped down and just built up with very high density stuff. I mean you do that enough places around the Town, then you lose the nice town feel, and you get more of a different feel at least.

Moderator: Okay, anything else?

- Yeah, I think the rapid expansion of commercial stores, etc. has negatively affected our downtown. I think there's just many people are going out to other areas to shop and not just downtown, but some of the older shopping centers are dying.
- Yeah, I would agree with that. On the retail side of things and stores, as the community grows, it seems places become abandoned almost. I don't know how much unused retail space is in Cary, but I think it's a lot.
- And other commercial space as well. I mean I was just driving down Chatham today, and noticing how many of the buildings on the west side of downtown are basically abandoned because they're old. They don't look as classy as the new stuff that's being built, that's being put up right now. So everybody wants to be in the new buildings.
- Real estate values, a lot of new homes on the market are without any buyers. It's just driving down existing.

Moderator: Okay, another question too is how much of a concern is it for the growth in Cary, the growth in Wake County or the growth in the Triangle region? What's the biggest concern for you guys?

- I mean schools is a county more I assume. I mean since they have the – going from Ohio where we have more neighborhood schools and town-based schools, it was very different to see that concept, but for the developments, I think, for me, it's more Cary. I'm happy the whole Triangle's growing and there's more people moving. But if you see places in

Morrisville, for example, where you have a farm and they take it down and build a three rise condo, and they build tons of them and it's all farm around it. Well, for an urban environment, that would be great, but it seems silly that they're going to densely pack that much right around there, and if that's sort of the style, then that changes the feel of the Town.

Moderator: Okay, what else? What do consider? Is it mostly Cary?

- Well, so much of the growth, in terms of the schools and so on, where a lot of the overcrowding is in Cary or western Wake County. So it's not just Cary but Apex, Morrisville, Holly Springs area as well, so some of it's the side of the county I think that's facing a lot of that growth.
- The 540 is going to accelerate when it gets more convenient for people to come from those areas around.
- See, I think that plays into a transportation and development issue you're talking about.
- Infrastructure.
- I happen to live on this side of Town on Chatham, and the development on our side of Town is really much slower and there are a lot of old buildings. When you go to West Cary, it's just booming everywhere – retail brand new, beautiful retail, great big McMansions, really, really nice. And the older side is just kind of sitting there and not much happening, other than traffic.
- It seems like it's different because if you look at, like you mentioned, over in West Cary, we lived in Keller Farms and off of there for a long time. We're more of the planned unit where it was very much sort of houses and parks and greenway altogether, and you see a lot of the new stuff that's coming in the other areas where it's much more – I'd say it has a different feel, a different plan, more modern, if you will, than that sort of planned concept of spreading around both different types of houses and also parks and activities.
- At least in the new developments, you see sidewalks and that kind of thing. In this part of Cary, you don't see any sidewalks along the roads or in the developments themselves which is a safety issue.
- Because the new developments are required, and if you have an old house, you're not required. But as we look forward, as we look at improvements in the city, my wife and I happen to be people, we don't have any children and we've lived here a long time, and I certainly don't mind supporting the community. But it's like okay, a great deal of our budget goes to schools, and I can appreciate that because I think education is important, but sometimes I want that other service too. And so striking that balance is very challenging.

Moderator: Well, when you think about what the Town has done regarding growth in the past couple of years, what comes to mind? And this could be positive or negative?

- Annexation.

- And not friendly annexation.
- Not so friendly.
- I mean we live just close to the Maynard expansion, and we moved in down there just before that got started and seeing how a lot of the houses got transformed for the five lane Maynard on the loop from Kildaire over to Chatham. It was – I know lots of people are unhappy they got news, but even just seeing how the remaining houses were with really steep driveways and everything ripped down, and now they're creatively planting things to make it not look so bad. But I mean a bunch of those houses that people did try to move, and I mean they sat there for a year and a half. I can't blame them. I wouldn't necessarily want to live there. It's really unfortunate.
- One of the things that I have appreciated has been the very conscious efforts on greenway development and parks. I know our kids really enjoyed the parks when they were younger, and we continue to enjoy the greenways. That's been a good thing. Because I live in an older part of Cary, I don't have a good sense of how much planning is going on in the new developments for greenways.
- Yeah, I live in a newer part, and I don't see the same thing with the greenways. I see the builders getting away with not doing it.
- That's what I was mentioning before. If you look at where Lochmere and some of the older places where they haven't built in new developments, maybe there's a greenway close to it, and they might connect a sidewalk to it if you're lucky. Otherwise, it's just sort of...

Moderator: So you're saying the new development's not as good on the greenways.

- Mm hmm.
- Yeah, I do like the expansion of the greenways and then the conscious effort to connect these greenways, so that it's easy to get from one greenway to the next. My issue also goes back to what Art said about sidewalks or lack thereof in the older neighborhoods. I'm in an older neighborhood as well. The houses there are 25 years plus in age, and there are no sidewalks in my particular part of the neighborhood. So yes, I do have access to a greenway, but I don't have sidewalks to get there.
- That's a good point. The new developments have to have it, but we actually moved from Kildaire up to off of Weston, and it's a good example of mixing of businesses and houses, but your neighborhood has sidewalks, and there's greenways around Weston. But there are no connectors, and you end up walking up the very tight Weston with no bike roads, bike lanes like the rest of Cary and you end up – my wife goes running in the morning and is kind of scared that she's going to be hit by a car one day just trying to connect to the greenway because the different developers aren't planning together like it used to be it seems. Because you look at Kildaire and Lochmere, there's a couple different builders all working together with a master plan as opposed to just I buy the land, and then I'll go and do whatever and not think about how it connects or flows.

Moderator: Okay, anything else positive, negative?

- I'm going to descent a little bit on the greenways. I agree with Art. There's some places in Cary where there's no sidewalks. There's some places in Cary where there's no crosswalks to get across very busy streets. There's some places in Cary where the greenways are unbelievable. There's a place near Cary close to my house where they just expanded the greenway near Koka Booth, and it just seemed like excessive spending to me. There's a new bridge that goes over Swift Creek that's dedicated for the greenway trail only. There is literally across the street, a sidewalk that crosses the same bridge. There's the greenway trail that goes over eight lanes of US1 North. I don't know what it's connecting, but...
- Back to my street. I don't know how much that costs. I don't know how much it's utilized, but I drive under that thing at least four times a day, and I think I can count maybe on two hands the number of people I've seen using it. And on top of that, they put artwork on it that I don't know what's the purpose of the artwork? I don't know how much that cost. I think some of that money could go to be used in some places where there's missing sidewalks and crosswalks that don't have street lights.

Moderator: Okay, what do you think the Town should be doing to better manage growth? Can you think of anything?

- What is the Town doing to manage growth?

Moderator: Well, I can't answer those questions. You're asking me. The question is what do you perceive the Town is doing?

- Yeah, that's a good question. It's hard to know what the Town is doing, and you only kind of see it as you drive past things that are being improved – roads, greenways being built.
- I don't know what the building permits, the number of building permits that are allowed now versus what they were before, and in a situation where we do have a downturn in the economy, and you have a lot of houses out there, should new builders be allowed to come in and build new developments? And what are the criteria for having them do that? You say if they're foolish to do in this kind of economy, let them do it, but on the other hand, you're adding to the burden on the county and on all the other taxpayers and not able to move and to turnover existing property that is certainly good right now.
- I think commercial has that same issue because you see down like Waverly Place where they're trying to renovate it and do some stuff, but just up the way where they built the Triumph Village, it's like oh, they put all new shops in and why would you want to spend money renovating when you can just rip something down cheaper and put it right over there? And then you end up having sort of a completely gone one mile away from a new shiny place.
- There's something going on in MacGregor Village too that I hear all kind of rumors about that Costco and anybody else going in, and you wonder about – I think Waverly originally probably was going to be a good idea because it would have gotten a lot of revenue from the businesses and other developments, but what they've done now, I'm not so sure. Hopefully just the developer paid for that and not a lot of us.

- Yeah, I don't think Cary put any money into that.
- Yeah.

Moderator: So what would you say the Town should be doing to better manage growth? Is there anything that you would prefer they would do now?

- Builders or developers more accountable or contribute more to the infrastructure. Better planning.
- Better coordination.
- Improve development, make sure that the infrastructure can handle it instead of being reactive.
- And have a vision.
- I believe the Town made the efforts to do that, and the Town was challenged in court and lost. Then they could not assess developer fees for the new developments and those funds were earmarked towards new schools and public area improvements.
- That was turned down?
- Yeah, they lost that in court. Cary or Morrisville, I don't remember which. I may have that confused, so I think that the Town itself has made a concerted effort to try and have the developer share in the cost of, not only making the profit of the homes, but make it more of a community as opposed to just a little standalone development. But I would like for them to be able to pursue that or some other mechanism like that to hold, as you guys said, the developers accountable for making it a cohesive community and not just a collection of homes.
- I don't know if the Town already does this or not, but my idea would be to offer incentives for more infrastructure improvement when it comes to development instead of the sprawling, let's move outward developments. So if a developer were to come in and say I want to do something with this area that's existing and improve it, then give them some special incentive to do so.
- Yeah, because it's always cheaper to take a farm that is already has no trees and build houses than to rip down stuff.
- Now there may be already – there may be something in place already. I don't know. I'm just not educated about that.

Moderator: What would be the ideal growth situation? I think you've said something for developers to put in money. We work in some of the older areas and revitalize those. What else?

- I think transportation with regard to growth. I don't know if you want that as a separate topic.

Moderator: That's fine.

- I think Cary does some nice things like the Tran, the C-Tran and they have some – I think they're supporting some volunteer organizations. My husband's part of that, where he drives old people to – older than us – people to doctor's appointments, but I think we're getting to a point where the community is aging more, and there's going to be even more need and with the growth comes more traffic. So people can't drive maybe like they used to, and so I think more and continued education or transportation with the growth would be good.

Moderator: Okay, so we have a lot of infrastructure items here. Anything else?

- On the transportation thing, I know that a few years ago, there was a multimillion dollar project that the Town undertook which was supposed to include automation of the traffic lights, and I'd like to know where that went because if you drive on the Maynard Loop, every stoplight, you get the opportunity to stop and see your neighbors. And I just don't see where the automation which was supposed to improve the traffic.
- There's a bunch on Kildaire that got put in that way that are now automated, the little ones, but most of the main intersection ones on the Maynard Loop are still timed. At least some of the cross streets along Kildaire, I noticed they switched over now. And they did at least make all the arrows flash now instead of making you wait red in the middle of the night when it's obvious a left turn is safe.
- At least they made that flash.
- That's another good issue. I think there are a lot of opportunities for traffic lights where they could be put into flash mode because if I come home at 10:30, 11:00 at night, and there's nobody on the road, and I'm stopped at a stop light, and I'm just wondering okay, well, what am I waiting for?
- And it used to be that way 15 years ago.
- Yeah.
- On Cary Parkway, they were flashing.
- They turned them into more strict, and now maybe they're loosening it a bit.

Moderator: Okay, let's move onto a second area where we'll talk about safety. A new concern was expressed by the respondents in this year's survey, and that was safety. Even though Cary itself remains the safest large community in the state and actually in the southeastern United States as well, can you shed any light on what you and your neighbors might have safety concerns about?

- I think for us, it's more vandalism in our area, and I think a lot of it's our neighborhood is getting older, and I know we've had some car break-ins and often times, it's from people who aren't locking their doors and things like that. But my guess is it's probably neighborhood kids who are just being ornery, but that would be – but I continue to be very

impressed with – in terms of major safety concerns. I have no concerns with my kids going out walking at night and things like that.

Moderator: Do you agree with that?

- I agree.
- Yeah.
- I think there's a complacency.
- My wife is very freaky about safety, and she goes out 10:00, 11:00 at night, even on the greenways and she usually feels very safe.
- She probably shouldn't do that.
- Actually the biggest concern we know on safety is we had some friends who live in Cary, and their daughter wanted to go to Columbia and told you that under no circumstances can you leave Cary and go to Columbia and actually be safe. You will die in four years. You've been spoiled too much.
- I think driving habits, if there's better enforcement. Go down High House, it's just a race to get to the next red light.
- It opens where it goes 35. In that stretch, everyone goes 55.

Moderator: Okay, so what I'm hearing so far, some vandalism, maybe some break-ins, right, or at least kids might be doing it. And then you said driving seems to be a concern, but in terms of major safety issues, do you all agree we don't have big major safety issues?

- I don't think we have any. I think people are spoiled because they were so complacent. Don't lock doors. Don't lock cars. Leave the purse in the car when they go in for four hours. Leave things out on the deck or on the – which we do and I still do, and mind you, I moved from D.C. where I had my car stolen twice and I had bars on my windows. So I'm coming from...
- Garage doors are left open.
- Yeah, garage door's open all the time.
- The only major safety things I hear are spousal, so if you don't make your spouse really, really mad at you, you're safe.

Moderator: Okay, how many of you have had your – have had your safety threatened in Cary in the past two years? Anybody?

(None)

Moderator: Outside of personal experience, how do you think you or others have come to feel concerned about safety? That is, where do you hear about safety issues?

- In the crime notes of the paper.
- Police blotter on the news.
- Neighborhood mail list.
- We had a neighborhood watch become very proactive with posting flyers when we had a series of break-ins in our neighborhood. So there was a quick response from that watch and from the Police Department to have some meetings.

Moderator: And the Police Department was proactive.

- They are proactive, yeah.

Moderator: In the previous focus group, that was mentioned as they would come in neighborhoods and help out if they had concerns.

- Mm hmm.
- Yeah, we saw on Kildaire there was some break-ins, cars and stuff and they had increased patrols, and you'd see them come by for a couple weeks to focus on it. It died off and you never heard anything else, so it seemed to work.

Moderator: Okay, so when you hear about crime, mostly it's coming from Cary itself, right? I mean their crime notes or emails or whatever.

- Emails, right. I'm going to hear about something.
- Cary News.
- Most of the anecdotal stuff I hear is Durham.

Moderator: Not in Cary.

- It's not in Cary.

Moderator: Now raise your hand if you subscribe to the Town's news or safety email or maybe the Twitter feeds. Anybody? Okay, two of you. Are you familiar with those?

- I'm not familiar with those.
- You're talking about the email newsletter?
- I think they have a couple different ones that you can subscribe to.

- Yeah, and then Cary sends out announcements about activities.
- I get some emails, but I'm not sure.

Moderator: Not altogether 100 percent sure you're familiar with all of the emails that they send out. Okay, what would be the best way to familiarize if they needed to do that? BUD?

- BUD.
- That's about the main thing that we use, that we read every month.
- Put it in the water bill.
- Exactly.
- The announcements that come in the water bill, there's tons of information on those.

Moderator: So BUD is a good source so you can learn about other ways that they can communicate with you. Anything else? Places that you guys read or look at?

- Cary's webpage.
- Yeah, at least the main few pages because if you have to dig through there, it can get a mess but at least I read the few things that pop on some of the main sites.

Moderator: You want it early.

- If you're going to try and engage – many people, they'll hit the first couple links off the main page and that's about it.

Moderator: Okay, now over the past two years, can you think of any safety related news stories or event that stands out in your mind as something that might cause you or others to feel a lack of safety? Think of something you saw in the news or something.

- The bank robbery over in West Cary that gave me an uneasy feeling about the police force, the way they reacted.

Moderator: Okay, tell me more.

- Well, the kid was shot. Okay, I mean he was robbing a bank, but it was pretty obvious that he was crying for help and I think they could have helped, had some restraint.

Moderator: I see. Anything else?

- The only ones that stand out in my head are spousal. One spouse offs the other spouse and tries to get away with it or something. That's about the only ones that come in my head.

Moderator: Where did you get that information from? Was that from newspaper?

- The news.

Moderator: But anything else stands out in your mind? The robberies and maybe the spousal. You mentioned break-ins earlier.

- There were some house break-ins, and I don't even remember where they were, but it was a single neighborhood in Cary about a year ago I think, which led me to lock my front door for sure every night, but make sure I close the garage door. So it brought some awareness to this is real life. Let's not tempt them too much.

Moderator: So these were items you probably saw in the newspaper, right?

- Yeah, I think so. Actually that came around as an email I think to a lot of people.
- Yeah, there was some proactive communication going on.
- I'm part of Lochmere so Lochmere Association would send out emails and notices sometimes.

Moderator: Okay.

- And it's not a scare – I think they do a good job, and it's not a scare tactic but rather just an informational kind of thing.
- Town communications, I mean the communications directors I think are through the Town, so they speak for the police as well.

Moderator: Okay, and that would be on the website.

- Website, emails that get sent out and then that stuff gets into the Cary News and less I guess on WRAL. I don't watch the news, but I look on WRAL's website and things like that. I don't see a lot of Cary related stuff.
- In terms of trying to get the Cary news email that I get, maybe if they worked with some of the homeowner's associations because they have the rights to distribute to the homeowners. I know Cary can't just take everybody's email and send something out, but if they worked with maybe some of the organizations. We get emails from Lochmere Association, so if they wanted to increase that distribution.

Moderator: What advice would you give the Town? That's one. Work with the homeowner's association, very good. What else? What other things can the Town do, kind of the things they have to do to make you feel safer?

- Well, not directly to my own personal safety, but I have two teenagers and I am becoming very much more aware of the amount of drug activity that goes on, not just in the high school but all around Town. The Cary Towne Center Mall, there's a lot of exchanging

going on over there, and I think it's – you want to categorize it as small time drug activity, but there's a lot of it in my opinion.

Moderator: What can the Town do to help that?

- I think they need to have more of a presence where the kids are hanging out. And I really like that they have that substation, the police substation in the mall, but it is not – it is not staffed full-time. A lot of times, it's empty and just used by the security guards, so there are times when the police are not available.

Moderator: So more presence in the areas that there's activities and make sure it's staffed. Okay, what else? Anything else you can think of?

- I would agree with the more presence there. We had a bust down the street from us in a house where there was some I guess drug dealers or something, and just after that, there was some police activity. But keep that up for a little longer.
- And I don't think they make the citizens or even just the people in the neighborhood as aware of that activity as they do the break-ins.
- I had no idea.
- Yeah, anything that's more violent crime, that's more the side stuff like that.
- Right.
- If you don't go on the county and the city plots of different things, you don't even realize because whenever I go to that site the first time, I'm like oh, there's like hundreds of colored dots, and you filter off the ones that you hear about. Oh, there's only one or two but then you see all the little minor things like – I mean more minor in the sense that they're not robbing a locked car or something on the driveway or a drug possession thing where they're not considered violent. You never hear about that.
- I would be just as highly interested in knowing which houses in my neighborhood were busted for illegal substances as I am interested in those houses that were robbed or vandalized. It's just these are all trends that need to be made equally public.

Moderator: So more presence even after the crime's occurred. Don't just stop and then also make – have a non-violent crime. Give us more information on those, right? And then also tell us the houses and everything that have the issues if possible.

- Which I think that is on that news site because you can see where the – maybe it's not the house, but you see where it happened, and you can see the different drug possessions or assaults or different things.
- Does it come out in those emails though?

- No, it's the GIS system on the Cary website. You can go to the Police Department, and they plot it all for you. You can see in each neighborhood everything. When you first look at it, usually you're like oh because it's a whole year's worth of data. If you calibrate it by looking at other areas like Durham...
- There goes your house value.
- Well, I think that service should be advertised more.
- Yeah, because those are things that are buried. I was actually looking for something different. I'm like ooh, this would be kind of cool to see and hit into it. So there's things hidden on the Town website that's really neat that you don't know about.
- And we were talking about how expansive our greenways are becoming. The greenways are also becoming places where the kids – I wouldn't say just kids but a lot of teenagers are finding them to be secluded places to do things that are illicit.
- And that's tricky because we grew up in – when I grew up in Cleveland, it was the same. We had this beautiful park system all around, and sure, they enforced the parks but you have hundreds of acres of wrapping park around Cleveland. It serves two purposes.
- And do we have any foot patrols? I mean do we have police on foot patrol?
- Or bike.
- On these greenways?
- There are some.
- Are they doing that?
- Bike. I know I've seen police cars parked. I live off Macdonald Woods off Seabrook and I've seen – occasionally seen police cars, and they'll have their bike racks in the back. So I'm assuming they're on bike patrol. Yeah, my girls are out walking on greenways and stuff like that after dark.
- Yeah, they say you're not supposed to be out there after dark.
- If we're talking about personal safety, I just go back to traffic safety. And I thought of one other incident. I think it happened a couple months ago on Cary Parkway where a couple was killed by a lady that was speeding.
- There's a couple places there on Cary Parkway, on Evans, I know where it's not really – I mean you have to think to even go the speed limit because the way the hills and the banks are on that road, you're suddenly going 55 and you don't even know it because you're going downhill and it's slanting and you come around a turn, and you'll have a bunch of exits of parking lots. I mean it can be tricky.

- And then my neighborhood where there's no sidewalks and all the cars are parked on the curb, and then we'll talk about the leaf collection, but you have these big piles of leaves on the roads, and the roadway becomes an obstacle course. My neighborhood is an absolute obstacle course when it comes to driving through it.
- Yeah, I don't really feel for my personal safety living in Cary. It's more of driving and your young kids. There some really wicked bad intersections where – like 64, you got to cross and cars and trucks are going 60 miles an hour because they're texting and cell phoning. That's what I worry about.

Moderator: Well, you mentioned leaf collection. Let's talk about the Town solid waste services overall got very high marks, however, there was one exception – that satisfaction with leaf collection. That score went down significantly, and we'd like to understand why. First of all, how many of you participate in curbside leaf collection, that is, if you put leaves out and you live in a home or a multifamily home. You put leaves out and the Town will collect them.

- Yep.
- Previous years. Our new house doesn't have many trees that are leaf bearing.
- We have participated, but we have a lot of naturalized areas and we try to compost them in.
- Moderator: So how many? You do.
- A little bit.
- We did previous years.

Moderator: Almost all but two of you. Okay, all but two. Alright, here we go. What was different about the service in the past two years than previous years? For example, was it the leaves were – when the leaves were picked up by the Town, did they do it when they said they would? Was it the fact that the leaves get picked up often enough? Or was it leaves left on the street? Were they cleaning up? Maybe it was customer service issues when you called the Town or was it maybe trouble finding information on the leaf collection? I mean what were the issues that made that go down this year?

- Well, I know exactly when they were supposed to come because I read the BUD and it's published in there. They give you a nice little color coded map and so forth, but what happens is that people get their leaves out to their curb at all different times which is convenient for them. And so a lot of times, the leaves will sit there for very long periods of time. People get them out way prior to their pickup time and then my impression – and I don't know what the statistics are on it – but my impression is that they were not coming when they said they would.
- Our – we were a middle window and we got ours out Tuesday before – it switched. Maybe it's Thursday and they switched to next Monday, and they'd already come and did our street previous to that, the previous week, so they were off a whole week on the schedule. We

were sort of the first part of the new color that they were switching to and so we ended up missing it.

Moderator: Where was that?

- It was in Kildaire Farms.

Moderator: So they came not the time they said they would.

- Right, a week before the start of one and a half or two week period that they said they'd come.

Moderator: Okay, that's an issue. What else?

- I don't remember that being as much of an issue for us where we're at, but it seems like the last year or two, they have not as been careful when they've been coming through. So there's still a lot of debris that's left once they do make the passes. It seems like the timing varies in terms of sometimes it's really early, and hold it, I really need to get one more last round or else it's too late or...
- I think switched out the last two years because I know two years ago, it was too early. We were in January with leaves still falling. We're like okay, well, now we have no leaf pickup, and then they switched it this last year so late, and a lot of stuff fell early. It ended up sitting on the street for like a month.
- And I'm wondering if there's a cleaner way of doing it. For example, our recycling is picked up every other week. In the off weeks, could the recycling bins be used as leaf collectors and then they could dump those bins into the truck?
- But you could also pack the leaves into refuse bags which we were doing this year that we had a thing, but it ended up doing half our yard which was 50 bags.
- A lot of people do not use the bags though because they're not required to and we'd end up with these huge piles.
- If you leave the loose leaves, they have to come and pick up. What we do is either put in the bags or we have two large bins that we put our collected every week, so I don't have any of those issues because I never put the leaves on the curb.
- What I'm saying is perhaps that the option of just raking it to the curb should not be an option because it's messy and it's hazardous. It makes our street even more of an obstacle course. Stuff gets buried in those leaf piles. Cars end up trying to drive through them or over them just to get down the street and you never know what's under the leaves. I just don't know if that should even be allowed or an option.
- I agree. I never understood that to be honest.

- But technically you're not supposed to put them in the street. You're supposed to rake them to the curb.
- And nobody leaves them on the grass.
- There's wind. There's rain. There's dogs that play around, so I never understood that system.
- I think something else that's contributing to it is not so much the city but the fact that you have all these companies that are doing yard maintenance, especially in areas like ours where they come up and they do a whole street full. And they have absolutely no idea or regard for what they're going to be picked up. It may be the day after, so perhaps if a community has community type yard maintenance, they ought to make sure they're coordinating with – and that's – I think it's the yard people's responsibility, not Cary telling – contacting everybody and saying. So somebody – whoever's hiring each of these communities. I don't happen to have it, but there's two communities around me that are smaller townhouses that have yard collection and yard maintenance as part of their homeowners' fees, condominium fees, whatever they are. Then they should be made to comply with whenever it's going to be picked up. That's the biggest problem in Lochmere I see is that they pick everything up, and then here comes here these big tractors with their 400 little people that rake and put it out in the street.

Moderator: So what I'm saying the leaves, occasionally they may not be picked up when they said they would. But you're saying that they're not – the timing of the leaf collection could be off.

- The frequency of leaf – I mean if you have two months between each pick up or a month and a half, and every week when all the leaves come down, everyone puts them right out on the street. You have a month and a half where you have both sides of the street, a third of the street taken up because they're not putting it on the curb. They're putting it out on the street, and then it ends up sitting and cars drive through and it blows around and then you end up having...

Moderator: So Brian, would you like to see more frequent collection then?

- That would – I mean one remedy would be more frequent collection. One remedy would be don't put them on the street.
- Yeah, I mean you don't put garbage out a week ahead.
- I think people would be more willing to keep them on their grass area if they knew they were going to be picked up in the next week or whatever. A lot of people end up putting them out on the street just because they know they're going to be sitting there for an awful long time. But you're right, it ends up becoming a real road hazard.
- If you just over seeded your grass, you're going to kill it all off with a month worth of leaves on there.

Moderator: Okay, but maybe once in a while, the streets are not as clean as they should be. But overall, the customer service is good and you can find the dates.

- Mm hmm.
- Yep.

Moderator: So what advice would you give the Town to improve leaf collection? And I've picked up a few of these, and that would be make sure that the timing is a little bit better occasionally. You also mentioned keep the streets cleaner. Make sure they get all the debris. And then you also said possibly more frequent pickup an option, and then you said make sure the homeowners...

- I think put some onus on the homeowner associations to pay more attention to when they can put those leaves out there or if it's not homeowners, then I don't know. Find out whoever's doing maintenance work.
- I mean if there's a city ordinance for it, then you don't have to worry about the homeowners. You can just do that. That's always enforced.
- But I think making the homeowners more responsible goes a long way. There are ample notifications that are sent out in BUD about the leaf collection.
- Do we know there isn't an ordinance that says don't put your leaves out early? I don't actually know if there is or not. They don't enforce it. I don't know if there is. I mean there might be one; they just don't enforce.
- Knowing Cary, there probably is.
- Well, I'm saying, same as grass, you can't have your grass over certain inches by Cary ordinance. They don't enforce it that much for some, but I mean it may be the same thing. There may be an ordinance. They just need to enforce it.
- The ordinance is you're not supposed to put it in the street.
- Right, they certainly don't enforce that because everybody puts it in the street.
- Well, part – we've tried to be very – I was interrupting you. We've put ours more up on the grass, and then they don't pick everything up. And so if you get it out more on the street, then you're more likely to have them actually pick it up because the guys who are raking it up, they're driving through the street and they're not getting it all the way.
- If it's on the grass, many times they leave it on the grass.
- They don't do a very good job.
- It's sort of a mismatch.

- I've tried this both ways, right. I used to have kind of a mulched area right near the street, and I would pile my leaves there and then the week of the collection, I'd move them out. So then I'd move them out the week of and they skip the week and come the week later, so it sits for two weeks. I had that happen. Then they came early and I had the big pile, and they came through and they didn't touch it. So I had to wait and it's depending on the yard that you have, it's not practical to put them in those bags, and then if you have to put the bags out...
- What if we just cut down all the trees?
- I love the leaf collection service.
- 50, 60 bags worth.
- By us, they've done a good job. I guess I'm contrary to everybody else. They've done a good job. I knew when they were coming. I put my leaves out there. They've done a good job of picking them up. The biggest problem we've had in our neighborhood is people would put their leaves out way in advance, and then park cars on top of them so that when they would come around to try and clean them up, they weren't accessible by the cleanup crews. And as a result, that would leave a mess in the neighborhood, but our neighborhood, we've been very blessed in that it's worked well.

Moderator: Very good. Let's move to the bottom. One of the questions on the survey asked you how much you'd be willing to pay each year in property taxes to help you afford these new projects. Remember that? Widening new roads, building new parks and greenways, extending the sidewalks, adding new fire stations and revitalizing downtown. Remember that question? We asked what sort of cents would you put in? Since the survey was conducted, Town Council actually voted to hold a bond referendum in November so that the citizens can vote for or against these types of projects and the associated property tax that would be incurred? If you vote yes, then the projects will move forward, and there will be, of course, an increase in taxes. If you vote no, the projects will not move forward, and of course, you would not have the associated tax increase. Okay, I think you're actually going to be voting on each on project, each area separately. Now the Town can't advocate one way or the other to vote for or against the particular bond, but it does have a responsibility to educate the citizens about the issue so that you will be informed when you vote in November. With that in mind, we want some information, only on the communication of the bond referendum. How should the Town reach out to its citizens? In other words, what communication tools should they use? Direct mail, television, web, Facebook? What do you think? What's the best way to reach you guys with information on it?

- For me, I'd like direct mail.
- Yeah.

Moderator: Okay, how about the rest of you?

- I think leveraging the Town events. I mean it's nice that we have the – you mention safety. Well, it's really nice when you go to Spring Daze or Lazy Daze and see they have the police and the fire booths, and you can talk to the people and they try to show a presence and what they're doing, so maybe you can have information at some of those that people go out to.

Moderator: At events, have information. What else?

- That email that I get from Cary is very informative, whether it be roads closing.
- I would agree.
- Whatever the activity. I read that one because it usually does have some bearing on what I'm doing.
- And if that points to then a website or where you can find more information.
- Say do you want your taxes to go up as the first line. That'll get them.
- And I wouldn't say – don't spend extra money on a separate mailing. Just put it in the utility bill.
- Or the email. Maybe the key is to go back a minute and say, how do we get people more signed – more people signed up for that email.
- I don't want to see separate mailings.
- If you stick it on the actual main part of the website that's obvious to see, especially if you have information about both sides and what it would do and what it would mean.
- That means you don't have to know to go look.
- If it's on the main page, I mean if you know you have to go under department of revenue, blah, blah, blah.
- But they don't even know that they'd even go because they don't know about the bond, so if it comes out in the email.
- Yeah.
- And then points you there.
- If you put more – yeah, if you put more information on the website about it, like if you put a little blurb because you're not going to put the whole money page flyer and all different things. Then have a good link and have something that's clear where it should go instead of hiding it.
- You're talking about asking for hundreds of millions of dollars. I say you advertise it every media channel you can because I have neighbors who do not ever look at a computer. Their nationality, they don't work that arena. You might get them on mail or you might get some people just newspaper. Hundreds of millions of dollars, some mailings if that's all we have to do.
- Does the Cary newspaper go to everyone free? No.

- No, not anymore.
- Wednesdays, isn't it?
- I think Cary News...
- I get it. It's always delivered.
- I was getting it free for many years, and then they said we're going to subscription, and I don't get it anymore.
- Well, I didn't subscribe.
- Yeah, I don't subscribe.
- Yeah, I used to get it free, and I don't get it free anymore. I don't know what happened.

Moderator: Is there anything they shouldn't use? Anything that you would not use?

- Telephone.
- No telephone.
- Yes, do not robo-call.

Moderator: What was that one?

- Do not robo-call.
- Don't call me.

Moderator: Okay.

- Even though that's how they got this survey.
- Exactly.
- Wake County schools call us enough.
- We get two or three times at least from things going on.
- Town meetings.

Moderator: Don't?

- No, I'm saying do. For the opportunity to actually meet with Town officials.

Moderator: You're talking about Town meetings as a group here in this or meetings in the neighborhoods? Which one?

- Probably coming here would make sense.
- What is your attendance here for Town meetings? I've never been to one.
- I don't know.
- You can watch them on TV.
- But I always go to Spring Daze and Lazy Daze, so if it was there, I would learn about it.
- Yeah, the Town has that channel on TV.

Moderator: Oh, the channel – 11 or something?

- Yeah, 11, I think. You can watch the Town Hall meetings.

Moderator: That's a good source you think too?

- I don't know.
- I don't know about that.
- TV's tricky though because I mean we don't watch commercials anymore. We don't do anything...
- Exactly, everybody's going to Netflix.
- We don't ever watch...

Moderator: They really don't have any sources not to use except maybe robo-call, and the rest of them, you just use broad base of media you think? Let me ask you another one there. What information would be most important? Like project timing, project information, tax information. What do you think is the key thing to communicate?

- What value is it and how much it costs.
- Well, you want value too. I don't want just cost. You got to show what are you getting for your cost as opposed to just saying oh, we're going to build some sidewalks, here's a cost. I mean you want to know where are they and detailed.

Moderator: So you want detail on every project.

- If you show value and no cost or you just show cost and no value, it's going to very clearly dictate which side is going to...

Moderator: Show your value, what you're getting for it, cost.

- But I think it depends on the project too. I mean if they say it's an expansion of the water treatment plant, well...
- What does that mean?
- Well, then you would explain the value.
- Yeah, but I mean we know we got to have that.
- How it's going to impact.
- So there's not a whole lot of detail. I agree with you only though if it's a big improvement.
- From what he was describing, at least for roads, if it's oh, we're only going to do a few small roads out on the outskirts. I mean if it's paving a few of the dirt ones, you want to see what is it actually?
- Is it right downtown?
- Well, what is the justification for the proposals? I mean I'm not asking that for you to give me the answer right now.

Moderator: Do you want more information? I can give it to you.

- They talked about – as I recall in the survey, they said okay, if you're – because when we asked your tax value or your tax bill will go up by this much or whatever the average, that was very helpful.

Moderator: We wanted to ask the questions beforehand to get – I think we've already talked about it. You want to read a little bit about it. It's just a short little page, and then you'll have a little bit more information on it. Let me go ahead and just give this to you and then you can look at it and then you'll have more detail. Pass this out to you. Pass them down and read it real quickly. That way you'll know what we're talking about. The things we're talking about, it wasn't as much money as you would think. It's broken into different areas, so it'll give you a little more detail.

- I appreciate the fact that it's broken down like that.
- Yeah.
- Yeah, I mean looking at the parks side, if you look at – okay, they have five planned parks, these greenways. Here's where they all want to put them. It's very clear so at least you know okay, is it worth this much money? Where we're just going to do various road fixes. Well, are they needed is it just – we can always repave. There's always some reason. So it's good to look at that, as much information as you can. And at least for parks, I was always happy. At least I have a plan. It was clear they have some kind of plan they're looking at.

Moderator: The key is to tell you exactly what it's going to be used for.

- Yeah.

Moderator: So you'll know if you benefit and the value.

- And as we heard before, the bridge with the art on it and how much was that cost? I mean if you know, okay, this is just going to be filling major potholes that are a big problem and that's worth this much versus oh, we're going to take an early approach at widening a road that maybe doesn't need it for a couple years. Then there's something to understand.
- There's information also that is good to know and how many people that is going to benefit, so what Art said, if we're going to expand the water treatment, okay, but expand by how much? Is this to accommodate 10,000 more people, 100,000 more people, 1,000 more people? And then I can gauge what the money is.

Moderator: Okay, just looking at that, anything you see in there would be really important to communicate?

- I would also like to see – and I know this can – I can research this on my own, but I would like to see what the surrounding cities and towns are paying.
- To benchmark it.
- To get a sense on per \$100 evaluation.
- There's something that's going on though. They say that has not had a tax increase since 1989, but what they did is doubled our value. On my house, it went up 40 percent so that in fact, it is a tax increase.
- That is. And in fact...and it's higher now than what it's worth.
- Yeah.
- And one other thing is that reevaluation was done right before the prices gone down. So we are paying more, actually more taxes than we should.

Moderator: Just to try to talk one at a time, so anything in there you think is important.

- So we went through the transportation. The transportation ones are usually the ones that don't give you much information for what you're getting for that cost and since it's more than three times than the cost of any other item on there, that would be good to actually clarify what because maybe if it's turning all the traffic lights to flashing at night, people are like hey, I'd actually like that so I don't have to stop at 10:00 at night for a red light. Maybe that's worth it.
- Maybe even just some examples.

- Yeah, some examples.

Moderator: Okay.

- Maybe there is a detailed plan, but I don't know where that one is.

Moderator: Okay.

- Over near me, there's a section, Reedy Creek, there are two schools that were built in the last eight years that are serviced by that road and the entire time that I've lived in Cary, they've never paved that road. And you have to drive around that thing because of the...
- That's a good point because if, for example, the transportation bond package for, let's say, road widening includes the Cary Parkway extension, then maybe no one really cares because I mean it's been a long time. So more details about that.
- In the – if all bond initiatives, the second to last line, so it says that it increases two cents per hundred evaluation in 2013 and then again in 2015. But it doesn't say when that ends. Is this a one year thing? No, it's forever.
- Taxes don't end.
- It just goes up.
- It keeps going.

Moderator: When does the increase end?

- I think...
- Well, here's my understanding of a bond is that it's for a specific project, so there's a specific cost, so if you say I'm going to charge you two cents more for the next 100 years, that's a pretty darn costly project.
- What's the term of the bond?
- If it's a bond, I want a term.
- Right.

Moderator: Okay, staying with this a couple minutes, do you agree or disagree with the things the Town is spending the taxpayers' dollars on? In other words, is the Town spending its money wisely and appropriately?

- I guess my point would be I don't really know what it is. I mean I can see the subject matter, but I don't know what a park...

Moderator: In general. Without taking this into account because I think they're giving the citizens a chance to make their own decisions on what infrastructure items, but what about now? Just in general, knowing the Town, you've lived here.

- It's hard to know with great certainty unless you come to the meetings, right? But for example, I'll say here's one good one for me. We put up these electronic billboards some time ago, four of them somewhere. It was \$11 to \$12 million for that. I don't think I've seen the one I drive by, anything on it ever. We've got \$15.9 million we're going to put here for parks, upgrades in a bond. There was no bond for the \$12 million spent on electronic billboards, so I would say I'd question whether the money's being spent properly.

Moderator: That was my next question. I'll put that down.

- I question the need for the bond to spend it on parks and a new fire station, which I think should come out of the taxes that we already pay.

Moderator: Okay, anything you think right now, how would you consider them spending money – wisely, appropriately or not?

- I think they're doing it wisely, based on the information that I believe that we are operating with a budget surplus and if they were not doing it wisely, they would be trying to spend every penny, plus more. So that instills faith in me that they're doing.
- And whatever I hear on the news about budget stuff, in Durham or Raleigh or the other cities that they seem to have way more problems that sneak up on them where Cary tends to be very proactive.

Moderator: Do you agree with that? They're doing a pretty good job. Outside of the sign.

- There's probably specifics like that.

Moderator: Anything else they probably shouldn't have spent money on?

- I already said I love the greenways, but I do not understand why there's a need to put stop signs on the greenways when you come to a street. It's like what, of course you're going to stop there. I just don't...
- It's probably legal.
- That's what I was going to say.
- To avoid a lawsuit, maybe.
- What I would like for them to do is actually put some signage where they're connecting parkways between roads so where you're actually on a sidewalk. We actually live in between two greenways and when people come up from a cul-de-sac at the end of one, and they look both directions, they have no idea where they're supposed to be going if they haven't been there before. Yeah, it'd be great to have them. They've got a stop sign there.

Put a little sign around it or something like that so there's signage on the greenways. I like the signage that was added recently, but yeah, I don't see the point of the stop signs.

Moderator: Okay, so really minimal stuff we've seen them spend money on that you don't think they should is what it sounds like, except the sign. Last area, communication, the Town's very interested in having citizens engage in the process. They want to create and implement and make good decisions for their programs or projects, policies and laws. They want these decisions to reflect the wants and needs and values of the community. In other words, they want the people that live here to be happy. One of the questions in the survey asked you to identify barriers to becoming involved. Remember that? The number one answer was I don't have time, but another answer that came up was I didn't know about it, okay. That remained relatively high, and the Town has some concerns about that. So what kinds of Town-related things have you looked for information about and not found it? Can you think of any? What you looked for, when it was, if there's anything that comes to mind.

- I was trying to find some information about building permits for sheds, things like that, and I had to do a fair amount of digging.
- Yeah, the website I've seen is organized by department, not by function. As a citizen, I don't care if it's in the department of buildings or the department of permits or the department of the police or whatever. If I want to look for ordinances around pets or ordinances around fences, I'd like to be able to just look at general ordinances and not know oh, this one's a building versus a land. This one's a – it needs to be structured more by function, not by department because we don't understand the arbitrary bureaucracy that they decided to group things in.

Moderator: Anything else you guys have looked for lately and not found?

- It's not that I haven't found it. It goes back to getting to it. Looking for notes from specific boards, trying to drive through the multi-layers to get to the notes. I think the search functions could be widened considerably and improve that.

Moderator: So it's not you can't find it. It's just not easy.

- It takes – I think they give up. If you have to find a permit, you're going to find it. But if you're just looking for some information, I mean the parks are generally okay, but I was looking for some budget stuff once and it wasn't clear because each department had its own sort of spending. You couldn't see a higher level view of some of the stuff, so it just seems like organization is tricky.

Moderator: Okay, and then are there any opportunities that you regret missing because you didn't know about it or couldn't find information on it? Can you think of anything?

- As far as participating in groups you mean?

Moderator: It could be participation in some sort of event or maybe some public hearing they were holding, anything like that?

- Or just knowing about some activity or something.

- Yeah, anything.
- I think the – I mentioned this, I think the classes and stuff that they offer in Cary, I mean it took us three years of living here to even know that they offered anything, and when we lived in Ohio, they had big community centers and it was obvious that these classes, these activities and we know some of the developments do. We know some of the private places do. And yet, we found out afterwards, oh, the Town of Cary has all this stuff and you can get these – but it took years to find that and it wasn't as well advertised.
- It didn't come home with your children from school.
- They weren't in school yet.
- Oh, they weren't in school. So we were getting some that way, but for adult activities for Heidi and I do to, there's some art events. There's some other things. There's stuff at Bond Park that we'd either find only going to the park and seeing a flyer stuck up on it or digging through the website.

Moderator: Okay, so make these more prominent.

- Yeah, I mean – yeah.

Moderator: And where would you make this more prominent?

- On those idle signs.
- That's where you can do the bonds.
- The two ways we've seen it...
- You could use those signs to advertise the bonds.

Moderator: We now have a use.

- The only two places we found original were at the parks where there's flyers and at the community events, like maybe Spring Daze and Lazy Daze. We found some. Oh, they had people there talking about some of the activities, but you hear about little pockets of them but you never got to see oh, there's all this stuff.
- You hear about that in the BUD though.
- I never really realized how comprehensive it was. We actually felt for three or four years, oh, they don't offer anything like they do up in Ohio where they have these huge community things. Then you find out no, they do. They just don't really talk about them the same way.
- Well, the other thing I found out, I was really flabbergasted that the weekend events which comes in the email that we get didn't include some of the events that I would have thought certainly would have been included in that, in part because they're not official Town of Cary

events. And so that's one of the things – there's so much stuff that's going on, whether it's at Koka Booth or whatever, but they're not necessarily sponsored by the Town of Cary and so they can't get included in that, and so how do you bridge that?

- You read the Independent.
- There you go.
- My kids have participated through Apex Parks and Rec, and I found it interesting that the moment I visited the Town of Apex's community center to register them, I, of course, provided my email address, and I immediately started getting their cultural newsletter with their Town events. And I don't know if I necessarily agree with automatically being subscribed to something.
- You should opt in.
- Yeah, some people would say I'd rather have an opt in and there's always an opt out. But it's just something that automatically started popping up for me and I have the option to opt out if I want to. But otherwise, I wouldn't have received that information.
- We live just north to the border now when we moved across Cary and we know more about some of the stuff that Morrisville offers for community than we did about Cary when we first moved to that spot.

Moderator: Let me ask one other thing. When you think about things, either from the Town or elsewhere, that have gotten your attention, what were they? More importantly, how did they get your attention? What did they say to get your attention? So it doesn't have to be Cary stuff. We did get your attention and how'd they do it? You mentioned emails.

- One of the biggest ones for us was the US 1 widening project. I followed that pretty closely because we live so close to that and I really appreciated having the regular updates. Okay, here's what's going to be going on in the next month or so, so you can kind of follow the progress of where they were going and they have the...

Moderator: Were they emails?

- It came via email and I would go out and look at the PDFs or whatever that was on the website from those and that was actually state department of transportation, but Cary was pushing those out.

Moderator: So the widening, that was a good way to do it. What else? Anything else?

- I guess I have a question about whether Cary wants to be proactive or reactive because we're obviously here because we care and we are going out looking for information and we're interested. Are they trying to get some of the people in your neighborhood who don't have the computers and who aren't maybe as involved or what is their objective in this? Because you have to use different forms. Maybe it's posted in certain churches or schools.

- I think Cary's very spread out. I mean where we lived in Ohio in Cuyahoga Falls, it was another suburb that had very primarily residents, but it had a strong community center. It had – they have a downtown just like ours that really sort of isn't that active anymore, but they took – every week, they'd have a cultural festival come in, whether they sponsor it or someone else did. They'd encourage them. They'd bring people down and they had enough of the citizens coming down that they could then broadcast some of their own stuff, so you tended to know what was going on because there was a few centers where things would happen and I think we just sort of spread around.
- That's a good point.
- There isn't – besides a few of art festivals that draw just as many people from across the state as locally, that bring a lot of people.
- A lot of people stay home for those.
- Yeah, because it's too crowded.
- Well, there's a Wednesday night concert now that goes on at Waverly Center. So maybe a presence there.
- The people I know in Raleigh, now that they have some of the cultural festivals coming downtown in Raleigh, there's lots of people that end up going downtown now or event outside of Raleigh, but they get a few people to come down so maybe some way that – a better way to engage more of a community as opposed to just...

Moderator: So what I'm hearing is perhaps some cultural events, a few more cultural events that would try to get more people involved, and at that point, use that as a place.

- And maybe not the mega events of hundreds of thousands of people downtown. I've seen more of those in the past few years, certainly than when we were first here in terms of some of the Hindu Festival, and there's a major Indian Festival that takes place.

Moderator: So get people more engaged, those that previously weren't engaged.

- Or if there is a function going on, then maybe have a presence there to take advantage of it.
- And even if Cary's not sponsoring it, if they can have some way to still get it out to citizens that this is happening without us officially endorsing it necessarily.
- And they might throw some benefits to whoever's doing the organizing.

Moderator: My last question was is there any other ideas you had to improve knowledge of opportunities the Town has? You mentioned some of these right there. Anything else?

- You mentioned Facebook. That's a good way to disseminate information.

- I'm not quite sure about the way this works, but recently I've been subscribing to an email that's called ParkGeek.com and the organizer of this email and I don't know who it is and who they're associated with or affiliated with, basically does the job of scanning the community and pulling together all of the activities that maybe of interest to anybody who likes the outdoors and outdoor activities. Well, maybe something similar could be done with the Town of Cary where there could be a particular organizer of a website or an email distribution newsletter that would do that compiling.
- Yeah, because it's very focused, either by department, by location. Bond Park does lots of stuff. Then you don't necessarily know Crowder Park does some stuff. I guess it's a county park but still, there's lots of disjointed things.
- It may even be a business opportunity for somebody. Some of these events that aren't sponsored by the Town of Cary might be willing to pay a small subscription to get their information on one site.

Moderator: Whether they sponsor it or not.

- Right, right.

Moderator: Well, I think we ran a little bit over, and I thank all of you for coming. Is there anything else you want to tell the Town government or share with us before we leave, we adjourn? Remember you can always write stuff down on the pads too, and I'll turn it in.

- This is really, really small, but one of the things – this is getting back to the communications and the website and we talked a little bit about search engines and things like that, optimization. I think one of the things that frustrates me when they say go to the Town of Cary website and then you have to go find what it is that you're looking for as opposed to provide us with a go link or a shortened link that actually gives us – we have those at the university, so the URL maybe incredibly linked, but you can publish a very short URL that gets you right to where you're actually trying to go.
- So you don't have to go digging around.
- A barcode, QR code.
- We moved from Cary to another part of Cary, and we never really considered leaving Cary so we're generally very happy, and we hope that it continues to be a nice place.

Moderator: Good, well, your response has been very positive. I mean overall. Actually these are things, what we'll do is compile all these together, combine them with the first focus group and then get all your opinions and stuff, and there'll be a transcription of everything that you've said too. So I do appreciate all of you coming. We really do and I'm sure the Town is very grateful too.