

**Town of Cary**  
**2002 Biennial Survey Focus Group Report**  
**March 9, 2002**

**Methodology**

In January 2002, the Cary Biennial Citizen Survey was conducted examining numerous issues relating to the overall functioning and operation of the Town. The results of this survey were followed-up by two focus groups that examined specific issues to gather more detailed information conducted by BKL Research & Consulting. Respondents to the citizen survey were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group session (49% were positive) and this was the pool that the participants were selected. The composition of the groups was controlled in respect to two factors, age and gender. Participants were selected so that all age groups were included and the groups were balanced with respect to gender. None lived in apartments. A total of 10 participants were in the first session and 7 in the second session. Appendix A has the roster of participants for both sessions and Appendix B has the seating charts. The participants were paid \$50 for their involvement. The sessions were held on March 9 at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in Cary. Both sessions lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes. 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. Due to time constraints not all questions could be asked of both groups. Appendix D and E have the transcribed text of both focus groups.

**Focus Group Results**

- 1a. *When you were asked to evaluate how well Cary maintains streets, what came to mind? Was it things like potholes, pavement cuts, or how new the pavement is, pavement marking, construction or was it dirt, mud, trash, etc.?***

Session 1

Most of the participants indicated they first thought of potholes. Several said street repairs and the need for resurfacing came to mind. Only one participant thought of trash and indicated it had increased in the past few years, especially on 40 and 440. A couple of participants indicated leaves in the road are a problem for them. It seems the Town's pickup schedule begins too early in the year. Another participant said trash was really not a problem in light of the amount of construction. When asked the major areas where trash was a concern the participants mentioned 40, 440, 1, and 64. Most of the members viewed the main highways as the problem, not the neighborhoods (outside of leaves). Several of the participants did indicate that some of the roads in the older neighborhoods needed attention.

Session 2

Most of the participants agreed they thought of potholes first. One indicated problems with potholes on Norwell. One respondent from New York said he saw no problems with potholes compared to the New York area. Respondents diverged into other street issues such as the need for walking paths, bike paths, and more shoulder room.

**1b. *What about sight distance issues such as tall grass or trees that need pruning? Are those in the list of things that come to mind?***

Session 1

Most participants indicated they did not think of the sight issues in relation to how well Cary maintains its streets. However, one member did think of it in the Greenwood Forest area. The conversation then turned to problem areas for sight distance. The areas mentioned were Wren (at Post Office) and Preston. One participant said the Oakridge and Maynard widening presented sight distance problems due to increased speeds and traffic. This person was also concerned over the planting of trees in the sight distance horizon.

Session 2

The members of this focus group did not consider sight distance issues in relation to how well Cary maintains its street. One participant indicated there is a problem at Holts Lane and Abby at the bus stop. No other participant had problems with sight distance.

**1c. *Can you give me some suggestions – overall or specifically – on what we need to focus our efforts on to improve streets?***

Session 1

The responses to this question include cutting back bushes in older areas of Town for sight distance management. Others indicated that street lighting is poor on Kildaire Farms and in Oakwood Heights (blind curve). One participant said that he had a good experience with the Town installing a streetlight his neighborhood. Another member wanted to stress that not all residents want the nuisance of a streetlight in front of their home and the Town should ask permission before installation.

Session 2

Most of the participants agreed the Town is doing a very good job now with street maintenance. One did mention that some potholes have not been repaired for years. They liked the fact that utility cable is now being run underground in Town.

**2a. *When you were asked to rate how well the Town is managed and operated, what kinds of things were you thinking?***

Session 1

The participants mentioned growth, water, Town Council and Mayor, Police Department, trash pickup, and streetlights. The participants tended to center on poor strategic planning in the past in regards to schools, people, roads, and water. All agreed that the infrastructure did not support the growth.

## Session 2

One member believed that how the Town is managed and operated must be separated. Others tended to agree with this breakdown. This person indicated that management deals with the agenda and priorities set by Town Council. Operation seems to be more of a Town staff function. The key issues discussed were more management related (i.e., Town Council) in terms of growth and water.

### **2b. *Can you give us any specific projects or issues that come to mind? How can we improve upon this?***

#### Session 1

The participants indicated they liked the well-maintained landscape of Cary and that is a trademark of the Town, especially the greenways. They felt it attracts people to the area. Many believed the schools were not adequate but that programs were good for children at Parks & Recreation and the Art Center. One participant noted there were more services for seniors in terms of the bus service and senior centers. They also indicated more sidewalks are needed especially in older neighborhoods. They felt the lack of sidewalks presented a safety issue and they are needed for walking (not everyone has a greenway was mentioned). The members of the focus group agreed that communication was good and the ombudsman program was effective.

#### Session 2

This session mentioned briefly areas such as trash, roads, crime, and traffic (especially the Crossroads area) that need examination by the Town. One participant said they have little insight into how the Town is operated, only the results and would like to gain more insight. Another member indicated that a liaison with the community could improve communication.

### **2c. *Have you lived other places where things were done differently? Can you share with us how they compared to Cary.***

#### Session 1

There was little discussion concerning other areas and their Town management in relation to Cary. A couple of participants said they e-mailed Town Council members and they were satisfied with the response and the fact they listened.

#### Session 2

One participant noted that in Michigan the library was much better in terms of size and holdings. Others agreed that it was a problem but understood this is a county not Town issue. Most agreed it could impact new residents moving in. Strategic planning was also mentioned as a problem area. One participant felt Cary was more of a suburb and developed with no sense of community. Poor strategic planning was to blame for this by a couple of participants. They felt that the area was too spread out and residents had to drive to everything. This

destroyed a sense of community. Several participants agreed that school redistricting was a concern. One member wanted the group to realize that some residents live in Cary because they want to live in just a suburb. The participants also recognized that Cary is doing things to enhance the sense of community by mixed-use development and rail service. One member saw the “love of the automobile” as the major problem in building a sense of community.

**3a. *How well the Town does serving you is directly tied to the people we have working in Town government. That is why we asked questions in the survey about how well the staff is doing. How many of you here today have had contact with a Town staff member in the last two years, not counting today and how was the experience?***

Session 1

Seven participants had contact with a Town employee. Overall the contacts were very positive. The experiences included:

- A positive experience with building a garage with the permits and approvals granted quickly.
- A street complaint and the Town came by and responded.
- A fire in the kitchen and the Fire Department was quick to respond and very nice. They even remembered having been there before. The participant indicated the Fire Department was concerned and did a walk-through to spot other problems.
- Contact with building inspectors that were competent and professional.
- Good experience with street lighting.
- Police Department responded quickly to an animal control issue.
- A rezoning issue discussed with Town and they showed concern.
- Installing a fence and the Town came in a couple of hours and assisted with the placement of the fence.
- A rezoning issue where the participant dealt with Town Council and Fire Department. Several Council members came by to see the problem and returned phone calls. The participant indicated they did not take sides. It was a favorable experience.

Session 2

Five of the participants had contact with a Town employee. The experiences included:

- Participation in the Book Festival in Park & Recreation was positive although it did not go through.
- Interaction with the Town concerning the widening of the road (Maynard). This participant indicated this was the first time the Town attempted such a project with its own funding and engineers. He thought the Town learned much from the process and may have pushed too far and should have settled with the residents (lawsuit?).
- The Police Department was nice on an animal control issue. Participant was concerned that Animal Control did not operate on Sundays.
- A loose dog in neighborhood that was finally caught by Animal Control. The Department was also very helpful.
- The Fire Department was very helpful, fast and pleasant with a smoke detector issue.
- One participant had multiple contacts with Water, Parks & Recreation, Police, and Animal Control departments and all encounters were satisfactory and professional.

**3b. *On what topics or in what areas would you suggest that our staff become more knowledgeable in terms of being able to meet citizen's needs?***

Session 1

Several participants indicated the schedule for the pick up of leaves is poor. The Town picks them up too early in the season and then does not return for an extended period. This results in leaves on the street and a fire hazard. One participant was concerned about the restricted hours (once a week) in the recycling center for deliveries. This will result in trash on the curbside. Another member believed the Town could do better on the “little things.” The Town does a good job on the “big things”, but poor at the “little things”. This includes answering questions when a resident calls, especially in light of the high taxes. One participant thought that speeding needed to be stopped especially on Crest Road.

Session 2

Only one participant indicated an area for increased knowledge. This involved a sewer backup where city employees were sent to help did not know where the drain was located. The participant believed that the records should have been accessible to the employees working on the problem.

**3c. *Can you think of any topics or issues for which it would be good if Town staff had greater ability to resolve problems?***

Session 1

The issue of the Town being good at the “big things” but not at resolving smaller issues was again mentioned. One participant thought the Town should follow-up more. Additionally, the leaf pickup issue was mentioned again. One participant indicated the Town should not put people off if they do not know the answer, but tell who would be able to help.

Session 2

One participant believed a 311 (non-emergency service) would be effective. Other participants thought this is for large cities and too expensive. They indicated the Town has a 24-hour phone service line. Another participant thought more information on the gray water project would be useful to residents planning to hook up to it. One person stated they had trouble determining what department to call and that a liaison could help. The others agreed with this.

**4a. *Let's move on to talk about some other concerns citizens raised in the survey. Let's start with growth in Cary. What do you think Cary's growth rate is now?***

Session 1

The participants were familiar with the Town's decision to limit the growth rate and the corresponding 2-3% goal. They agreed 3% is a good rate. They like that Town Council slowed the growth down in Town.

Session 2

Most participants were unsure of this percentage. One estimated it to be 5% or so. Another participant indicated that the growth rate is impacted by the number of people. So that even a low rate can result in thousands of new residents when the population base is higher.

**4b. *What would be a good growth rate for Cary, percentage wise? What makes that a good growth rate?***

Session 1

Several participants mentioned 2-3% to keep the small town atmosphere. They all agreed that the infrastructure has to keep up with the growth. One participant indicated there was too much commercial growth. All agreed that the number of shopping centers and strip malls are excessive. One person believed homes were needed not shops and apartments. Another participant indicated that growth is fine, especially for the younger residents, it is the infrastructure that must keep up.

Session 2

The participants agreed that smart growth is desired. It was not the growth rate that was important, but the quality of life and living standards that were the key issues as related to the infrastructure and growth.

**4c. *What about rapid growth bothers you?***

Session 1

The participant mentioned cutting trees down, schools, streets, water, traffic, and affordable housing (for Police, Firemen, and teachers who work in Cary). All felt the infrastructure items were lagging behind. One participant felt that growing up in Cary was like growing up in a bubble with no diversity and everyone being similar in terms of income and education. Others indicated that people can live in other areas of Raleigh if they want diversity. He noted we are like-minded and this adds to the culture and attractiveness of Cary.

Session 2

Not discussed due to time constraints and excessive time spend on other issues in this section.

**4d. *What do you think the Town should be doing to better manage growth? What would be the ideal growth situation in Cary?***

Session 1

Most agreed that letting the infrastructure catch up with growth is most appropriate. One participant noted the problem of schools with trailers and poor facilities. Another person indicated Cary does not want to create an elitist perception by keeping others out to keep it to ourselves. Restricting shopping center developments was desired.

Session 2

They generally agreed that standards must be set on quality of life issues such as greenspace, taxes, greenways, corporate revenue versus residential, etc. One participant indicated that growth must accommodate all income sectors. Lower income housing is needed for service and retail people who work in Town. Another participant said that teachers and workers need to have something vested in the community when they work here. A member noted that quality and life standards are still tied to numbers and percentages in the long run. There was debate over whether the Town should grow or not. Several participants indicated that Cary had not been building the infrastructure to keep up with growth in the past and now needs to plan better for the future.

**4e. *How many of you know the Town has a comprehensive growth management plan? Who can tell me some of the things that Cary is doing to manage growth?***

Session 1

Virtually all agreed they knew Cary had a comprehensive growth management plan. The participants mentioned contracts with builders providing for schools with development and other public facilities. The participants could not name all the areas of growth management that Cary is involved, but they were familiar with these aspects (ordinances on roads/schools, widening roads, working with other localities, etc.) when they were listed for them.

Session 2

Again, virtually all agreed they knew Cary had a comprehensive growth management plan. The participants were not sure of all aspects of the plan, but were familiar with these aspects when they were listed for them. They commented they thought the plan had been in existence for 10 years or so and they agreed the Town was behind the curve on keeping up with growth. The Town should learn from its past mistakes was one comment.

**5a. *How do you feel traffic is in and around Cary?***

Session 1

There was agreement that the traffic was very congested. One area in particular was the Crossroads region.

Session 2

The participants mentioned that traffic was crowded and fast. Frustrating was also a comment.

**5b. *Are most of the problem spots more inside Cary or outside Cary? Can you name some of them? Are they problem spots on weekdays, weekends, or specific times of the day?***

Session 1

The participants were not sure exactly where the Town limits are located. The areas mentioned mostly at morning and evening rush hour included:

- US 1 at Crossroads, Walnut, and Buck Jones
- Where 40 goes to one lane and 40 westbound
- US 1 back to Tryon past Walnut up to 440 at Raleigh
- Maynard and Chapel Hill
- Going to the airport is a problem – Aviation Parkway
- 54 is also considered bad

Session 2

The participants were also not sure exactly where the Town limits are located. The areas mentioned mostly at morning and evening rush hour included:

- Maynard (Crossroads to Kildaire Farms)
- Walnut
- Crossroads area
- Cary Town Blvd.
- Ellen and Maynard where there is a blind curve
- Tryon

**5c. What do you think the Town should be doing to improve traffic?**

Session 1

The suggestions include:

- Use of bus mass transit – although some members felt it would be a waste of money since few would actually use it. Some suggested more focused bus service to soccer fields for example.
- Rail service to link areas of Durham, Raleigh, and Cary.
- More sidewalks.

Session 2

The suggestions included:

- Better sequencing of lights, especially on Walnut.
- Crossroads needs continuous access from beltline with no stoplights. It is easier to enter Crossroads from Raleigh.
- Need pedestrian and bike paths.
- Town needs to be more pedestrian-friendly.
- The key is to improve the flow of traffic.
- Mass transit trains – but planning not good in getting people to the trains, especially in Town. South Harrison needs to be widened for this purpose.
- Increasing the courteousness of drivers.
- Better planning of roads and not having residential housing on main roads.

**6a. Now let's discuss water which is a concern that came up again this year in our survey. What concerns you about water – water supply or water quality? What specifically is the problem or concern?**

Session 1

Several of the focus group members indicated both were a concern initially; however, they generally agreed with discussion that water quality was not a problem. The discussion switched to water supply and whether there was enough for the future.

Session 2

Several of the participants mentioned both water quality and water supply were concerns. Most agreed water supply is the main concern. One participant noted the water pressure is too low and lower than any place he had lived before. Cost was also a concern for one member.

**6b. *How many of you knew that the Town has expanded the water plant and now has an adequate water supply? Does that make a difference in your concern?***

Session 1

Only one participant knew of the new water plant and that the water supply is adequate. The other members were not aware of the water plant and its capacity. Several participants were still skeptical of the water supply in the future even with the plant. One person noted that water is a limited resource and in 4 or 5 years it will be a problem again as we grow. All agreed they would like more information on the new water plant.

Session 2

None of the participants were familiar with the new water plant. Most did not perceive that the Town is ahead of the curve for anticipated growth and water supply.

**6c. *Since we have plenty of water, do you think we should keep regulating when people water outdoors (alternative day watering)? Why or why not?***

Session 1

The group was split on whether to keep the alternative day watering or eliminating it. Those who said to keep it cited conservation issues and the fact some people are wasteful in watering their lawns. They noted that you could always call the Town and get permission to water if needed. This group was concerned about water supply for the whole region, not just Cary. Those who said to eliminate it cited they did not like the Town to dictate how they water their lawns and it is a personal responsibility. They noted that those who use more water pay more under the progressive water bill structure.

Session 2

Most agreed the alternative watering should be continued for conservation reasons. One participant asked why not let people water everyday and the response from other member related the downstream consequences of fertilizer and water table depletion. One participant was concerned about the amount of parking lots in the area that contributes to flooding.

7. *I have an important question for each one of you, what would improve your quality of life in Cary?*

Session 1

The following are the suggestions from each participant:

- Happy with Cary and wants to maintain what we have.
- Content with Cary. Strategic planning is the issue. Keep growth slow so the infrastructure can catch up. More sidewalks would be desirable (Two Creeks area).
- Strategic planning. Downtown area needs improvement.
- Lower taxes. The Town can't have everything it wants like housing diversity without increasing taxes. People vote with feet and pocketbooks on what will stay in Cary.
- Happy with Cary, growth is the big issue and preserving what we have.
- Appearance of Cary, especially the downtown. Add greenways.
- Downtown needs attention. Need to bring people to downtown for shopping. The commercial growth is too much, especially shopping centers. Need to keep trees.
- Enjoy living in Cary (others agreed with this statement). The service level is very good and better than other areas. The perception of the Town is good. Town Council has been good about listening and contacting people. Keep the quality of life the same.

Session 2

The following are the suggestions from each participant:

- More police are needed. Crime is increasing with population growth.
- Hands are tied by relationship with County on schools and library facilities. Adding a liaison with the County may help. It is important to take care of what we have.
- Stop redistricting and reassigning students.
- Give more of a sense of community in Town.
- There is nothing in downtown to walk to and do. Need to improve it. Possibly subsidize entertainment (coffee shop, jazz bar) in the downtown area with incentives like tax breaks or eliminating obstacles in permits, zoning, appearance ordinance for signs.
- Add more sidewalks.
- The number of cul-de-sacs makes it hard to get around. This hurts biking.
- More greenways and pedestrian access.
- Planning has been poor like the lighting at Weston Point on the residential housing around it.

**8a. *From the survey we have an idea how frequently Cary residents might use mass transit, but for the sake of our discussion today, can we assume that everyone here might use it at least sometime during the year. What we would like to know is where you might take the bus to or under what circumstance you might use it. How many of you might ride the bus to work?***

Session 1

Five of the ten participants.

Session 2

None of the participants.

**8b. *How many would put family members on the bus to go to school?***

Session 1

Four of the ten participants.

Session 2

Only one participant.

**8c. *How about going to the airport?***

Session 1

All participants would use this service.

Session 2

All participants would use this service.

**8d. *How about going to special events such as ballgames or concerts or festivals?***

Session 1

All participants would use this service.

Session 2

All participants would use this service.

**8e. *How about shopping?***

Session 1

Two of the ten participants.

Session 2

None of the participants would use this service.

**8f. *Where or why else might you use the bus?***

Session 1

A couple of participants indicated the buses would be good to go to key points around Cary such as soccer fields from a central location. This would help parents.

Session 2

One participant thought it would be a good way to reach the trains.

**8g. *What features or services might the Town consider using if we want to increase ridership?***

Session 1

All participants agreed that a security person on each bus would be desirable. The participants vetoed food on the bus due to the trash left behind and discarded food, although some liked the idea of coffee in a closed container. One participant indicated the senior buses that functioned by appointment was a good service to offer to all. Bike racks were also mentioned.

Session 2

The respondents with children indicated children's car seats would be a nice feature to have on the bus. Another member said that storage for shopping items would be desirable. All agreed that food and drink on the bus was not a good idea. When asked if having a security person on the bus was desirable, they all agreed it would be a good service.

**8h. *Now with all that said, how many of you have ever used the regional bus system TTA (Triangle Transit Authority) or Cary's new bus system C-Tran?***

Session 1

None. Several participants indicated they could not figure out the schedules and the stops. They indicated that more information is needed.

## Session 2

Only one person had ridden on the bus system and indicated the experience was fine.

- 9a. *It is very important to the Town that Cary citizens feel they have access to all the information they could want on their government. We also know that there is a limited number of hours in each day, making it more difficult or less important for you to pay attention to government information. So let's prioritize. What kinds of information or on what topics do you think citizens want or need to know more? How informed do each of you feel on these?***

## Session 1

The participants indicated the Town should give information on any changes in procedures or new issues. Other information mentioned was strategic planning and garbage. There were complaints by several members concerning the radio ads saying the great job Cary is doing controlling growth. It was perceived as a waste of resources.

## Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints. The participants indicated that communication could be enhanced and they did not feel particularly aware.

- 9b. *Should we be more aggressive about getting the information to you or in letting you know how to get the information on your own – like promoting the website?***

## Session 1

The website was viewed as having good potential since most of Cary was online. A discussion ensued on the website and some potential concerns were expressed about the homepage. Several participants indicated the site was hard to navigate. The members all agreed that a search feature would help them to find things.

## Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints; however, a couple participants indicated the website may be one of the best methods.

- 9c. What is the best way for us to reach citizens with that sort of information – direct mail, the website, telephone calls, neighborhood meetings? What about for planning issues like site plans for new developments or rezoning, what are the best ways for us to get feedback from the public?**

Session 1

The participants complimented BUD. The members had concerns about new people to Town getting information. One person was concerned they were not notified of a road race in their community and would like a flyer or notice given. In concluding the discussion most agreed that multiple sources are most effective. The participants felt the Town could do better than just signs publicizing public hearings. They preferred direct contact on the affected people with direct mail.

Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints. All agreed that BUD, newspaper, and the website would be appropriate methods to reach them. They further agreed that telephone calls or mail would be effective methods to use on rezoning and planning issues directly affecting a homeowner.

- 10a. Let's move on to Parks & Recreation. The Town offers a wide variety of parks, recreation, and cultural resources, programs, and activities, but we are always interested in hearing about things we might not be offering that citizens are interested in. First, how many of you here today have participated in a parks, recreation or cultural program or activities with the Town of Cary? And what was that activity?**

Session 1

This area was not discussed due to time constraints.

Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints. Most of the participants had been involved in a Parks & Recreation program. All indicated the experience was good. Two participants mentioned activities with their children and indicated they were very good overall.

- 10b. Who can tell me some of the things that Cary is doing in long-range planning for parks, recreation, and cultural programs?**

Session 1

This area was not discussed due to time constraints.

## Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints. Most of the participants indicated they knew of the long-term plan, but did not know exact details. They were familiar with the particulars of the plan when they were listed for them.

### ***10c. What other types of programs do you think citizens might be interested in participating?***

#### Session 1

This area was not discussed due to time constraints.

#### Session 2

The discussion for this focus group was very brief due to time constraints. The most prominent suggestion was an aquatic center or municipal pool. One participant would like to see adult soccer clubs.

### ***11. In closing I would like to go around the room and ask if there is anything else about the Town of Cary government that you would like to share with us before we close today?***

#### Session 1

Several participants discussed that Cary needs to change its image of being a homogeneous, rich community with strict appearance ordinances. More diversity is needed. The Town's reputation is driven by new subdivisions and growth. One participant indicated they were upset over the advertising campaign of how growth had been slowed by Town Council. They felt money could be better spent.

#### Session 2

One participant liked the idea of surveys and focus groups because it forces residents to think of the issues. Encouraging people to vote was also mentioned and all agreed to this statement. The participants agreed we have a lot now that we did not have in the past. Growth was seen as too high in the past and schools were a continuing issue.

## Summary of the Results

### *Maintenance of Streets*

- The participants indicated potholes and pavement problems were the key issues regarding street maintenance. Trash was not a major consideration in relation to street maintenance. The participants viewed trash as mostly a problem on main thoroughfares like 40, 440, 1 and 54. The neighborhoods are generally well maintained in terms of trash.
- Sight distance issues were generally not a major concern to the participants. However, a few problem areas were mentioned including Wren (at Post Office), Preston, Oakridge/Maynard street widening, and Holts/Abby (bus stop area).

### *Operation and Management of Cary*

- The participants thought mostly of Town Council controlled issues when deciding how well Cary is managed and operated. The issues included growth, water, strategic planning, roads, and infrastructure growth. The participants tended to separate out management versus operational issues in making these decisions, focusing mainly on management.
- The focus group members like the well-maintained landscape of Cary with greenways and open space. One suggestion by the participants was to add more sidewalks for safety and to build a sense of community. The inadequacy of schools was also a concern. The traffic in and around the Crossroads area was stressed repeatedly by the participants as a major problem.
- Strategic planning and infrastructure problems associated with growth continue to be a concern. The size of the Town's library was a problem area, although the participants recognized this was County controlled. The focus group members would like to see more of a sense of community and they liked Cary's efforts to enhance this with mixed-use buildings. They felt improving the downtown would help the sense of community.

### *Town Staff*

- The participants all had very positive interactions with Town government staff. The focus group members thought the Town could be more knowledgeable on the leaf pick-up schedule. They indicated the pick-up was too early in the season. There was also concern over the recycling center only taking items one day a week. One respondent felt the staff needs to get better at the "little things" like answering questions or knowing whom the resident could contact to get the answer. One idea to correct this was a liaison for residents to contact.

### *Growth*

- The focus group members were relatively knowledgeable about the current growth rate and the fact that the Town had slowed the rate over the last few years. The key problem with growth was the fact the infrastructure was not keeping up.
- The participants did not state a particular ideal growth rate. They felt the desired rate should allow the infrastructure to keep pace. Interestingly, several members indicated growth should be limited by quality of life standards that should be set by the Town. These standards include greenspace, taxes, greenways, and corporate versus residential revenue, etc. As long as these standards are met, the actual growth rate is not a major issue.
- There was general agreement that shopping center growth was too excessive.
- The participants were familiar with Cary's Growth Management Plan though they could not name specific programs until prompted. They did note the recent agreements with builders who provided schools and public facilities for new developments.

### *Traffic*

- Traffic was viewed as congested in and around Cary. The respondents were not sure of the exact location of the Town limits and could not state if the problem areas are inside or outside of Cary. Areas that were considered trouble spots include 40W, US 1 at Crossroads, Walnut, Buck Jones, Maynard, Chapel Hill, Aviation Parkway, 54, Cary Town Blvd., and Tryon.
- Suggestions to improve traffic from the focus group members include better sequencing of traffic lights, continuous access to Crossroads (especially coming from Cary), mass transit, pedestrian/bike paths, and better planning of roads (especially eliminate housing on main roads).

### *Water Supply*

- The primary concern for the participants was for water supply as opposed to water quality. Only one participant demonstrated knowledge of the new water plant and its capacity. After the other participants were given information on the new plant, they still had concerns for the water supply in the future. They pointed out water has always been a problem due to growth in the past and will continue to be a concern in the near future. The Town could benefit by imparting more information on the new water plant and its ability to supply water in the future.
- Although a few of the participants wanted to end alternative day watering in light of the new water plant, most wanted it to continue. They indicated conservation and the downstream impact watering has on other communities as the major reasons.

### *Improving Quality of Life*

- Most of the participants were satisfied with the Town and the current service level. They desired to maintain the status quo. The appearance of Cary was a key aspect to maintain, especially the greenways and open space. Adding more sidewalks was also a suggestion.

- Strategic planning was mentioned several times as a concern.
- The downtown area was repeatedly cited as needing improvement. The participants wanted the downtown to attract people to walk and visit. An entertainment area was envisioned.
- The focus group members were pleased that Town Council was listening to residents and stressed they continue to be responsive.
- The Town and Wake County relationship was mentioned as a concern in light of schools and the library. One participant suggested a liaison with the County could help.

### *Mass Transit*

- The most desired reasons for use of a mass transit busing were going to the airport and attending special events/concerts/festivals. All of the participants indicated they would use the bus in these situations. However, there was limited demand for the bus in going to work, putting family members on the bus to go to school, or taking the bus to go shopping.
- Several focus group members believed that having the buses run from central locations to key points around Cary such as soccer fields would be desirable and help parents.
- The key feature suggested to increase ridership was having a security person on each bus. Other suggestions included children's car seats, storage for shopping items, and bike racks. The idea of food and drink on the buses was not desired due to trash.

### *Communication*

- The key areas the participants desired the Town to communicate were any changes in procedures or issues. The best communication methods mentioned were BUD, e-mail, Cary website, and the newspaper. Most agreed that multiple communication methods probably work best to reach everyone. There was concern that newcomers may find it hard to get information.
- The participants had concerns about the Town's website. Many felt it was hard to navigate and it needed a search feature.
- The focus group members indicated they would like direct mailings or flyers sent to homeowners directly affected by rezoning or planning issues.

### *Parks & Recreation*

- There was limited discussion of Parks & Recreation due to time constraints. Most of the participants had been involved in activities or programs sponsored by the department. They indicated these programs were a very good experience.
- The participants were familiar with the long-term plan for Parks & Recreation but not the specifics of the plan until prompted.
- The key suggestion for new activities centered on an aquatic center or municipal pool.