

# 9. ACT

*Moving from Vision to Reality*

## IN THIS CHAPTER:

Applying Plan Policies

Plan Monitoring

Amending the Plan

Updating the Plan

Summary of Recommended Policy Initiatives and Major Actions

# 9. ACT

The preceding eight chapters of this Cary Community Plan outline our community's vision and values, set policy direction, and recommend policy initiatives as well as specific actions for guiding growth and for helping our community thrive over the next 20 years. This ninth chapter (ACT) offers general guidance and recommendations for applying plan policies, for monitoring plan performance, and when necessary, amending the plan. This chapter also provides a summary table of the policy initiatives and actions found at the end of each of chapters 2 through 8, (or in the case of Chapter 6, at the end of each of that chapter's four Special Planning Area discussions).

## Applying Plan Policies

The comprehensive plan's policies provide guidance for making decisions related to private land development proposals, for shaping the appearance, economic vitality, and environmental quality of the community, for coordinating inter-jurisdictional planning efforts, and for planning and prioritizing service needs and capital improvements. The Future Growth Framework Map and the policies included in this plan should be used by Town Staff and Town Advisory Boards when making their recommendations, and by the Town Council when making decisions about land development, capital investments, and community programs.

One of the primary uses of the Town's comprehensive plan is for evaluating development proposals. Landowners and developers who wish to develop property often need to request a new zoning designation for their site. The Town's evaluation of the rezoning applications begins with the guidance provided in this comprehensive plan.

The former Cary Land Use Plan could be characterized as a map-based plan because its future land use map was used as the primary guidance document for evaluating rezoning requests. In contrast, the Cary Community Plan can be characterized as a policy-based plan, in that the Town's values and future aspirations are articulated in written policies that provide the primary guidance for evaluating rezoning applications. The Plan's Future Growth Framework Map works alongside the policies to depict the general long-term physical layout and general character of development envisioned for Cary. This shift from a map-based plan to a policy-based plan reflects the fact that there is a dwindling supply of large, undeveloped greenfield sites remaining in Cary's planning area; future development in Cary will increasingly be infill and redevelopment that require the flexibility that a policy-based plan offers for evaluating individual sites within the context of surrounding existing

development. When a rezoning application is received for a site, the site's geographic location within the Future Growth Framework, coupled with the pertinent guiding policies in the Cary Community Plan, will provide the basis for analyzing the proposal and making rational planning decisions.

## Plan Monitoring

To ensure that the Cary Community Plan is implemented as adopted, it will be important to establish a formal system of plan monitoring for two purposes: (1) monitoring the actual implementation of the plan to make sure that initiatives and actions are being carried out, and (2) monitoring the effectiveness of the plan over time to ensure the vision and policies set out in the plan are being realized over time.

### *Coordinating and Monitoring Implementation*

As soon as possible after the Plan is adopted, an Interdepartmental Comprehensive Plan Implementation Team composed of various staff with representative knowledge and/or expertise should be assembled to begin developing a prioritized action plan and implementation schedule that includes designated responsible parties. Once the action plan and implementation schedule are completed and adopted by Council, the team should plan to provide an implementation status report to the Cary Town Council at least annually. This will serve both to update the Council on the implementation of the plan, and also to trigger discussion on budget priorities for the coming fiscal year.

### *Monitoring Plan Effectiveness*

The Plan's effectiveness should be monitored to evaluate whether the policy initiatives being implemented are having the desired impact on the community. This can be accomplished by establishing and tracking a set of performance indicators.

A performance indicator is a measure of achievement over a selected time period. It is a measurement that can be used as a reference or as a standard for comparison. Potential performance measurements can be developed for each policy initiative or group of related policy initiatives. For example, for the policy initiative **Create a Business-Friendly Environment**, a performance indicator could be **Percentage of Business Owners Rating Cary as a Good Place to Do Business**.

It will be important to establish a baseline (actual or a



surrogate) for each performance indicator against which to measure progress over time. Baselines can be established by using professional accreditation standards, through the use of community surveys, etc.

The Comprehensive Plan Implementation team assembled to develop the prioritized action implementation plan and schedule should also develop a set of performance indicators by which to measure the Plan's effectiveness over time; then proceed as necessary to establish baseline measures and determine goals/targets. Measurements should be evaluated over time to determine whether plan policies and initiatives are having the desired effect. An analysis could be included as part of the annual implementation status report, making it a combined system of reporting to elected officials and the community.

## Amending the Plan

From time to time, it will be necessary to amend the Cary Community Plan to address conditions that could not have been anticipated during the planning process. The Town's Land Development Ordinance, at present, sets out the specific procedures for amending the plan, which currently includes two public hearings before the Town Council and Planning and Zoning Board, and concludes with a vote by the Town Council.

According to Cary's Land Development Ordinance, at present, proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan shall be evaluated based upon whether the amendment is necessary in order to address conditions including, but not limited to, the following:

- (1) A change in projections or assumptions from those on which the Comprehensive Plan is based;
- (2) Identification of new issues, needs, or opportunities that are not adequately addressed in the Comprehensive Plan;
- (3) A change in the policies, objectives, principles, or standards governing the physical development of the Town or any other geographic areas addressed by the Comprehensive Plan; or
- (4) Identification of errors or omissions in the Comprehensive Plan

One of the benefits of the Future Growth Framework in this Cary Community Plan is that it provides guidance about the general character of development and allows for a variety of uses in most categories. This will serve to provide a flexible land development framework that will support redevelopment efforts, while also providing clear direction regarding the vision for different areas of the Town. This flexible approach will likely result in a minimal number of comprehensive plan amendments, reducing time spent on making minor adjustments to the plan.

## Updating the Plan

This comprehensive plan provides a vision for Cary's growth and development over the next twenty years. Updates should be made when necessary to acknowledge planning objectives for new facilities. There should be a review and interim update to this Plan at least every five years, with the understanding that when the three recently-adopted, still-current plans that are incorporated by reference into this Cary Community Plan -- the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan; the Public Art Master Plan; and the Historic Preservation Master Plan -- are ready for an update, their respective updates will be physically integrated into this Plan. The Cary Community Plan as a whole should be comprehensively updated every 10 years.

## Summary of Recommended Policy Initiatives and Major Actions

The Cary Community Plan provides a vision for Cary's growth and development over the next twenty years. Through its policies -- both written and mapped -- it provides clear guidance as to the form, characteristics, and appearance that are desired for future development, and the type and quality of services the Town wishes to provide. However, the vision embodied by this Plan is dependent on the implementation of policy initiatives and specific actions listed at the end of each of the subject chapters (LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ENGAGE, MOVE, and SERVE) and at the end of each of the four Special Planning Area (SPA) discussions within the SHAPE chapter: Eastern Cary Gateway SPA, Downtown Cary SPA, Historic Carpenter SPA, and the Green Level SPA.

This Plan's policy initiatives and actions represent a good faith effort to reflect the input of Cary's citizens, Town staff, and Town Council, but they can be adjusted as time goes by and circumstances change. Implementation will take effort and commitment on the part of Town staff and its leaders. This Plan's recommended policy initiatives and major actions obviously can't be addressed all at once, and, as stated above, an interdepartmental Comprehensive Plan Implementation Team will be needed to prioritize them and assign target completion dates accordingly. Some immediate revisions to the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) will be essential for the Plan's initial implementation.

On the next several pages is a table containing a summary of this Plan's recommended policy initiatives and major actions, arranged by chapter. See the "How We Will Achieve Our Vision" section(s) in each chapter for additional important discussion on many of the initiatives and actions.

### *Implementation of the Policy Initiatives*

The actions listed in the following table are major ones. Implementation of many of the actions will require preparatory and supplementary steps, including but not limited to topical research, drafting of proposals, and public meetings and hearings before being recommended to Town Council for review and approval. Implementation of the policy initiatives and actions presented here is also dependent on the availability of staff and budgeted resources, and therefore should be reviewed on a regular basis for adjustment and re-prioritization as directed by Town Council.

It should be understood that recommended actions include exploration and evaluation of options, and discussion with and review by internal stakeholders.

# Cary Community Plan

## Policy Initiatives and Recommended Major Actions

### *LIVE: Foster Strong and Sustainable Neighborhoods*

#### **Policy Initiative: Implement a Strong Neighborhoods Initiative**

- Create a baseline housing inventory and neighborhoods assessment to develop a neighborhoods health report.
- Work with neighborhoods to explore development of a formal mechanism for communicating neighborhood interests and concerns to Town officials.
- Amend the LDO to include context-sensitive infill and redevelopment design standards.
- Expand the framework of what is now called Project Phoenix to include an interdepartmental task force that examines whether the Project Phoenix model could be expanded to include issues related to community development, code enforcement, and minimum housing.
- Expand the funding and scope of the Neighborhood Improvement Program.

#### **Policy Initiative: Expand Housing Choices**

- Create a Cary task force to collaborate with employers and other stakeholders on the development of workforce housing.
- Tie general fund support of community investment and housing to a fixed formula based on the age of the housing stock, population growth and/or amount of CDBG received. Continue to operate as a revolving fund.
- Develop new zoning districts and /or development incentives to accommodate new housing options/trends such as co-housing arrangements, small apartment buildings, tiny houses, cottage homes, and accessory dwelling units.
- Initiate/participate in intergovernmental efforts to increase revenue support for funding affordable housing.
- Consider prioritizing existing publicly-owned surplus land for affordable housing developments; land-bank appropriate sites.

**WORK: Foster a Prosperous Economy and Fiscal Health, and Leverage the Town’s Regional Context**

**Policy Initiative: Foster a Resilient Economic Base and Diverse Workforce**

- Study and identify business sectors with the greatest promise for diversifying our economic base; focus recruitment efforts accordingly.
- Amend zoning and development ordinances as necessary to allow selected business and industrial parks to transform into employment mixed-use campuses.
- Implement the policy initiatives in Chapter 2: LIVE that will promote the development of housing options that are affordable and appealing to a diverse workforce.

**Policy Initiative: Create a Business-Friendly Environment**

- Create and develop initiatives in concert with the Chamber of Commerce to support the creation and growth of small businesses, e.g. a small-business loan program, expansion of the façade improvement program, incubator space, etc.
- Expand the role and make-up of the Economic Development Commission to review and identify improvements to ordinances, policies, fee schedules, and programs that would foster a business-supportive environment.
- Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to proactively maintain a relationship with major employers, i.e. CEO roundtable, to identify cooperative efforts to improve the business climate.

**Policy Initiative: Promote the Economic Growth and Vitality of Downtown**

- Take a leadership role in exploring opportunities for bringing additional transit services downtown, in downtown station area planning, and in increasing regional coverage and connectivity.
- Amend downtown zoning and development ordinances to reflect the downtown special planning area vision.
- Develop marketing collateral to promote development opportunities and successes.

**Policy Initiative: Maximize Cary’s Locational Appeal**

- Implement LIVE, SHAPE, SHOP, ENGAGE, MOVE, and SERVE policy initiatives and actions.
- Solicit feedback from employees of targeted businesses to identify opportunities for enhancing Cary’s national image in order to attract types of industries and workers critical to Cary’s future.
- Strengthen and promote Cary’s brand to direct economic recruitment.

## ***SHOP: Create Vibrant Destinations by Managing Future Land Use and Encouraging Redevelopment and Infill Efforts***

### **Policy Initiative: Promote and Enable Revitalization of Existing Commercial Centers**

- Review all Town development regulations to identify and remove disincentives for redevelopment.
- Create baseline economic health indicators for aging commercial centers as a first step in evaluating the need for a Minimum Commercial Code.
- Develop evaluation criteria to guide public investment in redevelopment projects.
- Create new infill and redevelopment design guidelines that balance the goal of encouraging redevelopment with the goal of protecting the character of adjacent neighborhoods.

### **Policy Initiative: Support and Enable Vibrant Mixed-Use and Destination Centers**

- Amend Cary's Land Development Ordinance and design guidelines to enable and guide development/redevelopment of destination centers and commercial mixed-use centers, as well as shopping centers. Consider utilizing a form-based code to foster design creativity and a sense of place.
- Identify and prioritize locations for catalyst public infrastructure investments or other forms of Town participation.
- Update the Alston Plan to align more closely with destination center goals.

## ***ENGAGE: Provide Extensive and High Quality Parks and Recreation, Create a Vibrant Arts and Cultural Environment, and Preserve Historic Resources***

### **Policy Initiative: Implement the Recommendations of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan**

### **Policy Initiative: Implement the Recommendations of the Public Art Master Plan**

### **Policy Initiative: Implement the Recommendations of the Historic Preservation Master Plan**

### **Policy Initiative: Incorporate the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan; Public Art Master Plan; and Historic Preservation Master Plan into the Cary Community Plan Document**

- Update the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan; Integrate Into the Cary Community Plan Document
- Update the Public Art Master Plan; Integrate Into the Cary Community Plan Document
- Update the Historic Preservation Master Plan; Integrate Into the Cary Community Plan Document

***SHAPE: Guide Future Growth by Managing Future Land Use and Encouraging Redevelopment and Infill Efforts***

**Policy Initiative: Undertake Regulatory Changes to Implement the Future Growth Framework**

- Amend as appropriate Cary’s zoning ordinance, site design standards, and design guidelines through the implementation of the policy initiatives and actions set out in the LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ENGAGE, MOVE, SERVE chapters and in the Special Planning Area discussions in the SHAPE chapter.
- Establish an interdepartmental working group that meets regularly to discuss and oversee progress on the regulatory changes necessary to implement the Future Growth Framework.

***Eastern Cary Gateway***

**Policy Initiative: Foster Development of a Compact Mixed-Use and High Density Destination Center; Improve the Visual Experience of Gateway Corridors**

- As proposals for major developments arise, explore opportunities for public/private infrastructure investments or other Town participation for the following projects:
  - Explore Potential Prospects for Expanding WakeMed Soccer Park into a Tier-1 Soccer Facility
  - Support the Development of Area 2 East of Trinity Road
  - Support a New Connection Across Cary Towne Boulevard
  - Study the Redevelopment Potential of the WPTF Site
  - Support the expansion of the Triangle Aquatic Center

**Policy Initiative: Require Connectivity and Accessibility Within and Between Developments**

- Perform planning analysis to further transportation goals, including the following projects:
  - Pursue Street Extensions, Using Recommended Cross Sections
  - Extensions of the Road Network to Better Connect the Area
  - Adjust Parking Regulations to Encourage Shared Parking Arrangements
  - Plan Specifically to Accommodate Large Events
  - Monitor and Engage with Wake County Transit Plans



**Policy Initiative: Review Regulatory Measures That Impact Development Timelines for the Area**

- Review regulatory measures that impact development timelines for the area; establish review and approval processes to allow for expedited processing of applications that directly align with and promote the vision and policies of this Eastern Cary Gateway Plan.
- Establish a stakeholders group to review implementation of the Plan.

***Downtown Cary***

**Policy Initiative: Foster Downtown’s Authentic Character**

- Explore and develop strategies for communicating Cary’s cultural and architectural history.
- Develop financial incentives to support balanced, mixed-income neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

**Policy Initiative: Promote a Distinct Downtown Identity**

- Develop distinct branding and signage to encompass all downtown sub-districts.
- Through public and private investments, enhance the visual appeal of downtown through such activities as expanding the streetscape onto Chatham Street and other principal downtown streets; adding public art; burying existing above-ground utility lines, etc.

**Policy Initiatives: Balance Transportation Investments to Support All Modes, and Promote Multi-Modal Connections Between Downtown Sub-Districts.**

- Expand accessibility to and within downtown and supporting neighborhoods via greenways, bike routes, public transit options, additional regular and handicapped parking.
- Update the downtown parking strategy.

**Policy Initiative: Encourage Downtown Reinvestment and Redevelopment While Supporting a Range of Uses**

- Update zoning districts and related development standards to implement the downtown vision.
- Identify and implement strategies for maximizing the use of the Business Improvement District.

***Historic Carpenter***

**Policy Initiatives: Protect Historic Properties and Places; Encourage Compatible Infill Development and Uses Within and Adjacent to the Carpenter National Register District**

- Explore development of a Carpenter Local Historic District.
- Develop and adopt design guidelines.
- Consider developing preservation incentives.

<p><b>Policy Initiatives: Design New Neighborhoods in the Special Planning Area to Complement the Historic Context; Use Streetscape Designs That Reinforce the Historic Character of Carpenter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluate and update zoning and site development ordinances to implement the vision of the historic Carpenter special planning area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Green Level</b></p>
<p><b>Policy Initiative: Maintain An East-to-West Transition in Density While Respecting the Area’s Heritage and Open Spaces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluate and update zoning and site development ordinances to implement the vision of the Green Level special planning area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy Initiative: Support Development of a Signature Mixed-Use Destination Center</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare mixed-use development and design standards that protect and celebrate the sensitive environmental setting of the future destination center; consider a form-based or hybrid zoning approach.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOVE: Provide Transportation Choices With an Efficient and Well-Designed Transportation System</b></p>
<p><b>Policy Initiative: Provide for the Safe and Efficient Movement of People and Goods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct a pilot program to construct and evaluate a separated bike lane project along Chatham Street.</li> <li>- Conduct a study with other public/private partners for a future north-south transportation corridor in western Cary along existing rail infrastructure.</li> <li>- Evaluate holistically more frequent and wider coverage of transit as described by the Wake County Transit Plan.</li> <li>- Continue the implementation of ADA pedestrian improvements at targeted intersections throughout town.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy Initiative: Create a Balanced Transportation System</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluate and identify feasible corridors for bus rapid transit and opportunities for context-sensitive improvements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy Initiative: Integrate the Built and Natural Environment With an Innovative and Well-Designed Transportation System to Create Great Places and Great Spaces</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluate the impact of the Future Growth Framework on existing parking/pedestrian/bicycle/transit standards and requirements (e.g. size facilities appropriately in destination centers), and update as necessary.</li> <li>- Develop an interdepartmental and multi-disciplinary collaboration process for responding to unique transportation situations and contexts, including impacts to the natural environment, special urban centers, and historic features.</li> </ul>

**Policy Initiative: Make Strategic and Equitable Transportation Investments**

- Explore intelligent transportation systems and emerging technologies and evaluate their integration into Cary’s transportation system.
- Focus on public/private investment opportunities and/or cost-sharing for future transportation projects.

**Policy Initiative: Conduct Further Study of the Recommendations on the Planned Roadway Widths Map**

- Explore context sensitive designs for Green Level Church Road through the Green Level Historic District.
- Conduct a land use / transportation study of the recommended NE Cary Parkway Extension as depicted on the Planned Roadways Widths Map.

***SERVE: Meet Community Needs By Providing Comprehensive and High Quality Facilities, Infrastructure and Public Services While Respecting Nature and the Environment***

**Policy Initiative: Provide and Promote Safe, Reliable, Technologically Progressive, and Environmentally Responsible Public Services**

- Identify and implement policies, programs, and practices needed to place Cary in the top 10% of comparable communities for key measures of quality of life.
- Identify pressing public service challenges facing the Town of Cary and recommend approaches for addressing them on an ongoing basis.
- Create a Town of Cary Smart City/Strategic Innovation Plan to identify and remove barriers to innovation.

**Policy Initiative: Promote Green Practices That Will Leave an Environmentally Safe and Desirable Community for Future Generations**

- Provide regional leadership among communities contributing to and affected by nutrient loads to Jordan Lake with the objective of agreeing on a science-based program to protect the future quality of the lake.
- Create a Town of Cary Sustainability Plan to integrate concepts of sustainability into the Town’s planning practices, processes, and service delivery.

**Policy Initiative: Respond in an Exemplary Manner to Present-Day Emergencies While Anticipating Future Challenges**

- Identify new service needs or service areas that may be necessary to address shifts in population, demographics, and the environment.
- Expand support for homeless and high-cost-burdened families.
- Identify opportunities to integrate emerging technologies or alternative service models into emergency operations.