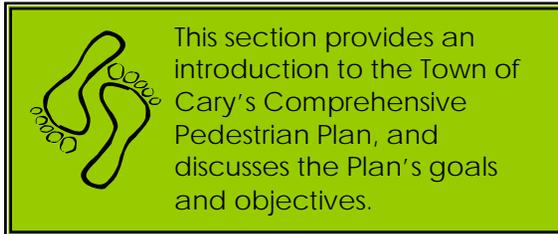


Section 1. Introduction and Goals



1.1. Introduction

As we enter into the 21st Century, the need to reduce our dependency on the automobile has become increasingly apparent. With rising fuel prices, decreasing revenues available for major roadway construction, and increasing air pollution, it has become imperative that a successful, thriving, and growing town such as Cary must develop and maintain a well-connected pedestrian network in order to preserve its quality of life. With such a network, the Town of Cary can make it easier for residents to choose walking to a destination over driving. The benefits of a walking community are many: reduced traffic congestion and air pollution; improved public health as a result of more active lifestyles; and a better sense of community and economic character. Perhaps more importantly, a strong pedestrian network is particularly necessary for those Cary citizens who have less access to a car. Trends in the Cary population show a rise in the numbers of children and senior citizens, as well as recent Hispanic immigrants – all populations that are underserved by the private automobile. By increasing the pedestrian-friendliness of Cary's transportation network, the Town will serve all members of its population, while at the same time benefiting from reduced air pollution, less traffic congestion, and improved health.

The Cary Pedestrian Plan is intended as a guide to the future of pedestrian facilities in Cary. Prior to this Plan, many of Cary's plans and design guidelines have made pedestrian-related recommendations and policy statements. The purpose of this Plan is to meld all of the recommendations of the various plans into a single overarching document. As a result, the Cary Pedestrian Plan will serve as the main source for pedestrian-related future plans and design guidelines. In addition, this document will serve as the Pedestrian Element in the Cary Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

The Cary Pedestrian Plan was made possible by a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and matching funds from the Town of Cary. Begun in January 2006, the Cary Pedestrian Plan process was a fourteen-month effort completed in February 2007. Throughout, the process was directed by a Stakeholder Committee comprised of Cary citizens, Town Staff, and other representatives who met frequently to provide input on major decisions in the Plan and to generally guide the planning process. The Cary Pedestrian Plan process also included an extensive public outreach and involvement effort, which is discussed further in Section 2. Final Plan

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documents were prepared by the Louis Berger Group with direction from the Town of Cary Planning Department and other Town of Cary staff. Although the Plan's initial preparation process was completed in February 2007, the document should be considered a living document which will undergo revisions as necessary. In this sense, the planning process begun with this Plan will continue to be an on-going effort.

The Town of Cary Pedestrian Plan is organized such that the first chapters describe the current conditions and needs of the Town, with the following chapters building upon these needs to recommend projects, programs, policies, and design guidelines to make the Town more pedestrian-friendly.

1.2. Goals and Objectives

It is important to have Goals and Objectives at the start of the Pedestrian Planning process in order to clarify the aims of the project and to guide the decisions made throughout the process. Goals are those general ideals towards which the Plan's efforts are aimed; an objective is a measurable outcome created to help achieve a goal. The following paragraphs discuss the goals and objectives for the Cary Pedestrian Plan as identified by the Stakeholder Committee and members of Town staff.

Goal 1. Connectivity and Accessibility. Provide a well-connected, American Disabilities Act-compliant pedestrian network for the Town of Cary that will provide convenient and pleasant access to all major destinations, for work and play.

Objective 1.1: Reduce pedestrian trip time. One approach to making pedestrian travel more convenient is to reduce the time it takes for a person to walk from one place to another.

Objective 1.2: Create access to all major destinations.

Objective 1.3: Provide connections to other transportation facilities (such as greenways) and modes of travel like transit and bicycling.

Objective 1.4: Ensure pedestrian considerations are included in all new public and private developments, as well as all transportation projects.

Goal 2: Health and Safety. Develop pedestrian facilities throughout Cary that promote a healthy lifestyle and allow all residents and visitors to safely walk to destinations.

Objective 2.1: Create safe access to schools.

Objective 2.2: Create safe and comfortable access to major destinations.

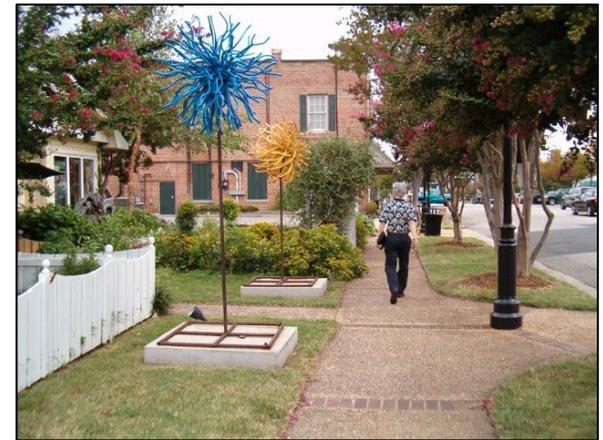


Figure 1-1. An example of Cary's Pedestrian amenities in downtown Cary.



Figure 1-2. Pedestrian amenities in Downtown.

Objective 2.3: Create safe street crossings at intersections

Objective 2.4: Create safe mid-block crossings as needed for pedestrian access to greenways, parks, schools, and other major destinations.

Objective 2.5: Establish standards and guidelines that require all transportation facilities in Cary to include safe pedestrian facilities that meet ADA requirements.

Objective 2.6: Provide education to raise awareness about pedestrian-related issues including safety and the benefits of a pedestrian lifestyle on health.

Goal 3: Appearance and Attractiveness. Encourage a pedestrian system with amenities and programs that enhance the quality of life in Cary by making it more visually, socially, and culturally attractive.

Objective 3.1: Create a sense of community and foster social interaction.

Objective 3.2: Coordinate recommendations of Public Art Master Plan with recommendations of this Plan.

Goal 4: Stewardship. Create an approach to pedestrian facilities within Cary that is guided by a sense of environmental and financial stewardship.

Objective 4.1: Continue to prioritize projects in a clear, concise method that reflects the values and needs of Cary's residents and provides adequate flexibility in future facility planning.

Objective 4.2: Create pedestrian facilities that are sensitive to special environmental conditions, such as the need to reduce impervious surfaces within stream buffers and water supply watersheds so as not to impact water quality.

1.3. Benefits of Pedestrian-Friendliness

Any discussion of how pedestrian-friendly a community is should begin with a discussion of the benefits of walking more frequently.

- ◆ *Health.* One estimate suggests that 60 percent of Americans lead sedentary lifestyles, and that 40 percent of Americans are clinically obese. Walking plays an important role in addressing obesity and fitness levels. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed this statement in 1999 when it called the replacement of walk trips with automobile trips a contributor to the number one-killer in America: heart disease. As schools have trimmed down the amount of physical exercise that students receive in

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favor of more class time, being a good role model for walking and physical fitness has emerged as an important parental responsibility.¹

- ◆ *Transportation.* Although it would take a very large number of walking trips to make a noticeable decrease in vehicular congestion, walk trips can substitute for about 40 percent of the short (under two miles) trips people make every day. Alternative ways of getting around are much more important for people that are too young, too old, physically unable, or lacking access to a private car to make a trip by automobile.
- ◆ *Air and Water Quality.* Walking does not contribute to airborne pollution as does traveling by automobile; even a short walk keeps several pounds of pollutants out of the air. Stormwater runoff from streets carry away residue left behind by cars such as oil, grease, and coolants. Reducing reliance on automobiles, especially for short trips when most automobile engines are operating at their poorest efficiency, is an important way to reduce the level of contamination in stormwater runoff.
- ◆ *Economics.* Providing pleasant places to walk (see Figure 1-2) helps the business communities near these spaces, and reduces automobile costs, which comprise a significant source of out-of-pocket expense for the average Cary family.²

“Drive only when necessary. Driving less reduces the amount of pollution your automobile generates. Automobiles emit tremendous amounts of airborne pollutants, which increase acid rain; they also deposit toxic metals and petroleum byproducts into the environment.”

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Resources

¹ Emily Smith, “America’s kids are more inactive than ever: Walking can make a healthy difference.” Partnership for a Walkable America, University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center. September, 2006.

² Walkinginfo.org. September, 2006. (www.walkinginfo.org/pp/benefits/index.htm).