

## Section 2. Existing Needs

### 2.1. Introduction

Cary's origins date back to its initial settlement in 1750, then known as Bradford Ordinary. The development of the railroad through the center of Town was a significant influence not lost on Allison Francis Page, who purchased 300 acres of land and established a post office, general store, and sawmill in the early 1860's. Page was then an admirer of Samuel Cary, an Ohioan Prohibition leader, and named his new village after him. In 1868, Page constructed, then sold to J.R. Walker in 1884, what became known as the Page-Walker Hotel for railroad travelers wishing to spend the evening in Town.<sup>1</sup> Many of the roads that connect Cary today began as farm roads, but Cary has become known for its system of trails and bicycle-friendliness as well, the latter when the League of American Bicyclists (its own history dating to 1880 when it was known as the League of American Wheelmen) designated Cary as one of its bronze-level recipients of its award for bicycle-friendly communities in America.<sup>2</sup>

This section covers existing pedestrian needs in the Town of Cary. In particular, it provides a brief demographic analysis and discusses results of the plan's public involvement effort. A demographic analysis and overview of public involvement efforts is important in order to identify any existing and future pedestrian needs in the Town. Coupled with the analysis of existing physical conditions in Section 3, this information provides direction for the pedestrian recommendations later in the plan.

### 2.2. Demographics

#### 2.2.1. General Town Analysis

Age, race, and income indicators help identify a population's general characteristics, propensity to use the pedestrian system, and potential attitude towards pedestrian facilities. Car ownership and commuting patterns indicate the overall current demand for pedestrian facilities. In addition to walk-to-work numbers, transit and bicycle commuting numbers can also reflect pedestrian facility usage because of the dependency of these two modes on the pedestrian network. Most transit trips begin and end with a walk to a transit stop, and thus depend on a well-connected pedestrian network to augment its service. Often, bicycle-friendly communities with high levels of bicycle commuting also have characteristics that are pedestrian-friendly.

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Appendix 1 contains a demographic analysis of the Town's population using data collected from the US Census Bureau. The analysis shows that the town is a growing community, with a higher percentage of children under 18 than the national average. In general, Cary's population is typically suburban, exemplified by affluent young families with children and cars. However, two percent of Cary households have no vehicle available, and over a quarter have access to only one vehicle. At the same time, Cary's growing Hispanic population (up from 699 in 1990 to 4,029 in 2000) brings with it a cultural diversity to the Town that includes more pedestrians on its sidewalks, indicating improved pedestrian facilities are needed.

Given the demographic make-up of the Town, several conclusions can be drawn about future needs both for pedestrians and transportation in general. Specifically, the Town's growth rate suggests that new pedestrian facilities and improved older facilities will be needed in the near future. First, the Town will need to plan for development that has adequate pedestrian facilities. Already, the Town enforces several regulations and requirements relating to sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals for new developments and road improvements; these should be reinforced and strengthened. Another step in planning for future development with adequate facilities is to identify locations that are intended as future pedestrian areas and facilities, as shall be done in this plan. Second, the Town will need to upgrade its existing facilities to address increased demand. Lastly, as the number of pedestrians increase, the Town will need to develop education programs that encourage pedestrians and motorists to interact safely.

Cary's age demographics also suggest additional potential pedestrian needs. Cary's younger population will demand more pedestrian facilities such as greenways for recreation and exercise, safer routes to schools (especially elementary schools), and more connections to locations like parks and libraries. Meanwhile, as Cary's middle-age population matures into senior citizens, the Town will need to provide safer non-vehicular access to shopping and other commercial areas.

While the population's work travel commutes and vehicle ownership rates suggest that the Town is primarily dependent on automobiles, an increase in population will mean a potential increase in traffic. The Town will need to be prepared to provide alternatives to future congestion, including more sidewalks, better bicycle routes, and better bus service. At the same time, it should be noted that currently over 30 percent of Cary's workforce takes between 20 – 29 minutes on their daily work commute, suggesting that many of these commuters' workplaces are outside of Cary's Town limits. This also



**Image 2-1.** A runner crosses the intersection at Walnut and Maynard. As the number of pedestrians increases in the Town, the Town will need to develop education programs that encourage pedestrians and motorists to interact safely.



**Image 2-2.** As part of the Plan's public involvement effort, a booth was set up at Cary's 2005 Earth Day at Spring Daze and Pedestrian Plan surveys were distributed to participants.

indicates the need for increased regional cooperation and coordination to provide better services across municipal borders.

### 2.3. Survey Results

The Cary Pedestrian Plan Survey was conducted from April 9, 2006 to July 31, 2006, both online and through a paper version of the survey. The paper version of the survey was distributed at a variety of public events and locations such as the Cary Earth Day event at Bond Park, Town Hall, Town Council, and the Cary Pedestrian Plan's Stakeholder Committee Group meetings. The survey was designed to gather input from citizens of the Town of Cary about their pedestrian habits and preferences, and the condition and needs of the pedestrian system in the town. The survey received a total of 524 responses. A detailed analysis of the survey results is provided in Appendix 2.

The analysis of the survey responses found that respondents generally feel safe walking in their neighborhoods, but are uncomfortable crossing streets, especially streets with high speed and volumes of traffic. Most respondents enjoy walking for recreation and/or exercise in parks and to other recreation facilities, and would like to be able to walk to more of these locations, as well as places like a shopping center, post office, library, or cultural event. Overall, weather and level of fitness have little impact on respondents' reasons for walking.

In general, respondents approve of Cary's progress with sidewalk and greenways that make up the Town's pedestrian network, but they would like to see things improved. Some of the major issues include:

- ◆ Lack of pedestrian system connectivity. A top reason respondents did not walk to a location was because it did not have continuous sidewalk or a greenway to that location.
- ◆ Need for better pedestrian access to locations such as other neighborhoods, parks, shopping centers, post offices, or cultural events. Many respondents indicated they would like to walk to these destinations. With better pedestrian access to these locations, respondents hopefully would be able to walk to them more readily than they can now.
- ◆ Establish better road crossings. Many of the comments from the survey responses indicated a need for better pedestrian crossings at mid-block locations and at intersections of major roads with smaller roads for access to schools, parks, greenways, shopping, neighborhoods, and work.

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Some recommendations for addressing these issues include:

- ◆ target identified focus areas for improving the concentrated needs of many people quickly;
- ◆ construct more sidewalks and greenways; and,
- ◆ provide crossings at selected mid-block locations.

The results of the survey also have implications for project prioritization. Based on survey responses, priority should be given to projects that include crossing treatments and intersection improvements for pedestrians; improve connectivity of the pedestrian system; and create better accessibility for pedestrians.

Several focus areas emerged from the analysis of the survey results; these were:

- ◆ Evans/Maynard Area
- ◆ Symphony Lake/Hemlock Bluffs Area
- ◆ Walnut Street Corridor Area
- ◆ North Cary Park
- ◆ East Chapel Hill Area
- ◆ Davis Drive and Green Hope Area

These focus areas are locations that received comments from many survey respondents indicating pedestrian access issues. In general, focus areas have one or several major destinations, such as a school, park, greenway, or shopping center. These locations include a variety of needed improvements on a variety of roads. Maps and a discussion of the needs, issues, and recommended projects for each of the focus areas are listed in Appendix 3, beginning on page 3-14. The list of recommended projects in this Plan (contained in Appendix 5) were developed from an analysis of the improvements needed in the focus areas in addition to staff and stakeholder input, public comments, focus group discussions, and study corridor analysis (discussed in the following section).

#### 2.4. Study Corridors

In addition to the focus areas, study corridors were also developed based in part on survey results, along with town staff and stakeholder input. The locations for the study corridors were:

- ◆ E. Chatham Street: Chatham Street/E. Durham Road split to I-40, 1.4 miles
- ◆ Kildaire Farm Road: SE Maynard Road to Cary Parkway, 0.9 miles
- ◆ Kildaire Farm Road: Queensferry Road to Glen Echo Lane, 1.8 miles

- ◆ Old Apex Road: Chatham Street/Old Apex Road split to Laura Duncan Road, 3.1 miles
- ◆ Penny Road: Killingsworth to Winding Ridge, 3.0 miles
- ◆ Reedy Creek Road: NE Maynard Road to Harrison Avenue, 1.2 miles

These six corridors were selected for an in-depth analysis of the opportunities and constraints because of their need for pedestrian facility improvements and the potential for increased pedestrians along those corridors with those improvements. For each corridor, a field review was conducted which included both an in-vehicle and walking assessment. Results of the corridor studies are contained in Appendix 4. Projects generated from this analysis were also included in the complete list of projects considered for recommendation in this Plan (contained in Appendix 5).

## 2.5. Focus Group Results

In addition to the survey, a series of focus group meetings were conducted during the planning process. These focus groups targeted populations in Cary that may not have participated in the survey but that may also have a strong need for pedestrian facilities. In particular, these focus groups included members of Cary's Hispanic population and senior citizens. The following is a discussion of the results of these focus groups.

### 2.5.1. Hispanic/Latino Focus Group

On Monday May 22, 2006, representatives with the Cary Pedestrian Plan met with the Briarcliff Hispanic and Latino Parent's group during one of their monthly meetings at Briarcliff Elementary to discuss the needs of the Hispanic and Latino community in Cary. The Briarcliff Elementary Hispanic and Latino Parents' Group is a group of parents with children in the following schools: Briarcliff Elementary, Weatherstone Elementary, Northwoods Elementary, and Farmington Woods Elementary. The group meets to discuss their children's needs at the school and to learn more about different school activities. In addition, it is a venue for parents to receive information about various services available to them, such as after-school care and summer camps. The group is led by Rachel Manriquez, Ready-to-Learn Nurse for Western Wake County Schools.

Approximately fifty parents and children attended the May 22, 2006 session. Through the assistance of a translator, parents were asked to discuss how they felt about walking in Cary and to point out locations that they thought needed pedestrian improvements. In general, the group talked about two areas of particular need in Cary: first, the area around Briarcliff Elementary School that encompasses the residential neighborhoods and commercial areas bounded by Southwest Cary Parkway, Southwest Maynard Road, Kildaire Farm Road, and Old Apex Rd; and second, the residential and commercial area



**Image 2-3.** The Hispanic Focus Group meeting was held at Briarcliff Elementary School, where the Briarcliff Hispanic and Latino Parents group holds their monthly meetings.

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south of the intersection of East Chatham Street and Maynard Road. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows these focus areas and locations of needed intersection improvements.

The group's members identified the following issues and needs:

- ◆ On both main roads and local roads, people drive too fast and are inconsiderate of pedestrians. More crosswalks, especially mid-block, for crossing the street from residential neighborhoods to reach commercial areas and schools are needed.
- ◆ Parents must walk their children, often with strollers, to various destinations. There is a need for additional, wider sidewalks for parents with children to access schools, libraries, doctors, grocery stores, and neighborhoods.
- ◆ Parents were unaware of Cary's CTran bus system, but many of them were TTA bus riders. All bus stops need bigger signs, and in Spanish. Bus stops also need seats and coverings.
- ◆ Parents feel there is a personal safety issue in their neighborhoods. They would appreciate lights and a greater police presence.

The group also identified the following specific locations for needed improvements:

- ◆ midblock crossings across Kildaire Farm Road to the Kroger Shopping Center
- ◆ signed and signalized crossings across Maynard Road at Pond and Wicklow
- ◆ sidewalk access from Pond and Wicklow to the shopping centers at the intersection of Maynard Road and Kildaire Farm Road
- ◆ crosswalks, sidewalks, and more pedestrian signs from the apartments on Cheswick Place to Briarcliff Elementary
- ◆ traffic calming needed in the neighborhood around Briarcliff Elementary
- ◆ midblock crossings across Maynard Road from Tate Street and Maple Avenue to shopping centers and Sloan Drive

Mid-block crossings across Kildaire Farm Road to the Kroger Shopping Center may be unnecessary if pedestrian crossing improvements are made at the intersections of Kildaire Farm and Kilmayne, Commonwealth, Wren, and High Meadow. Any traffic calming efforts by the Town in the neighborhood around Briarcliff Elementary will be limited by private roads and private property constraints.

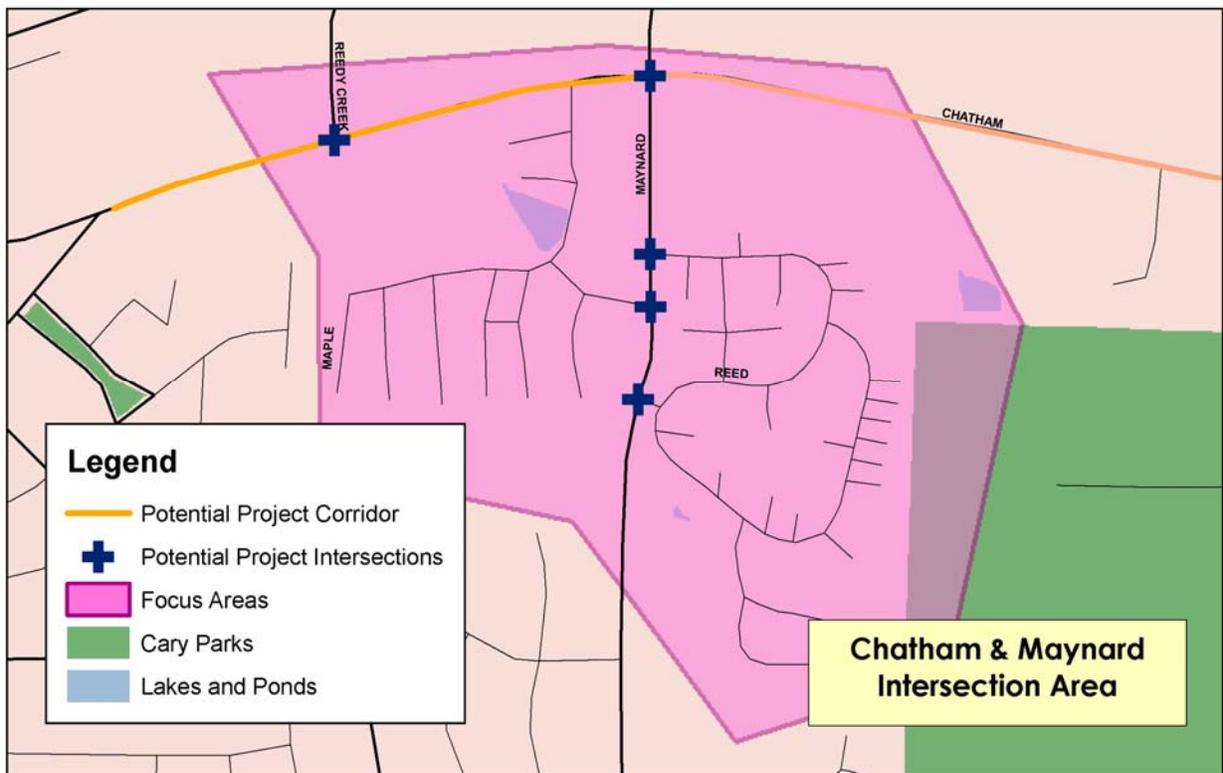
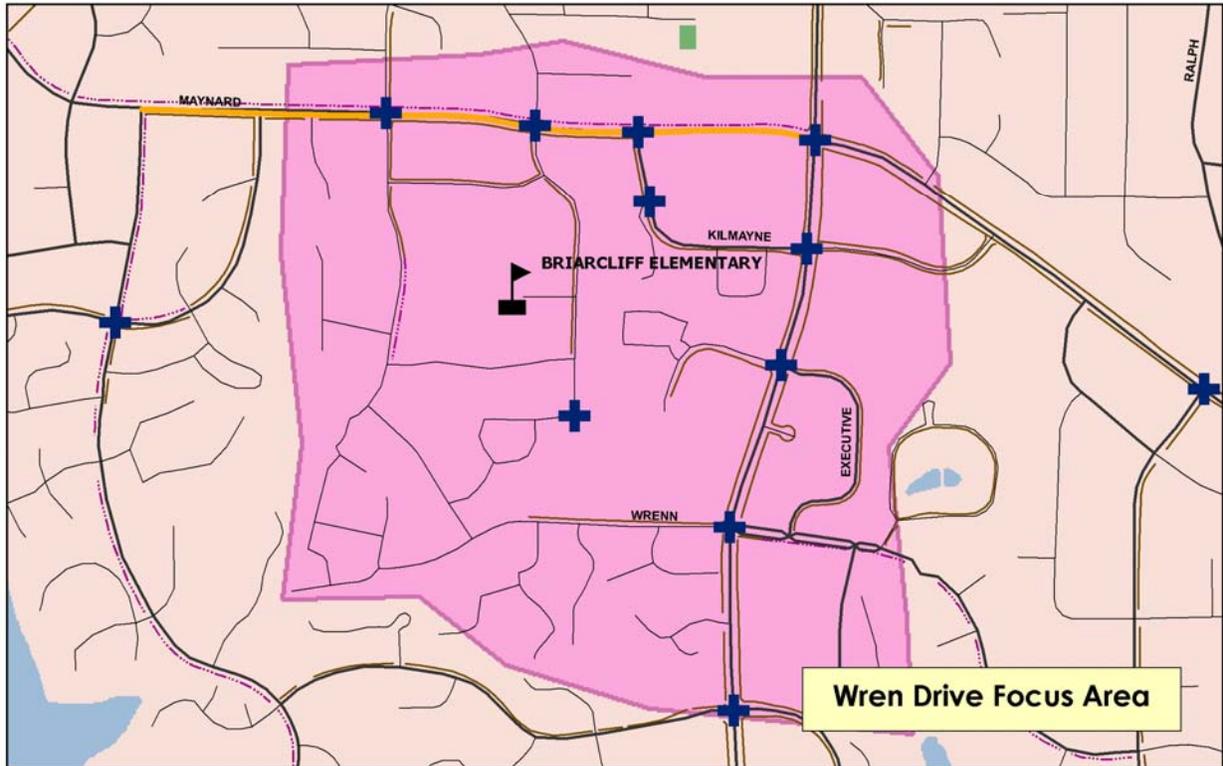


Figure 2-1. Focus areas and potential projects developed from comments received during the Hispanic Focus Group meeting.

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#### 2.5.2. Seniors Focus Group

On Monday, June 5, 2006, representatives from the Cary Pedestrian Plan held a meeting at the Cary Senior Center for Cary residents aged 65 and above to discuss their pedestrian needs. Eleven people attended. Participants were asked to share with the group the locations and destinations that they frequently walked to, and what they felt would improve the walking conditions in Cary.

In general, participants walked in their neighborhood and on bad weather days in the Cary Towne Center Mall. Neighborhoods were popular places to walk out of convenience and also because the streets have very little traffic. The Mall was a popular place to walk because it is air conditioned and does not have any hills. Some participants also liked to walk to the stores near their neighborhoods. Common destinations included the hair dresser, the grocery store, and the pharmacist. Other participants also walked on the greenways; however, most participants were concerned for their safety on greenways when they were not walking with another person. Safety concerns included both fear of criminal activity and fear of tripping or falling and not having a someone nearby to assist them.

Some of the concerns participants expressed about walking included a fear of dogs, fear of tripping on uneven surfaces, and a fear for personal safety. Many participants were also afraid to cross certain streets in their neighborhoods for fear of speeding cars and too much traffic. Participants indicated they would be more inclined to walk if there were more sidewalks that connected to more destinations, and if the sidewalks had better, more even surfaces. Participants would feel less concerned about their personal safety if they were walking with others, if there was better lighting for walking at night, and if there were fewer secluded areas and large bushes. Concerns about speeding cars could be reduced through traffic calming measures and better enforcement.

The following is a list of locations where the group participants recommended improvements should be made. These focus areas are also highlighted in **Error! Reference source not found.**

- ◆ W. Chatham from Park to Old Apex. A sidewalk is needed to connect neighborhoods and residences on W. Chatham to downtown. There is currently some sidewalk, but the sections of W. Chatham without sidewalk are too dangerous to walk.
- ◆ High Meadow from Two Creeks to Cary Parkway. There is currently a sidewalk on one side but high speed traffic makes it hard to cross the street to get to the sidewalk for those residents who are not on the sidewalk side of the street. It was requested that a



**Figure 2-2.** View of the gardens behind the Cary Senior Center, where the Seniors Focus Group was held.

series of signals be placed along this street to warn drivers of pedestrians crossing from connecting cul-de-sacs.

- ◆ Two Creeks from Lake Pine to Cary Parkway. Currently, there is no sidewalk on this street and the traffic levels have been increasing such that it is dangerous to walk in the road at certain times of the day.

Issues of particular importance to the participants in the Seniors Focus Group included:

- ◆ the need for continuous sidewalk to connect neighborhoods to destinations
- ◆ signals, and especially audible signals, at crosswalks and mid-block crossings
- ◆ more pedestrian crossings (ie, mid-block) for access to existing sidewalk from a side of the road without it, or access to a destination
- ◆ repairing sidewalks with cracks and heaving from tree roots or grass in order to reduce the potential for tripping
- ◆ better (brighter) lighting in neighborhoods for walking at night
- ◆ dog waste in neighborhoods

Group participants also indicated that the following intersections are also very difficult to cross due to speeding cars and too much traffic. They requested that audible signals and other improvements be placed at these intersections.

- ◆ Lake Pine and Plantation
- ◆ Maynard and High House
- ◆ High House and Abbeydale

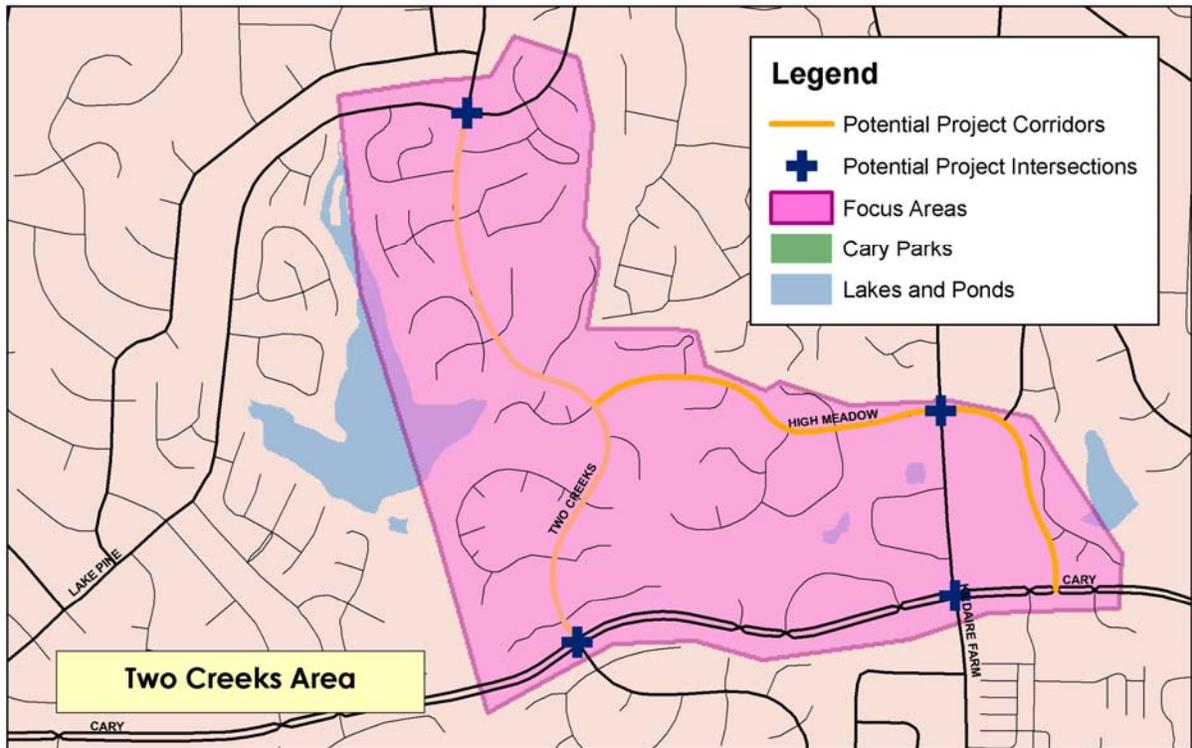
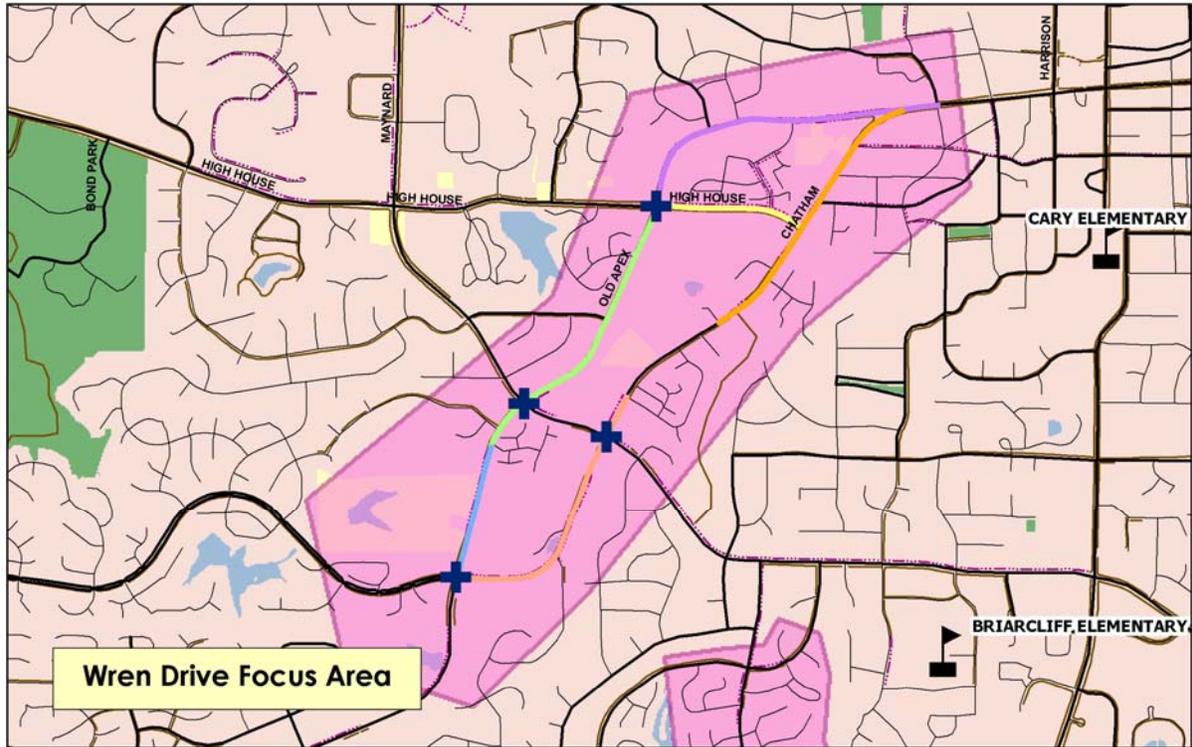


Figure 2-3. Focus areas and potential projects that developed out of comments received during the Seniors Focus Group meeting.

### 2.5.3. Transit Focus Group

The Transit Focus Group was held on Thursday October 19, 2006, from 6 – 7:30 PM in the Herbert C. Young Center, Room B. There were fifteen attendees, including representatives from C-Tran and the Cary Pedestrian Plan, consultants for the Pedestrian Plan. General results of the meeting found that most people rode the bus to major destinations such as Cary Towne Center and Crossroads, as well as to doctor's appointments and the grocery store. Many attendees used both the on-call and fixed route service. Several attendees also made transfers to Regional Transit. A popular stop was the Wake Medical stop at Kildaire Farm Road.



**Figure 2-4.** A passenger boards one of Cary's C-Tran buses. One of the focus group meetings targeted transit and transit rider needs.

Participants recommended the following improvements:

- ◆ benches with shade at major destinations including the Food Court at Cary Towne Center
- ◆ sidewalk along James Jackson from Cary Parkway to Maynard
- ◆ sidewalk along Maynard from Weatherstone to High House
- ◆ fix construction issue at Maynard and High House (this will be/has been addressed)
- ◆ provide sidewalk at Maynard and High House (this may be missing due to utilities obstruction)
- ◆ benches at shared TTA stop just south of Maynard and Harrison and one across the street
- ◆ Sidewalk along Buck Jones between Nottingham and Town Limits for safer transfer between C-Tran to CAT buses
- ◆ Relocate stop at Crossroads 20 out of middle of parking lot and near a location with sidewalk
- ◆ Place Maynard Loop 2 stop closer to Maynard Loop 1 stop at Reedy Creek/Maynard

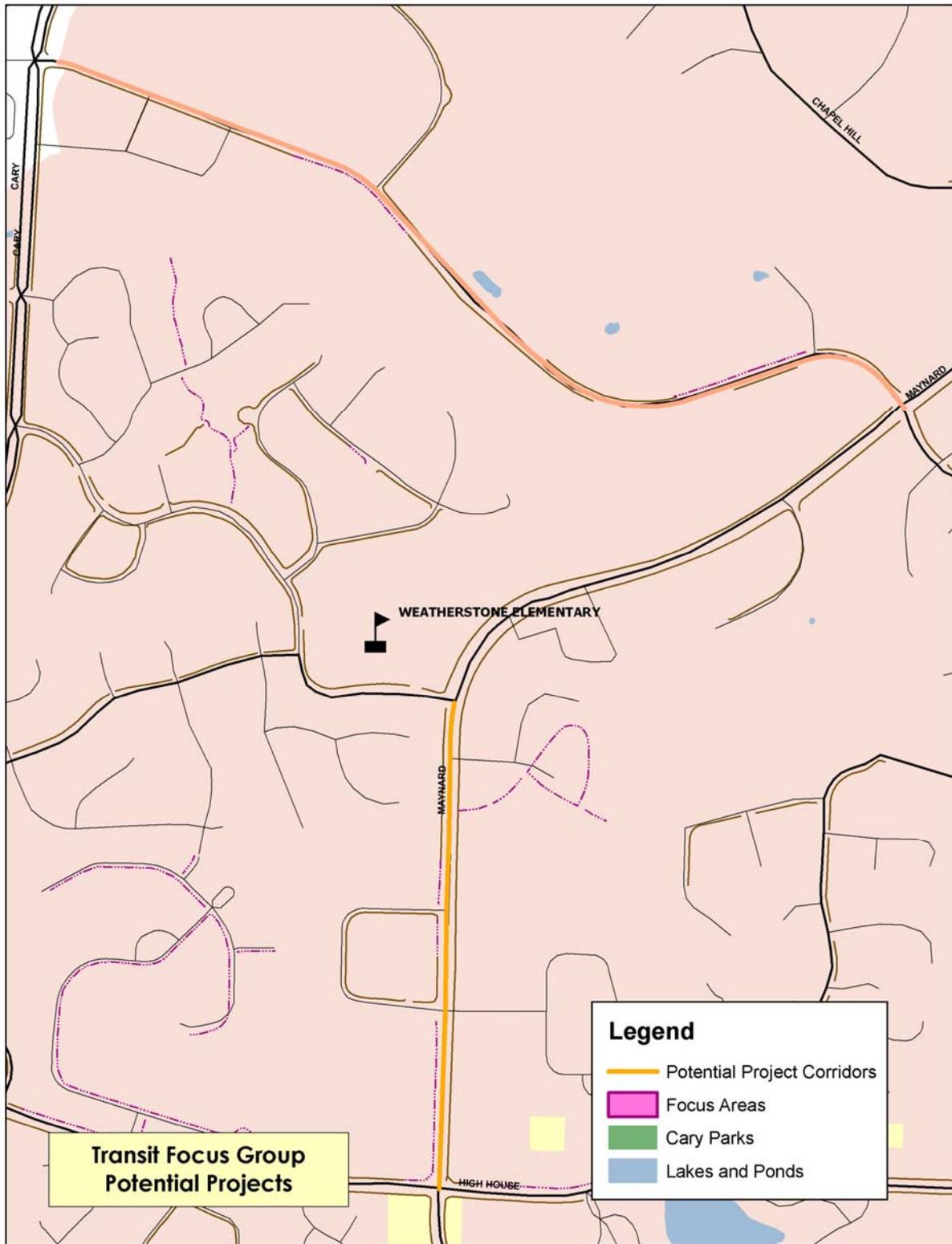


Figure 2-5. Some of the potential projects that developed out of comments received during the transit focus group meeting.

## 2.6. Town Council Survey

A survey was distributed at the Town of Cary Council Work Session on Thursday July 13, 2006 to identify future needs to be addressed in the Town of Cary's Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update. As part of this survey, there was a series of questions relating to pedestrian travel and the pedestrian system in Cary. Council Members were asked to rank the importance of sidewalk in various locations, assess the Town's development standards in providing adequate sidewalk facilities, and describe their vision of Cary's pedestrian future.

Results of the survey indicated the following items:

- ◆ Council Members feel that the most important locations that should be accessible by pedestrian facilities are other sidewalks, greenways, and schools. Second in ranking were shopping centers; and least important were employment centers, transit stops, and high density residential communities.
- ◆ Council Members approve of Cary's development standards for providing a safe and efficient pedestrian-friendly environment in residential and office developments, but feel that the Town's standards are providing inadequate pedestrian facilities to shopping centers. Council members have mixed feelings about the Town's standards relating to pedestrian access to public facilities.
- ◆ In the future, Council Members feel that Cary's pedestrian system should be a seamless greenway/sidewalk system, and that there should be sidewalks on at least one side of all roads. Less important to Council Members for the future of the pedestrian system are the presence of pedestrian-actuated signals and crosswalks at all signalized intersections and Town-initiated public education programs to promote walking as a transportation mode.
- ◆ Given a set budget amount to be spent on a variety of transportation improvements, out of those pertaining to walking, Council Members would put the most money towards pedestrian safety improvements and greenways and the least money towards fixed route transit, on-demand transit/paratransit, and streetscaping or aesthetics.

Based on the survey responses, it can be seen that Council members place top priority on enhancing the connectivity of Cary's pedestrian system, which is in keeping with the Cary Pedestrian Plan's goals of "connectivity and accessibility". Future improvements should focus on providing pedestrian accessibility at schools and shopping centers, and linking existing sidewalks and greenways to each other. In comparison to the results of

the general Cary Pedestrian Plan survey, there appears to be a difference in priority between Council Members and the general public. One of the major requests of the general Cary Pedestrian Plan survey was to provide better pedestrian crossing access at major roads and intersections, but the results of the Town Council survey indicate that Council Members place less of an emphasis on crossing improvements than on other improvements such as sidewalk construction. Council Members also place less of an emphasis on pedestrian access to transit facilities. The recommendations in this Plan seek to reconcile Town Council's demand for more sidewalk with the needs identified in the Pedestrian Plan survey for better pedestrian crossings. In addition, although neither the survey respondents nor Town Council Members placed the highest importance on pedestrian access to transit facilities, this should remain an important issue due to the link between transit ridership and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

## **2.7. Summary**

This section has reviewed the initial input from a public opinion survey, focus groups, and a second, independent survey of the Cary Town Council regarding pedestrian planning issues and priorities. The Goals established in this Plan should align with the needs of the Town as expressed through the public input process in order to insure that Plan's recommendations will address these needs. In the following discussion, each goal of the Plan is discussed in terms of the needs expressed through the public involvement process.

*Goal 1. Connectivity and Accessibility.* For both citizens and elected officials, providing greater connectivity is a central issue, although the Town Council focused less on pedestrian crossing treatments than did the citizenry. Connections between neighborhoods and destinations (e.g., shopping, employment, schools) were considered important to both survey groups. Citizens were able to readily identify a number of very specific projects that could be constructed or otherwise implemented to improve their pedestrian experience. Access to hair salons, movies, and parks were also cited as important destinations to various groups.

*Goal 2. Health and Safety.* The citizens of Cary indicated that there were few "internal" barriers to making pedestrian trips; that is, where it is safe and convenient to do so, Cary residents will consider walking to their destinations. The Town Council survey did not focus as much on the health and safety aspects of walking, but the results did indicate a willingness to spend scarce financial resources on pedestrian safety improvements and greenway facilities. Seniors expressed greater concerns over tripping hazards and other

aspects of personal safety than did other survey groups. In many cases (although the Town Council survey did not necessarily reveal this issue in a specific question), speeding and traffic volumes are indicated as significant barriers in many parts of Town.

*Goal 3. Appearance and Attractiveness.* Bus stop amenities and shelters were cited by some respondents as areas where appearance should be a focus; this was especially emphasized by the Hispanic and Transit Focus Groups. Improvements to a bus stop's appearance through small landscaping changes and street furniture additions can create more attractive places for people to interact, in keeping with this Goal's aim of a pedestrian system with amenities and programs that make the Town more visually, socially, and culturally attractive. Cary has engaged in a number of corridor studies for roadways; it should also focus on transitways in the same manner, while also emphasizing the importance of creating small-scale pedestrian venues.

*Goal 4. Stewardship.* The objectives of this Goal are to improve environmental quality and prioritize projects in a cost-effective manner. Although the purposes of the surveys and outreach efforts were not specifically oriented towards the concepts presented by this Goal, the results of the surveys indicate very clearly where people want to place an emphasis on allocating resources: connecting specific destinations as described; improving safety conditions; and creating places where pedestrians are encouraged.

## Resources

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<sup>1</sup> Town of Cary ([www.townofcary.org/depts/pio/aboutcary.html#history](http://www.townofcary.org/depts/pio/aboutcary.html#history))

<sup>2</sup> League of American Bicyclists, Bicycle Friendly Community.  
([www.bicyclefriendlycommunity.org/Images/bfc\\_pdf\\_pages/cary.pdf](http://www.bicyclefriendlycommunity.org/Images/bfc_pdf_pages/cary.pdf))