14. The plaza in front of the Cary Public Arts Center includes LED lighting to activate the space at night.

15. *The Railroad Man* is a local sculpture at the Cary Train Depot building.

16. The *Fly Tower* is an art installation that is integrated into the façade of the Cary Arts Center building.

17. *Fly Tower* at night.

05 | Cary Public Art Opportunities

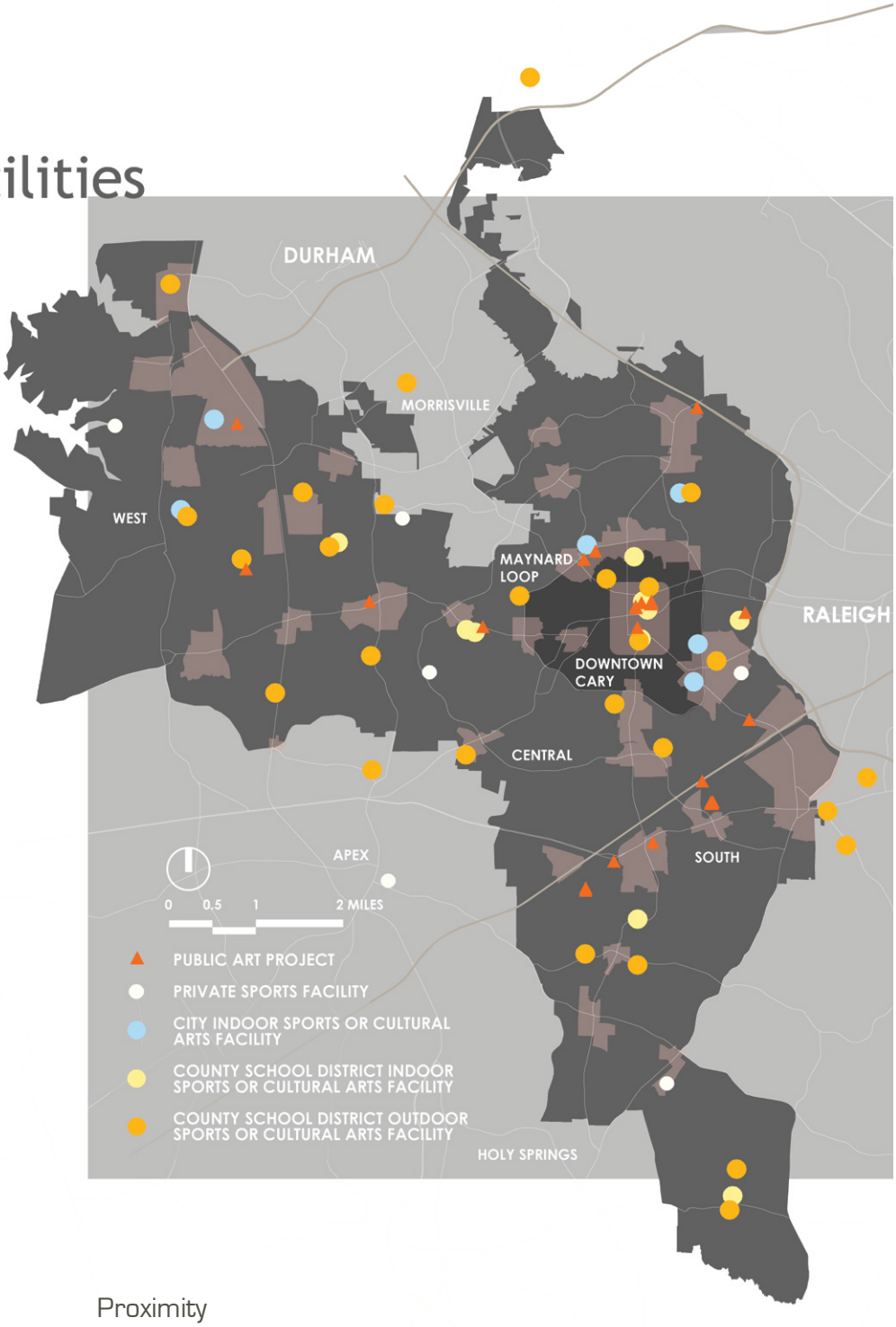
Great cities are remembered for interesting streets, lively gathering places, surprising discoveries, and pleasant strolls – physical and social environments where public art can meaningfully connect people with place. Through metaphors, illusions, story-telling, and cultural messages, public art creates new and exciting experiences that build upon other urban design strategies. Public art thrives in public spaces that that are centers of human activity and are designed as destination places.

Over the past few decades, rapid development has transformed Cary and the surrounding landscape into a suburban community with multiple commercial centers and residential neighborhoods. Public art operates within this rapidly changing context to:

- Cultivate Cary's emerging community identity/identities
- Show that Cary's public facilities, including its parks and greenways, are part of a larger system that supports community and culture
- Ensure that larger-scale mixed-use development in Cary is part of the town-wide public realm
- Advance Cary's Town Center Plan for "a unique, vibrant, dynamic, pedestrian-friendly location; a regional destination and a place to live, work, and recreate" (*Cary Town Center Plan*, 2001)
- Advance Cary's Town Center Civic & Cultural Arts Plan, (2006) which designated an urban sculpture park and public art emphasis in the downtown core along Academy Street

The following urban design framework identifies opportunities where public art can make the greatest impact in Cary within the context of the Town's policies to create remarkable places.

Facilities



Proximity

The Town of Cary has identified Mixed-Use Centers that are defined as being "physically and aesthetically unified areas, where all elements and land uses are designed to function as an integrated whole," (www.townofcary.org). The plan above shows that public and private amenities like recreational facilities are clustered in these areas, and are opportunities for public art.

Civic and Community Identity

In a workshop for this Public Art Master Plan, several participants raised the question "What is the character of Cary?" At a follow-up session several days later participants were asked to help answer this question. Some participants suggested it was Cary's forested, green landscape and the commitment to good design. Others said Cary's character was grounded in its heritage; for example, tobacco farms and rail-borne commerce played an important role in Cary's history, landscape and local economy. Still, other participants experienced difficulty in describing Cary's character for a lack of prominent characteristics.

Civic, cultural, sports, and other publicly-owned facilities – are places for public art to tell community stories and promote community identity. Facilities with social and recreational functions, such as a library or sports center, or more utilitarian functions, such as a wastewater management plant, bridge or retaining wall, can be treated as part of a larger system that supports community and culture. Every one of these facilities that is physically accessible and visible to the public can be an ideal opportunity to speak about Cary and provide a personal and community-engaging experience.

Themes and Opportunities

Public art will vary according to the type of structure and use of the public facility. The following facilities offer different opportunities based on their structure and use:

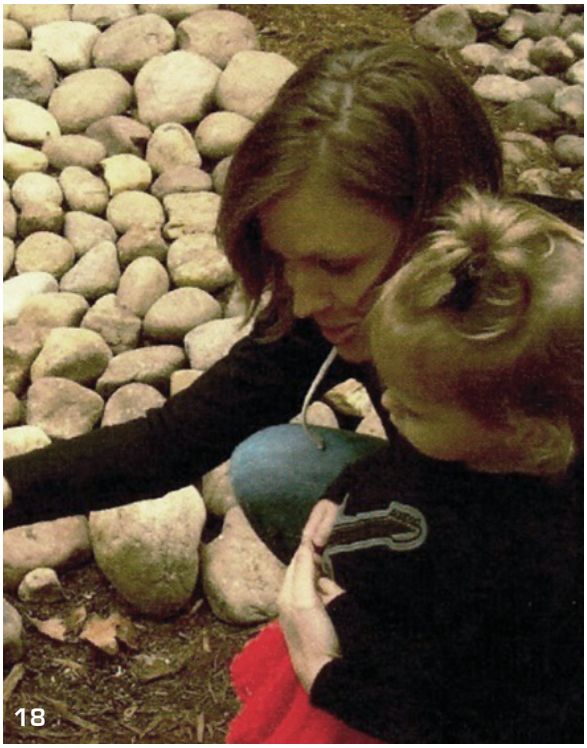
- Public utilities, such as wastewater treatment or stormwater facilities, could host public art that explores themes of conservation and sustainability, and reflects the Town's innovations in these areas. Depending on its visibility, the art might be freestanding or integrated into infrastructure elements such as stormwater swales, retaining walls, culverts, power distribution facilities, and pumping stations.

- The Town library and branch offices are institutions that explore Cary's history and culture. These 'knowledge" venues offer opportunities for public art to reflect upon any of Cary's historical and cultural themes. "Knowledge" venues are ideal for interpretative, educational art that memorializes themes in a clear, explanatory manner. Interpretative art is an expressive, but not abstract, art form usually accompanied by signage that tells a story. Interpretive art is important in communities like Cary where the historic and cultural identity is not as evident in the physical environment due to rapid growth and suburbanization that has occurred.

- Cultural arts facilities are places where public art can be displayed in new, surprising, and even whimsical ways. `The theme of the art is not as important as the experience of the product. Integrated, functional, and freestanding art projects would be ideal at cultural facilities. The Cary Arts Center is a good examples of the variety of locations where, and ways in which public art can be displayed; the outdoor classroom, plaza design with solar pavement lighting, the architectural *Fly Tower* with glass sculptured forms, as well as the integrated art in the interior of the building using historical themes of the site and community can be looked to for inspiration.

- Regional sport centers attract large crowds and are an opportunity to introduce important events or people related to the sport or site,, in a way that creates a fun and enjoyable experience for visitors. Functional art objects such as outdoor seating; art integrated into buildings, gates, and infrastructure; and freestanding art are all appropriate types of public art at sport centers.

- Finally, the Town's infrastructure includes streets, transit facilities, and bus shelters; streetscape elements, and everyday objects are opportunities for artistic flair that unifies the public realm and tells the Cary story. The art themes for these projects should be site specific, and will depend on the type of infrastructure. For example, integrated or partially integrated art is preferable over freestanding projects. Functional art can energize transit facilities, such as bus shelters and bicyclist racks.



18. *Stoneleaf + Fairy Circle* is an example of an interactive installation that can be both educational and beautiful. Giant mushroom sculptures add further inspiration for children.

19. Mushroom sculptures add interest to the *Stoneleaf + Fairy Circle* installation.

20. A large ant sculpture becomes an iconic addition to the landscape, enhancing pedestrian experience along a trail

Parks and Greenways

Parks and greenways are natural settings dedicated to passive and active outdoor activities. These natural settings could host art with such themes as topography and geological forces, ecosystems, changing seasons, local history, the cultural landscape, environmental stewardship, and native flora and fauna. The relationship of the art to its setting is critical. Although these public art themes are appropriate for both parks and greenways, the activities that take place in these two places differ, and, therefore, present distinctly different opportunities.

Parks

Parks are typically expansive areas designed for recreation, picnicking, and social gatherings. Public art in parks should be interactive, offering opportunities for discovery and surprise. Public art opportunities and themes in parks might include:

- Functional art that provides seating (e.g., picnic tables)
- Art integrated into park infrastructure such as footbridges and paths
- Wayfinding elements and signs at trailheads and parking entrances
- Installations that invite contemplation in quiet or scenic settings
- Interactive art that engages people through individual and shared experiences

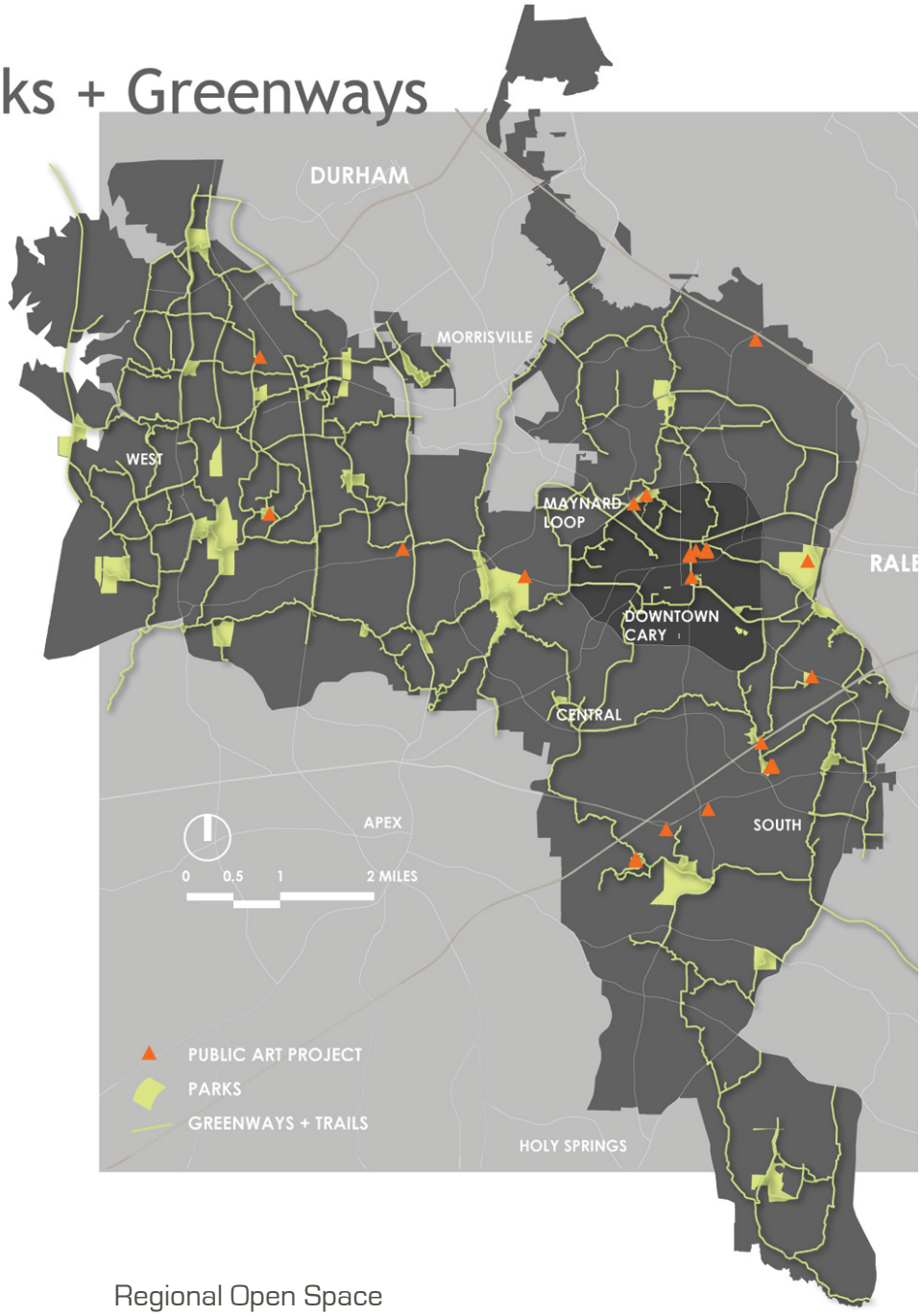
Greenways + Trails

Greenways and trails within parks are designed to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. The activities are generally limited to walking, cycling, and rest areas. Greenways and trails provide a safe, attractive and affordable means of exercise and travel. To encourage more users of local greenways and trails, public art can accentuate entrances and trailheads, act as landmarks and gateways, and can coincide with wayfinding elements. Public art can define trail corridors and enhance the overall trail experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

Themes and opportunities

- Wayfinding elements and signature artworks to highlight entrances and crossroads, which might require lighting to emphasize safety and accessibility.
- Trail markers to guide users along a path and provide direction at gaps in the path.
- Small-scale art projects that provide a sense of discovery or surprise along the path.
- For natural paths in pristine settings or environmentally sensitive or protected areas, public art should be limited to entry points.

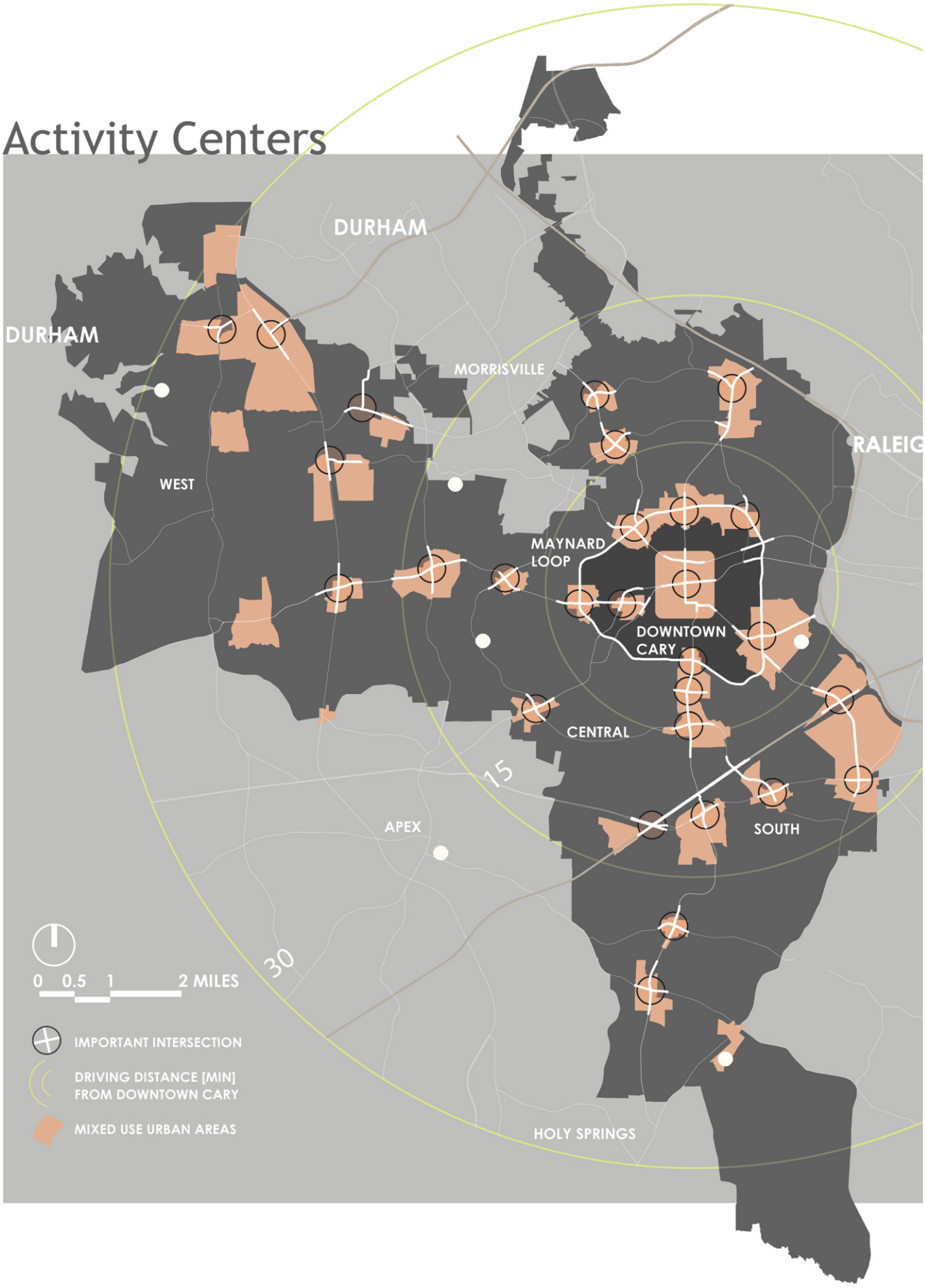
Parks + Greenways



Regional Open Space

The Town of Cary has been very conscientious about connecting to the regional network of greenways, trails, and parks, shown in the Parks + Greenways plan, above. As an important component of Cary's public realm and regional identity, public art installations should help to integrate the town with these vital spaces.

Activity Centers



Social Gathering Places

The Cary Land Use Plan organizes the Town by activity centers, which are the key "building blocks" of the Town's commercial and mixed-use developments. Activity centers contain the shopping, services, recreation, office and institutional facilities that serve the Town's neighborhoods. Higher density housing occurs in mixed-use activity centers and is encouraged for future development in these areas. According to the Cary Comprehensive Plan, activity centers are to be designed as walkable, compact, and pedestrian- and transit-friendly. Public art can be used to create focal points and increase legibility in these areas for a strong sense of community identity.

Cary's activity centers are ideal places for public art because artworks can enliven public spaces and add to the sense of place that the community envisions for these developments. The ideal places for public art are in areas of high levels of pedestrian traffic where art can be enjoyed by the most people, such as in plazas and streetscapes.

Themes and Opportunities

The theme and character of public art in activity centers should be site-specific, drawing from history, geology, folklore, and culture associated with the site. The form and type of art project should be sensitive to the character and scale of its setting; for example, digital lighting projects might not be appropriate for highway corridors due to traffic safety issues, while they might be well-suited to a pedestrian-focused downtown setting. Art with elements of sound might be appropriate in parks and large open spaces, but not in or near residential neighborhoods.

Fig. 21, 22 A green wall installation adds atmosphere, while the paving in front of the Cary Arts Center helps space become *place.*

23. *Her Secret Is Patience*, a magnificent sculpture ensures that there is interest during the day and at night.

24. *Her Secret Is Patience* activates the space at night.

25. This public art installation at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, creates an excitement in a space that would otherwise be unused during the night. Through projection, blank walls become temporary canvases.

A Vibrant Downtown

Cary's vision for Downtown is a "unique, vibrant, dynamic, pedestrian friendly location; a regional destination and a place to live, work, and recreate", according to the 2001 Town Center Plan. Downtown Cary, defined broadly as the area within Maynard Loop, and bounded by Harrison Avenue, Walker Street, Chapel Hill Road, and Dry Avenue, is the heart of Cary. Civic facilities, commercial businesses, an arts center, residences, neighborhoods, and a park create the potential for a lively, vivacious center. Cary's current planning strategies for downtown revitalization include bringing higher densities to areas close to the existing Cary Depot Amtrak Station, as well as increasing the mix of uses by attracting more shops, restaurants, entertainment, and offices. Additional planning studies (Town Center Civic & Cultural Arts Plan) recommend a cultural arts district along Academy Street.

Public investment in line with this revitalization strategy began with the redevelopment of the old Cary High/ Elementary School at the southern end of Academy Street into an Arts Center, followed by the acquisition of a vacant building on Chatham Street for a film and performing arts theatre. Cary recently hired a Downtown Development Manager to refine the downtown vision and oversee future private and public investment. One idea under consideration is the transformation of Academy Street into a boulevard from the Town Hall in the North across Chatham Street to Dry Avenue, emphasizing the southern vista of the Cary Arts Center. Other ideas include converting the public library building for an arts-related use, expanding the park near the Cary Arts Center, and constructing a new cultural arts building as part of an overall cultural arts district. Existing destination places in and around the town center also contribute to Cary's downtown. Public art plays an important role in these revitalization strategies by animating the streetscapes, emphasizing gateways, and connecting public spaces and destination places for a unique, walkable experience.

Public Art Project Locations

A Burgeoning Art Scene in Cary

Seven public art projects already exist within Cary's downtown, enhancing the experience of visitors and residents. Together these projects represent an exciting burgeoning art scene.

In this section the public realm was explored in order to determine overarching strategies that could maximize the impact of public art projects within the heart of Cary.

Fig. 26 Existing Art inTown of Cary, North Carolina

Themes and Opportunities

Public art plays a prominent role in the vision for revitalizing downtown Cary. Strategic placement and appropriate themes and types of art can enhance the streetscape, improve wayfinding and legibility, attract and engage people, and contribute to the destination qualities of downtown. Public art has already been installed in some downtown locations, including the Town Hall, businesses on Chatham and Academy, the railroad station, and the Cary Arts Center. New art projects should build upon recent and past investments, and improve the overall quality and experience of downtown Cary. Public art themes should be inspired by the history and stories of the town creating an authentic place unique to Cary. Public art themes generated during this master plan process include the history and geography of Cary, water, technology, the digital gaming industry and natural phenomena in Cary.

Procession + Arrival

There are multiple ways people find their way downtown and then navigate the town center. The main entry points to downtown should be emphasized through art projects at a scale for vehicular movement, serving as a landmark and signaling arrival. Public art is important in transition areas to serve as wayfinding objects and signal the entry into unique spaces. Transition areas are places where pedestrians and cyclists begin their journey into downtown, either from parking lots, greenways, or bus stops.

Landmark objects, repeating elements and integrated art in sidewalks, crosswalks, and adjoining plazas augment the downtown experience, and connect the experience from one site to another. Public art can enliven "dead areas" within the public realm, such as parking lots and blank walls.

The Diagram at left shows the main public realm and the locations at which public art can enhance the experience of arrival and procession downtown.

Destinations

Public art at downtown destinations adds a sense of identity that creates a memorable experience, attracts visitors, and encourages return visits. The Cary Arts Center, theatre, town hall, and rail station all include existing or planned public art as freestanding pieces on the site or integrated in the building architecture.

Downtown's destination places should include public art that enhances the visibility and grandeur of the place. The diagram to the left shows the location of destination places and their proximity to one other.

Ceremonial Space

Programmed events such as Cross Currents, Monumental Fire Sculpture project, Lazy Daze, Dreamfest, and Wheels on Academy, bring creative vitality and excitement. Special events reframe the gathering places at the centers of town, activating the public realm. Public art projects should be located to attract people to gathering places where events are held, and should coincide with existing Town traditions and events. By conveying the significance of these civic places, public art can create meaningful landscapes that will contribute to memorable experiences.

The public park and bank plaza are examples of existing or potential gathering places. Public art should be included in other sites where activities are programmed, such as farmers markets, arts festivals and parades. The Ceremonial Space diagram, at right, identifies the location of existing or potential ceremonial spaces, and how they are interconnected.

Priority Places for Public Art in Downtown Cary

Academy Street

Academy Street is the main street of downtown Cary, with the significance of the Town Hall at the north end, and the Arts Center as a visual culmination to the south. Public art along Academy Street should provide visual interest for both pedestrians and drivers. A series of works by one artist, or following a particular theme or concept would bolster the town's boulevard concept and define Academy Street as the center of the cultural arts district. The theme of the serial art could be based upon the history of Cary; water resources and management, cultural diversity; and the arts in Cary. In addition, there are opportunities for public art to be incorporated in benches and other streetscape elements; wayfinding maps and kiosks, and a future vest pocket park - an idea generated during the public art workshops.

Train Station

The Amtrak Train Station and the "bus shelter" along the tracks near Harrison Street provide public art opportunities to relate to the history of Cary, while serving to welcome and orient visitors. An artist-designed Welcome sign to Cary could be located where the train pulls into Cary, while inside the station building there might be an installation of historic artifacts and information. The entrance to the train station could additionally be accentuated by public art in order to direct passengers into the downtown district. The "bus shelter" closest to Harrison Street is a great opportunity to provide a unique shelter that serves as protection, but also is a special experience, and visually notable from Harrison Street.

The "Cary Theatre" Block

The area around the renovated Cary Theatre should be inviting and encourage visitors and citizens alike to stay in town and enjoy local events, activities, and shops. Opportunities include strategic locations for both planned and impromptu performances, such as music, readings, and story telling. Paving and/ or "downtown" lighting designed by an artist may be part of creating a sense of place.

Temporary Art

Temporary public art offers opportunities for art projects that are only possible in a specific space and time frame. The scale and excitement of these art projects can provide a riveting sense of excitement and discovery. Opportunities include performances (dance, theater, story telling, music) in specific locations, such as the steps of the Art Center, or, for example, the open green space across from the Arts Center. Other opportunities in interesting locations might be lighting, sound, and video projections. A "Movie Night" with movies shown on the side of a building is a great way for people to come together and experience Downtown in an exciting new way. Possible sites along Chatham Street include the Gothic Revival house, which might either serve as a backdrop for a performance, or renovated as a restaurant, or gallery. Other possibilities are the blank walls of buildings on Chatham Street and the bank plaza at the intersection of Chatham and Academy, which might become an opportunity for a mini park/seating area. Food is always a crowd pleaser, and snack wagons could be designed by artists for special evenings, like "Final Friday."

Academy Street and Dry Avenue Site

A downtown park, the Cary Arts Center, and numerous civic facilities surround the corner site at the intersection of Dry Avenue and Academy Street. Its prime location makes this site suitable for a wide range of public art. With its juxtaposition to the Arts Center on Academy Street, this site warrants a highly visible art project that defines this end of downtown as the cultural arts district. Public art should also be integrated into paths connecting the site to the park and other adjoining public places. This location could be a magnet destination place, bringing both visitors and citizens to downtown activities such as performances or a Farmer's Market. Public art should be incorporated into the early planning and development stages of this site so that work on both can proceed in tandem, saving time and money.

Gateways to Cary

There are many entrances and approaches to Cary from a range of arrival points. Public art should herald the gateways through a cohesive message for both arrival and departure, signage or other projects. Examples of gateway art types include lighted sculptures as beacons and artist-designed wayfinding signs. Major downtown intersections are a prime location for public art because they welcome the visitor to downtown and orient the visitor to downtown and orient the traveler through wayfinding or landmarks. The Harrison Street and Academy Street intersections on Chatham should be priority areas for public art.

27. *Lazy Daze* annual festival organized by the Town of Cary

28. Art Vendors line Academy Street during the *Lazy Daze* festival

29. During *Lazy Daze* Academy Street is full of activity, becoming a ceremonial space.

30. *Lazy Daze* festival poster showing festivities on Academy Street and the Cary Arts Center at the Southern end.