

**Town of Cary  
2010 Biennial Survey Focus Group Report**

**Executive Summary**

***Growth***

The two focus groups expressed divergent opinions on whether the Town should publicize the growth rate. One group thought it would not impact the citizen's concerns about growth while the other group thought it would be effective by giving a point of reference. Both groups were primarily concerned with maintaining the infrastructure aspects during growth including the water supply, police, fire, greenways, community centers, and parks. The increased number of traffic lights and the loss of greenspace/trees were also development issues. There was a call for more consistent or defined lines for growth or annexation citing the Morrisville and Cary border where it is difficult to distinguish each Town's borders.

Schools were also considered a major growth issue in both focus groups. Most of the participants with children enrolled them in private schools and pointed out this was common in their neighborhood. In addition, many of the children in their neighborhood were not assigned to their community-based school. The participants were also upset that parents with children in private schools did not get to complete the Wake County public school parent survey. Another growth issue discussed was the demographic changes. Previous growth was viewed as younger individuals and families while recent growth was baby boomers and retirees. There was concern for the services offered to both of these groups.

Overall, the Town was viewed as doing an effective job with growth by both focus groups. It was mentioned that Cary is fortunate to have a growth problem when compared to other areas with little or no growth. The Town was complimented for putting major projects on hold such as downtown development due to the economic conditions. The participants suggested the Town would be able to manage growth better by balancing development on the outskirts of Town with infill development inside Town. The participants felt moving infrastructure aspects to the outskirts of Town was too expensive while infill development would be less costly since the infrastructure items were already in place.

Finally, the concept of controlled growth was supported by both groups. However, it was recognized that inhibiting growth could result in negative consequences such as increasing the cost of living. The economic downturn was viewed in a somewhat positive light because it gave the Town time to take a breather and evaluate the projects. There was concern for development increasing the number of properties for sale and damaging property values. Overall, maintaining the infrastructure and

environmental aspects continued to be the major growth concerns. There was a call to set goals for growth and continually evaluate the impact of development.

### ***Traffic***

Both focus groups named several problem areas for traffic. Most of the problem areas were perceived to be within Cary. These include Highways 55 and 540 (poor light timing), High House & Cary Parkway (poor light timing and short left-turn lane), High House & Davis (poor light timing and no left turns), Cary Elementary School (congestion), Harrison & Maynard (no left turns), West Chatham & Cary Parkway (lane changes to left/right-turn only), Green Level (potholes), and Maynard (potholes). The suggestions to improve traffic were to have the intelligent traffic lights have the ability to work independently to allow cars go through when no traffic is present. Better traffic light synchronization and the use of roundabouts were also suggested as potential solutions. The participants also recommended increasing and improving bike lanes in Town. They also would like to see more signs to warn drivers of lanes that change to right/left-turn only lanes and to inform drivers about flow-through lanes. Finally, the acceleration lanes need to be lengthened when pulling off the Beltline to Cary Parkway.

### ***Street Maintenance***

The participants were aware that the responsibility for street maintenance such as fixing potholes and repaving depended on whether the road was a Cary or State road. However, few of the participants in both focus groups knew neither Kildaire Farm nor Maynard were State roads. Most felt it was a Town road. There was also uncertainty for Cary Parkway which is both a State and Town road depending on the location. On the other hand, most of the participants knew that Academy Street was a Town road. The participants in both groups felt Cary should not perform State road maintenance but continue to inform the State so they can make the needed repairs. There was a suggestion for Cary to make emergency repairs on State roads if needed. The Town's website was noted as a good place to determine if a road that needs repair is the responsibility of Cary or the State.

### ***Revenue and Spending***

The participants felt Cary was presently doing a good job of living within its budget. They recognized that the Town cannot slow growth, keep taxes the same, and add new improvement projects. They did not want the Town using any additional funds to pursue unnecessary projects. There was a suggestion to use online surveys to ask residents which projects the Town should undertake. The tax rate in Cary was perceived as low compared to other areas and several participants would be willing to pay more to maintain high-level amenities such as greenways. However, the participants were careful to indicate this did not endorse a tax increase. Both groups stressed the need for Cary to stay as efficient as possible and avoid waste. As for projects or activities that should be a priority, the participants felt maintaining the present facilities or infrastructure was most important. Both focus groups were

complimentary of the services and facilities the Town provides them and had difficulty thinking of projects the Town should have pursued or should not have pursued. They felt Cary had selected their projects appropriately. The only potential wasteful areas discussed were the information signs, usage of the aquatic center, and flashing yellow lights for left turns. The participants noted Cary selects projects to provide activities for all citizens and also to bring money into Town from visitors. There was a comment that the facilities are top-tier and bring a wow factor to Town.

### ***Communication***

When asked what things come to mind when they think of involvement with the Town, the participants mentioned going to Council meetings (or watching Channel 11), participating in focus groups, and serving on advisory panels. There were suggestions to improve Channel 11 by changing the somewhat chaotic method of information flow; although, it was viewed as an effective method to acquire information on events in Town. Emails and BUD were also viewed as effective information sources. The participants supported adding more Council members due to the growth in Town. It was felt that the current number of Council members could not represent all regions effectively. Overall, the participants were more concerned with being informed than actually being involved with Town government. One member indicated they were not involved due to apathy, but because they were satisfied with what the Town was doing. They liked the idea of an online suggestion box. The participants would be more motivated to get involved if the Town did something or proposed doing something they did not agree with. Schools and redundancy of Town services were discussed as issues that would possibly increase involvement. Between the two focus groups, only three participants had any level of involvement with the Town. This involvement was for a Homeowner's Association problem, setting up a neighborhood watch, and sign ordinance questions. Finally, all the participants used Cary News as their primary source of information. In the first focus group made up of younger participants, all of them who read print media also read it online. In the second somewhat older focus group, only two of the seven read online.