



## Chatham-Cary Joint Plan



# Key Facts About the Proposed Joint Land Use Plan

1. **The Joint Plan covers 11,517 acres.** That figure includes 10,753 acres of unincorporated land, and 764 acres within the Cary Town Limits (including developments such as The Preserve, other portions of Amberly, and part of Weldon Ridge and Stonewater).
2. **Residential Densities and Transitions.** The proposed arrangement of residential land uses transitions from lower densities near Jordan Lake to higher densities closer to the Chatham County/Wake County line. The plan recommends residential uses of 1 dwelling per 5 acres for all land that is located either (a) within 1 mile of the mean pool elevation of Jordan Lake, or (b) within ¼ mile of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) land around Jordan Lake. Proceeding eastward from the 1-mile lake buffer and ¼-mile COE buffer, residential densities generally transition upward, first to 1 dwelling per 3 acres, then to 1 dwelling per acre, and then 2 dwellings per acre. Finally, a small portion of the plan is designated at 4 dwellings per acre, reflecting the existing Del Webb active retirement community in Cary.
3. **Mixed Use Area.** The Joint Plan includes a Mixed Use Area of about 460 acres situated near the intersection of Lewter Shop Road and NC Hwy 751. The Mixed Use area is recommended to include (a) about 24 acres of neighborhood-supportive retail and services; (b) about 218 acres of residential at an overall average density not to exceed 8 dwellings per acre; and (c) about 218 acres for office and employment.
4. **American Tobacco Trail 200 ft. buffer.** The Joint Plan recommends there be a 200 ft. undisturbed, vegetated buffer maintained on both sides of the American Tobacco Trail. No clearing, housing, or development should occur within this buffer.
5. **School and Park sites.** The Joint Plan includes 2 future joint school/park sites, 2 future stand-alone park sites, and 2 Cary park sites that are already planned.
6. **Greenway Trails.** The Joint Plan recommends a future system of greenway trails, connecting park sites and other destinations.
7. **Rural Buffer Boundary Line.** The entire area west of this Boundary Line is designated for low-density development that averages one dwelling unit per five acres. Public water and sewer will not be provided west of the Boundary Line (either by Chatham or Cary). There are approximately 7,300 acres west of the Boundary Line.
8. **Design Guidelines.** Design guidelines will be developed for use by both jurisdictions to help guide the design of new developments. The guidelines will seek to ensure that future development is compatible with, and helps to preserve, the rural character and scenic quality of the joint plan area.

### ***By The Numbers:***

- **Timing of Development.** There is no timing element associated with this Plan. Neither the County nor the Town governments build subdivisions, office parks, or retail centers. Private developers and landowners do. There is nothing in the Plan that states that development has to happen, or the rate at which it should happen. That would depend on individual land owners

and market forces. However, it can probably be assumed that the Plan has a 20-30 year time horizon.

- **Existing Housing and Population.** At present the Plan area includes about 1,200 homes in unincorporated Chatham County, and another 1,700 homes (existing and approved) in the incorporated (Town of Cary) portion of Chatham County, for a total of about 2,900 homes. That translates into an existing population of about 3,400 people in the unincorporated portion of Chatham County, and another 3,800 people in the incorporated portion (Cary), for a total of about 7,200 people.
- **Long-Term Potential Housing and Population.** If – at some future date – every property within the plan were to be developed at the absolute *maximum* density for its land use category, then at buildout the entire study area might someday contain up to an additional 6,100 homes, for a grand total of about 9,000 dwellings. That could translate into an additional 16-17,000 people, for a grand total population of about 24,000 people.
- **Long-Term Potential Employment.** Most of the employment space identified by the draft plan is located within the Mixed Use area, where about 218 acres are recommended for office and employment uses, and 24 acres for retail and services uses. If – at some future date – the entire 242 acres were to develop, that acreage could typically support about 1.6 million square feet of office floor space, and about 180,000 sq. ft. of retail/services floor space, altogether supporting about 7,000 jobs.

**Joint Land Use Plan: Acreage by Category**

Land Use Category	Total Gross Acres	Acres Currently in Cary Town Limits
1 dwelling per 5 ac.	7,351	
1 dwelling per 3 ac.	213	
1 dwelling per 1 ac.	765	46
2 dwellings per 1 ac.	1,857	290
4 dwellings per 1 ac.	335	301
Mixed-Use – Commercial portion	24	
Mixed-Use – Office portion	218	
Mixed Use – Residential portion	218	
Institutional (pvt. school + church)	54	54
Public Parks and Pvt. Golf	482	73
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>11,517</b>	<b>764</b>

Figures in the table at left do not account for the 200+ acres that will be needed for public schools and 4 of the 6 parks. That land will eventually need to be taken from the total acres for certain land use categories, depending on final school and park locations.

The figures in the table also do not include sites that Chatham County has already zoned as nonresidential.

- **Low Densities Predominate.** As can be seen in the table, over 8,300 acres are at 1 dwelling per 1-5 acres – about 72% of the total plan area.
- **Open Space.** The figures in the table above do not reflect the amount of open space that will eventually be permanently preserved in future development projects for regulatory stream buffers, required public parkland dedication, required open space, perimeter buffers, streetscape buffers, wetlands preservation, etc. At buildout, such areas will amount to many hundreds of acres.



# Questions & Answers About the Proposed Joint Land Use Plan

**Q: What exactly is the Chatham-Cary Joint Land Use Plan?**

**A:** Once completed and officially adopted by both the Chatham County Board of Commissioners and the Cary Town Council, the Joint Land Use Plan will establish the official long-range policy for guiding growth and development within the plan area. The Joint Plan will establish a common long-term vision for future land uses, transportation, parks, the environment, and open space. The plan seeks to protect Jordan Lake while also provide economic opportunities.

**Q: Once completed, how will the Joint Plan be used?**

**A:** The Plan will be used by Chatham County and Cary to help guide infrastructure planning (roads, water, sewer, parks, etc.) and as the basis for evaluating private development and zoning proposals submitted to either local government. Lastly, private landowners, area residents, and businesses will use the Plan to help guide their own investment decisions.

**Q: Why does the plan designate 7,351 acres for a density of 1 dwelling per 5 acres?**

**A:** The purpose of this low density is to protect Jordan Lake water quality and to preserve rural character. Chatham County applies a similar density designation of 1 house per 5 acres on average, with no lot smaller than 3 acres, within a ½ mile buffer along many portions of the Haw, Rocky, and Deep Rivers.

**Q: Within the 1 dwelling per 5 acres area, why does the Plan recommend limiting a lot's total impervious surface area to a maximum of 8%?**

**A:** The impervious surface limit was set to enable future development to meet water quality goals and standards currently under consideration by the State for the watershed, without having to use on-site engineered stormwater controls or best management practices.

**Q: Why doesn't the Plan Map show specific sites for new schools?**

**A:** County school planners prefer to indicate school facility needs for a general geographic area, rather than indicating specific properties or sites. There is a practical reason for this: when the County School System seeks to acquire a new school site, its buyers look for available properties on the market, or may even approach individual owners to see if they might be interested in selling. The school system then looks competitively for the best site at the best price. At the very early stage of developing a Joint Land Use Plan for this area, it is still far too early for the County School System to know which properties might be needed or available.

**Q: Why doesn't the Plan Map show any new roads, or recommend specific roadway improvements?**

**A:** As the planning process moves forward, when the Chatham-Cary Joint Issues Committee considers plan changes in response to your public comments (sometime in early 2010), the joint staff will develop estimates of future peak-hour traffic generation and the impact on local roads. We will then be able to provide recommendations for roads that may need to be widened in the future, or new roadway connections that may be advisable.

**Q: Why are Historic Inventory properties shown on the Plan Map?**

**A:** The historic inventory properties are shown on the Plan Map for reference only, and to provide a context for the land use recommendations. The sites on the maps were identified by the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office in a survey they conducted about 25 years ago. We have not yet field-verified that all the sites are still in existence. If you have suggestions or concerns about these historic properties, please provide your input on the Comment Form.

**Q: I notice that some properties are split by land use categories on the Joint Plan Map. How would those properties be treated?**

**A:** In evaluating a rezoning or development proposal, the governing jurisdiction would simply calculate the housing yield recommended by the Plan on each part of the property, and then add the two numbers together to arrive at a recommended total housing yield.

**Q: I notice that some County subdivisions are included in land use categories that don't seem to match their lot sizes. Why is that?**

**A:** There are two reasons. First, the primary intent is to convey the overarching concept behind the Plan – namely that residential densities should gradually transition downwards – in bands of successively lower densities – as one moves from the County Line towards Jordan Lake. If every subdivision was “cut out” to represent its own particular density, the Plan Map would appear “chopped up” into a Swiss-cheese pattern, making it hard to convey that concept.

Second, the land use categories used in the Plan are defined in terms of the highest density that would be allowed within the category, and not the lowest. That is, within an area designated as “1 dwelling per 3 acres” it would still be acceptable to have subdivisions at densities less than that. This is in fact exactly how County zoning works. Existing County subdivisions are zoned RA-40 (i.e., minimum lot size of about one acre), even though such subdivisions may include lots much larger than one acre.

## To Learn More...

1. Visit the Web page for the Plan at: [www.chathamnc.org/jointchathamcaryplan](http://www.chathamnc.org/jointchathamcaryplan)

2. You can contact project staff:

Chatham County Planning Department: Jason Sullivan, Acting Planning Director,  
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3. Send comments or questions in writing to:

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