
Compiled Focus Group Meeting Summaries

Five focus group meetings were held between October 16, 2017 and November 14, 2017 in support of Advance Apex. The focus groups represented different areas of interest relevant to the planning process. Summaries of the focus group meetings are provided in this compiled document. Page references provided in the Table of Contents refer to PDF pages.

Transit	2
Development	5
Schools.....	16
Bicycle and Pedestrian.....	23
Downtown.....	33



Transit Focus Group Meeting Summary

Date: Monday, October 16, 2017

Time: 4:15 pm – 6:15 pm

Location: 3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall, 73 Hunter Street

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to explain to participants the purpose and steps of the Advance Apex planning process, learn more about the committee’s vision for transit in the Town, and get into details about how the transit system can be enhanced through Advance Apex.

Meeting Outcome

Feedback from the meeting will help guide the development of transit recommendations for Advance Apex. Input will also guide how the transit network related to other transportation modes and surrounding land uses.

Meeting Attendees

The Town’s standing transit committee met to begin discussing the vision for Apex’s future transit services. The following attendees were present at this meeting.

- Andy Werking, Transit Committee
- Sara Owen, Tree CAP/Steering Committee
- Kurt Pfeifer, Withers Ravenel, Inc.; Apex Chamber Board
- Nick Bryant, Transit Committee
- Angela Reinke, Town of Apex, P&N
- Bonnie A Parker, CAMPO
- Town Staff
- Planning Team

This group will meet again during Advance Apex to dig deeper into service recommendations.

Key Takeaways

- New funding is available to Wake County jurisdictions to explore expanded local transit service, which may potentially include circulator routes.
- Generally, the group agreed that funding a local circulator is a higher priority than enhancing the regional service between Apex and Raleigh/RTP beyond what is included in the Wake Transit Plan.
- A significant portion of the meeting was spent discussing the idea of a transit circulator, as well as details such as routing, stops, and vehicle types. Transit corridors and stop locations generally fell into one of the following categories:
 - Olive Chapel Road
 - Downtown
 - Hospitals

- Community Center
- Parks
- Middle and High Schools

Agenda

The meeting agenda and discussion items are reviewed in this section.

Introductions

- Participants were introduced to each other as well as the project team.
- A review of previous meetings briefly discussed the Wake Transit Plan and Cary Transit Administrator lessons learned, as well as the transit stop inventory and bus rides to Raleigh on the R-line.

Purpose of Advance Apex, Work Plan, Public Engagement

- The purpose of Advance Apex, the work plan, and the public engagement process was provided in the PowerPoint presented at the meeting.
- It was mentioned that at the time of the meeting, 600 people had participated in the online survey. It was also noted that the survey was still open for comment and participation by attendees was highly encouraged.

Purpose of the Focus Group Meeting

- The role and importance of the focus group and the meeting was explained and supplemented with information in the presentation.

Transit Vision Discussion

- The group discussed the importance of having a circulator between both neighborhoods and downtown.
- The group's vision, and the vision of the Town, is to live, work, play in Apex.
- Participants stated that there needs to be both a North/South circulator and an East/West circulator.
- There was also a desire for an all-day service in and out of downtown Raleigh.
- It was mentioned that transit needs predictability to be effective.
- Town staff discussed lessons learned from Wake Forest transit. Wake Forest was the first jurisdiction outside of Raleigh and Cary (within Wake County) to start up a transit circulator service. One of the keys to the success of the line is that it is a free service, thereby assisting those who are transit dependent. The initial routing specifically tried to serve areas with high transit dependence. Observers also noted the successful identification of major destination points within the Town, making this a desirable route to travel.

Transit Detail Discussion

- The conversation in the meeting shifted to a discussion of a potential circulator within the Town of Apex. The group discussed having it serve downtown Apex and all of the Apex Peakway. Key connections and destinations include:

-
- Parkside Town Commons
 - Connection to 55/Walmart/Cambridge Village, Villages at Broadstone
 - Shangri-La trailer park
 - Apex Mobile Estates trailer park
 - It was mentioned that the west gap in the Peakway should be completed by 2019, however there is no schedule as of yet for the east gap.
 - The group further discussed the following key destination points around the community, both for a potential circulator or for other fixed-route transit service:
 - Hospitals
 - Apex Medical Center/Wake Med Apex Healthplex
 - Regency Park- Wake Med Cary
 - Regency is a proposed new transit hub for GoTriangle
 - Community Center
 - Parks
 - Apex Nature Park
 - Town Hall Community Center
 - Jaycee Park; end of Beaver Creek greenway next to Peakway
 - Apex Community Park
 - Guidance should also be provided on how to get to the park from the existing transit routes, such as connections through Pine Plaza Drive.
 - Middle and High Schools
 - An East/West connection through Olive Chapel was also proposed to connect to downtown Apex, serving Beaver Creek (potentially utilizing the existing but unused transit shelter), adjacent park facilities with future greenway connectors, and the Richardson Road area.
 - One member of the focus group provided a route with listed stop locations. This route and stop suggestions can be found below:
 - Chatham or Center on Salem
 - 55 and South Salem
 - Salem Village
 - 64 and Salem
 - Haddon Place and/or Haddon Hall
 - Target Shopping Center
 - Peakway; South Salem
 - Highway 55; Walden Creek to high school
 - Tingen Road at South Salem
 - Laura Duncan at 64 (or Costco) and Peakway
 - Old Raleigh at Peakway
 - Hunter Street Park
 - Apex Community Park
 - Town Hall



Development Focus Group Meeting Summary

Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Time: 10:00 am – 11:00 am

Location: 3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall, 73 Hunter Street

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to explain to participants the purpose and steps of the Advance Apex planning process and to learn more about the focus group's vision for the growth of the Town.

Meeting Outcome

Feedback from the meeting will guide the development of transportation and land use recommendations for Advance Apex.

Meeting Attendees

24 participants discussed needs and opportunities specific to development. Participants represented the Triangle Community Coalition (TCC); Home Builders Association of Wake County (HBA); individual home builders, commercial builders, and engineering firms; the Triangle Apartment Association (TAA); Chamber of Commerce; Parks and Recreation; Economic Development; and CAMPO.

- Jacob Rogers, TCC
- Raquel Motenegro, Lennar
- Paul Kane, HBA
- Wes Reynolds, Macgus
- Ajay Gilleece, Gilleece & Associates
- Madeline Gabe, TAA
- Corey Schmidt, E1 Homes
- Suzanne Harris, HBA
- Barbara Todd, Gilleece & Associates
- Glenn Philips, Toll Brothers
- Gordon Poulsen, Forsyth Investments Company
- Glenn Futrell, Classic Road Partners LLC; Pinnacle Park Center
- David Whittington, SEPI
- Jimmy King, Peakway Development
- Jeff Roach, Peak Engineering
- Marlow Campbell, N4C Youth Nationwide Ins.; Apex Chamber
- Paul Black, CAMPO
- Debbi Ferm, Withers Ravenel
- Tristan Walters, Withers Ravenel
- Joanna Helms, TOA
- Baxter Walker
- Ester Leach
- Sharron Scroggs
- Stuart Jones, Jones and Clossen
- Town Staff
- Planning Team

Key Takeaways

- The interrelationship between population growth and transportation needs was a frequent conversation point. This discussion noted that transportation facilities in many places are inadequate for the current population, and that the pressure on these facilities has the potential to increase dramatically if Apex continues to grow at the rate it has been.
- The group debated the balance between affordable housing versus the desire for low density residential development.
- There was discussion from a 2045 perspective regarding autonomous vehicles and increased transit use.
- The group discussed the importance of land use and transportation and how there should be appropriate facilities and modes of transportation depending on the land use (i.e. sidewalks around schools or between adjacent retail areas).

Agenda and Summary

The meeting agenda and discussion items are reviewed in this section.

Introduction and Purpose of Advance Apex

- Participants were introduced to each other as well as the project team.

Meeting Purpose and Format

- The role and importance of the focus group and the meeting was explained and supplemented with information in a PowerPoint presentation.

Initial Survey Results

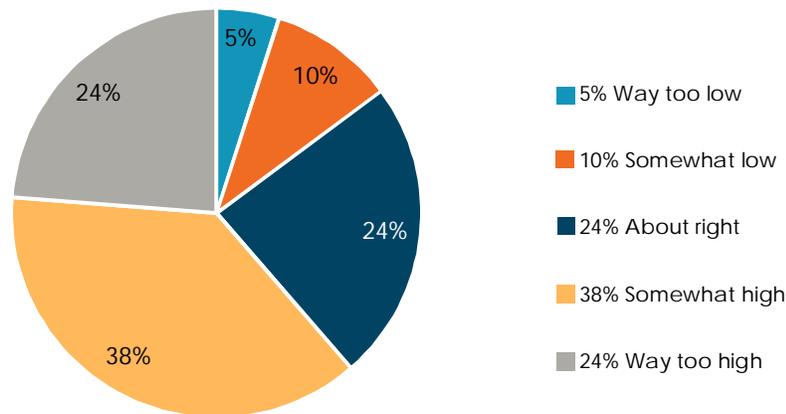
- Feedback from the Advance Apex online survey was discussed with the group. At the time of this meeting, the survey was still open for comment. Therefore, the results shown at the meeting and communicated in this summary are only preliminary. The subset of survey questions discussed during this meeting focused on the types of land use patterns and growth highlighted by members of the public, as well as applicable written comments.
 - The group wondered how the project team balances the contradictory desires that are apparent in survey comments. For example, responses could indicate that there is a desire for an increased level of funding for transportation and civic assets, but that the appetite for growth is decreasing. The question of how to address these opposing issues will be central to the development of the plan.
 - Participants wondered if survey respondents are thinking about the economics of their choices or strictly what they'd like to see done.
 - Participants believed that there is an educational opportunity out there to help the public understand how the planning process works from a project perspective. For example, the general public wants A, but they don't realize there's an impact on B in order to get to A.
 - It was pointed out that the questions within the survey do not address the cost of land.

- Through the discussion, it was noted that Town staff has a responsibility to gather public feedback, but it must be structured in a way that makes sense and is easy to understand. The parameters of a survey must be clear and concise, and typically cannot go into a lot of depth on any one topic.

Group Survey

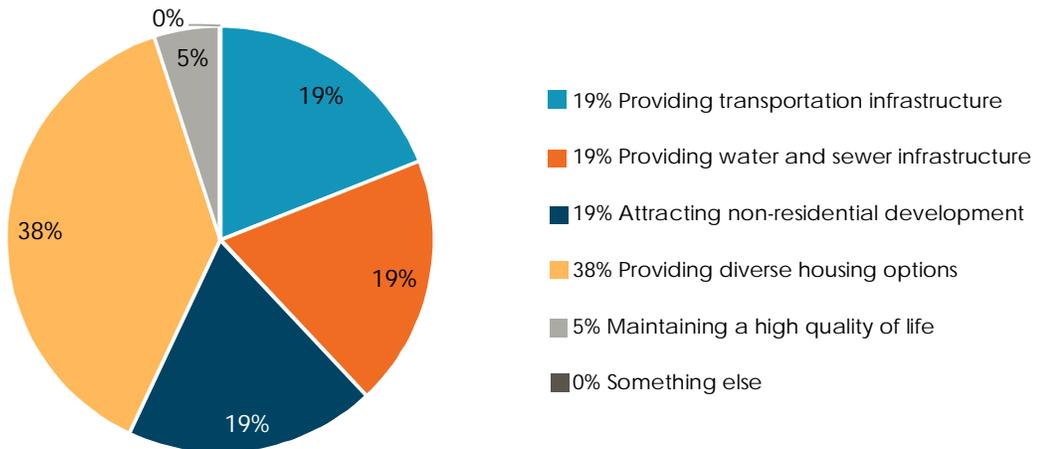
Following the initial survey results discussion, the Focus Group was given the opportunity to take an interactive survey intended to prompt discussion. The survey was conducted through Publicinput.com and allowed respondents to input their answers using their cell phones.

Question 1: According to the Planning Department's estimate, the current population in Apex is about 50,000. The residential units that have already been approved are anticipated to add about 23,000 more people. If the average growth rate (4.68%) experienced over the last 5 years continues to 2045, the Town's population in 2045 would be about 180,000, or just a little larger than the Town of Cary is now. What do you think about the accuracy of this 2045 population? Is it...



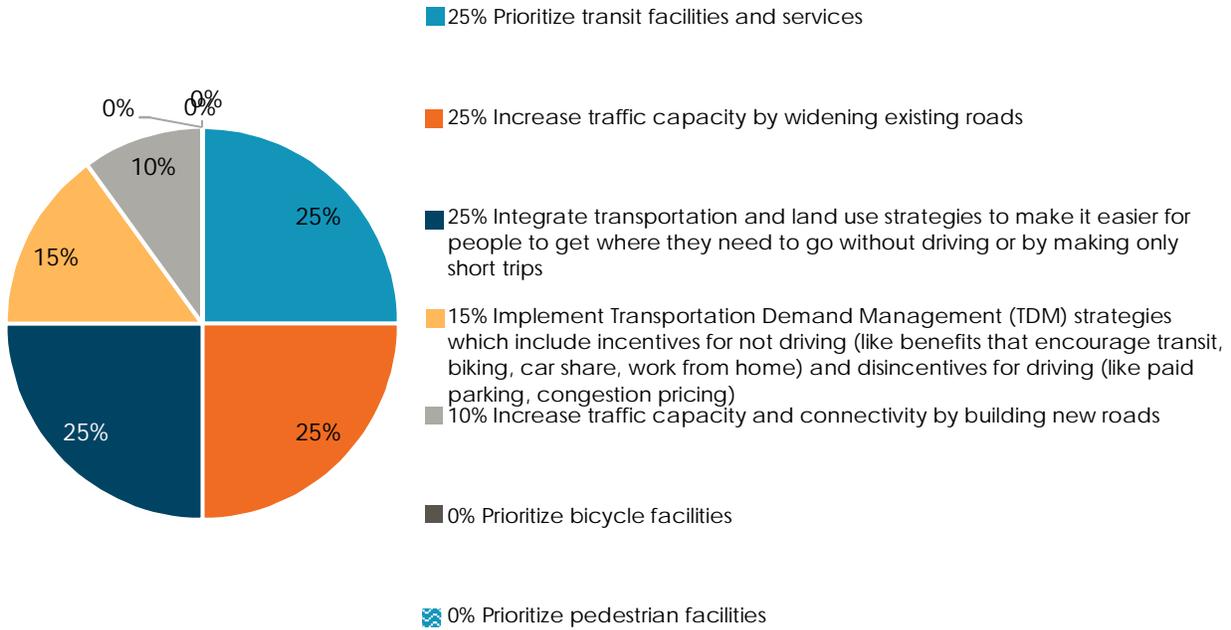
- The group initially leaned toward identifying this level of growth as too high. Through discussion it was noted that the Town of Cary has also grown rapidly. There was acknowledgement that in order for Apex to reach that level, significant changes would likely be needed, either in terms of the overall geographic size of the Town or the levels of density and intensity.

Question 2: As Apex experiences this population growth, what will be the single biggest challenge?



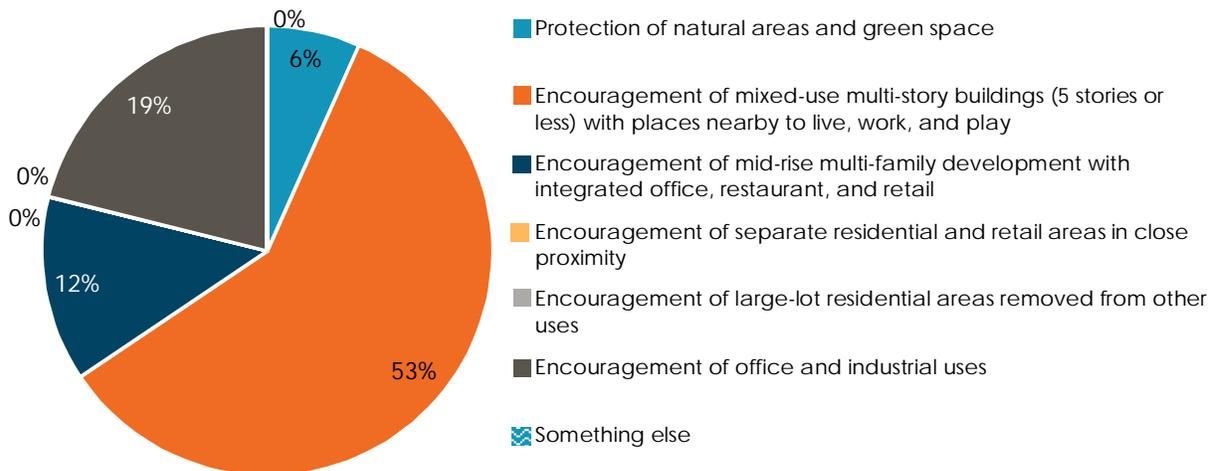
- This question explored the topic introduced in the previous question by highlighting key issues that may become apparent in the future. The largest response category, providing diverse housing options, was identified as an issue now within the Town. Participants noted that a continued rapid pace of growth could exacerbate this issue, along with putting a strain on infrastructure.

Question 3: What is the most important transportation strategy to implement as Apex grows?



- This question received a significant mix of responses. Through discussion with participants, it was noted that a blend of existing strategies and emerging priorities will come into play to shape Apex’s growth. There was also an acknowledgement that making a significant change to how the area chooses to grow could positively affect transportation.

Question 4: What is the most important land use strategy to implement as Apex grows?



- This question explored the land use side of future growth. The majority of respondents indicated they were interested in mixed-use development with live, work, and play spaces

included. This type of development can lend itself to the creation of more dense spaces that also have more internal tripmaking. As a result, this type of development can help reduce reliance on the overall transportation network.

Break-out Brainstorming Sessions

- After the survey was conducted, the group broke out into several brainstorming sessions with the primary topics of type and density of different land uses within the study area.
- Two main topics sprung from these discussions: population and transportation strategies.

Population

- Attendees stated that people will move elsewhere before they move vertically enough for high density.
- It was mentioned that development and population depend largely on market cycles. There will have to be some dips between current day and 2045 with the current growth rate otherwise it is not sustainable.
- Despite the demand for growth, people want to maintain the small town feel. Within the public survey and in the other engagement tools, this concept continues to be identified as one of the most critical to Apex's identity and success.
- The group questioned where all the people will be going what with the State and County recruitment efforts like that of Amazon.
- It was mentioned that over recent years, Apex has reaped the benefits of NC-540. In the future, areas to the west will see that growth as well.
- Participants discussed diverse and affordable housing options as one of the single biggest challenges that Apex faces:
 - Because the cost of land is so high, it is difficult to build/buy affordable housing options. Economics is a repetitive theme in the affordable housing debate.
 - If workers are unwilling to come, it is hard to maintain non-residential uses.
 - Density would need to be increased to provide affordable housing.
 - The group suggested that Council needs to be educated on the correlation between affordable housing and higher density.
 - The question remains as to whether Apex wants to be a bedroom community.

Transportation Strategies

- The most commonly discussed transportation strategies were transit, road widening, and the integration between transportation and land use. Each of those topics are addressed in this section.
- Transit
 - There was a general concern that Apex will not preserve the quality of life by continuing to do things in the manner it has become accustomed to. There is already a significant strain on the transportation network, which may reach a tipping point if it is not addressed.
 - The group felt that TDM and mixed use could be a driver to extending the life of existing systems and facilities.

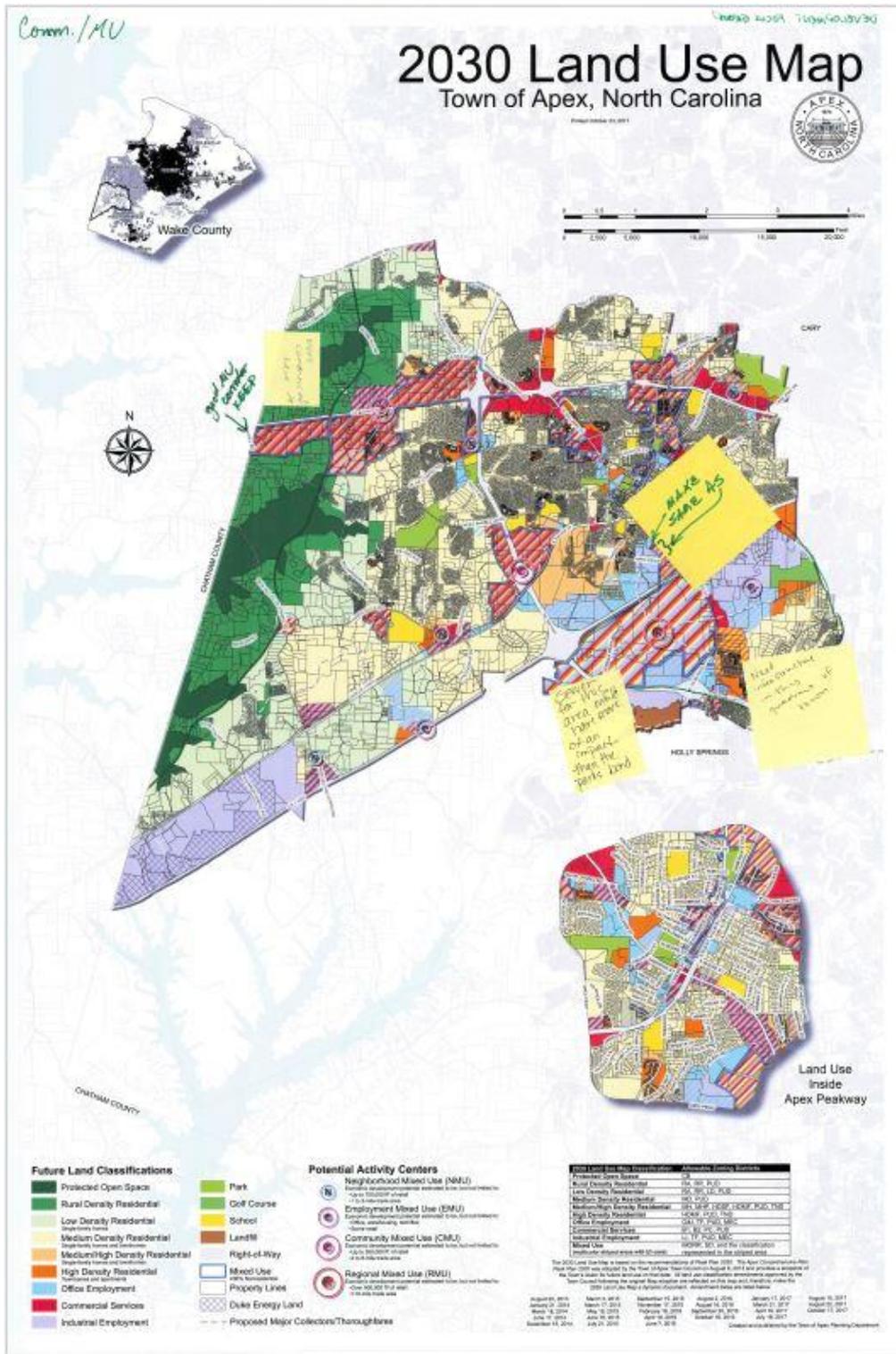
- Integrating TDM, transit, and land use strategies may be the more realistic approach. By creating shorter trips, it makes it more realistic to use other modes of transportation other than single occupancy vehicles.
- From a 2045 perspective, the group was interested to know how self-driving cars would be considered in the planning effort. Questions were also raised about the level of self-driving cars in our plan's interim years.
 - At this time, experts are unsure whether self-driving vehicles will create more or less cars on the road.
 - The freight community will likely embrace autonomous vehicles.
 - Although it is premature to estimate the full impact of this technology, the Town can begin to identify places (infrastructure development, policy making, or planning) that can benefit from getting a head start.
- Road Widening
 - Attendees believed the widening of streets has become a traditional, and for some, unpopular answer to solve road congestion.
 - In recent years, Apex has approved huge subdivisions on rural roads. The group wondered if more provisions need to be made to accommodate these growing areas.
- Transportation and Land Use
 - Based on survey results, the public is in favor of mixed-use facilities that are five stories or less as well as the encouragement of office and industrial uses.
 - Meeting participants noted that additional density must be created in order to support new uses.
 - Educational opportunities are a big part of making new land uses work. Members of the group stated that getting people bought in and understanding the approach to integrating transportation and land use will be a big help.
 - Participants noted an ongoing trend where businesses are beginning to locate to where people are and where employees live versus having employees drive to them.
 - The group noted that industrial uses often get overshadowed during these conversations. However, for the health of the community it is critical that industrial uses are seriously considered and not just reacted to by the public.
 - Participants noted that despite everything, there is not a single correct answer to any of these looming questions, and a comprehensive approach must be utilized to have effective change.

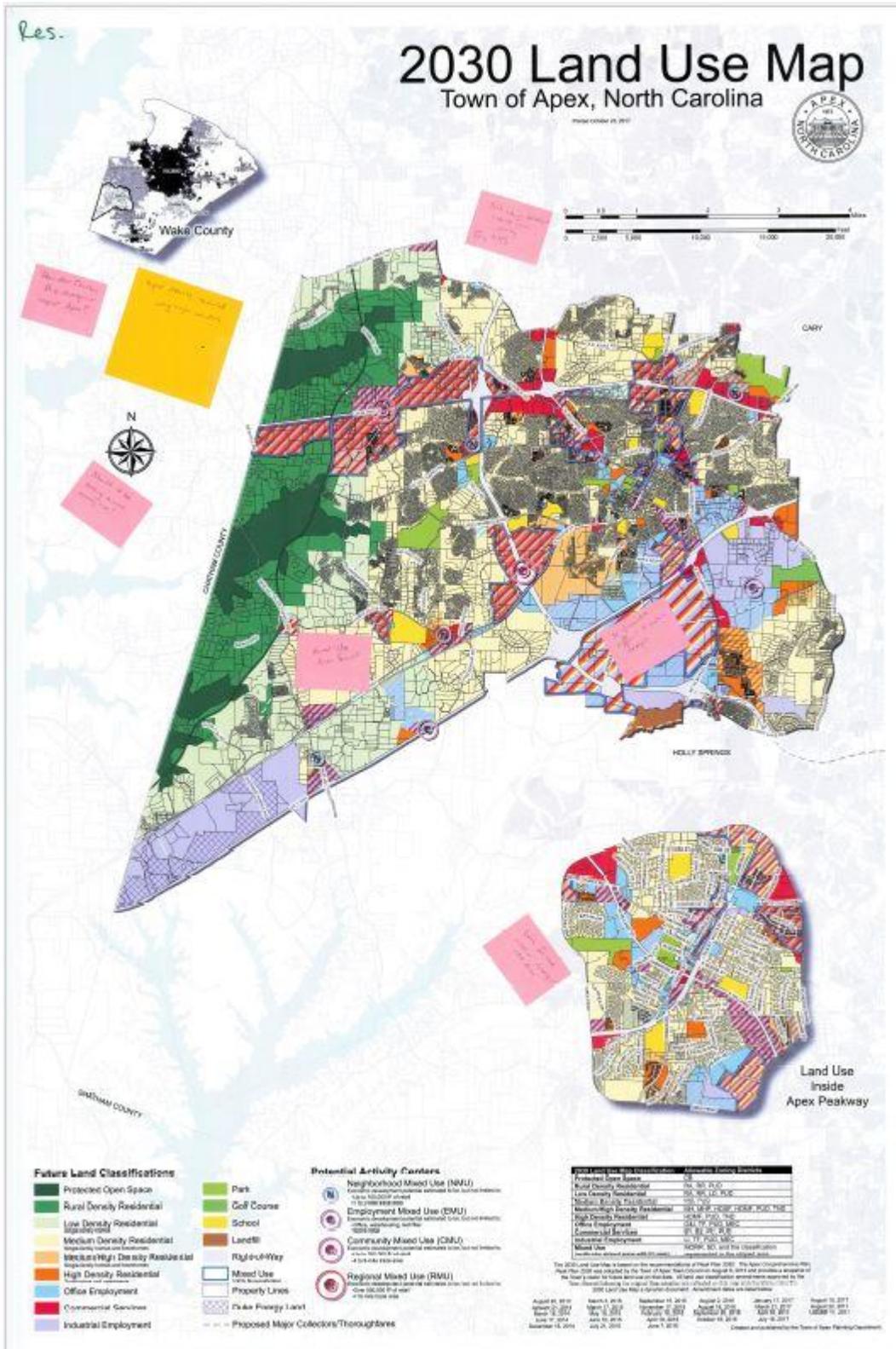
Other General Comments

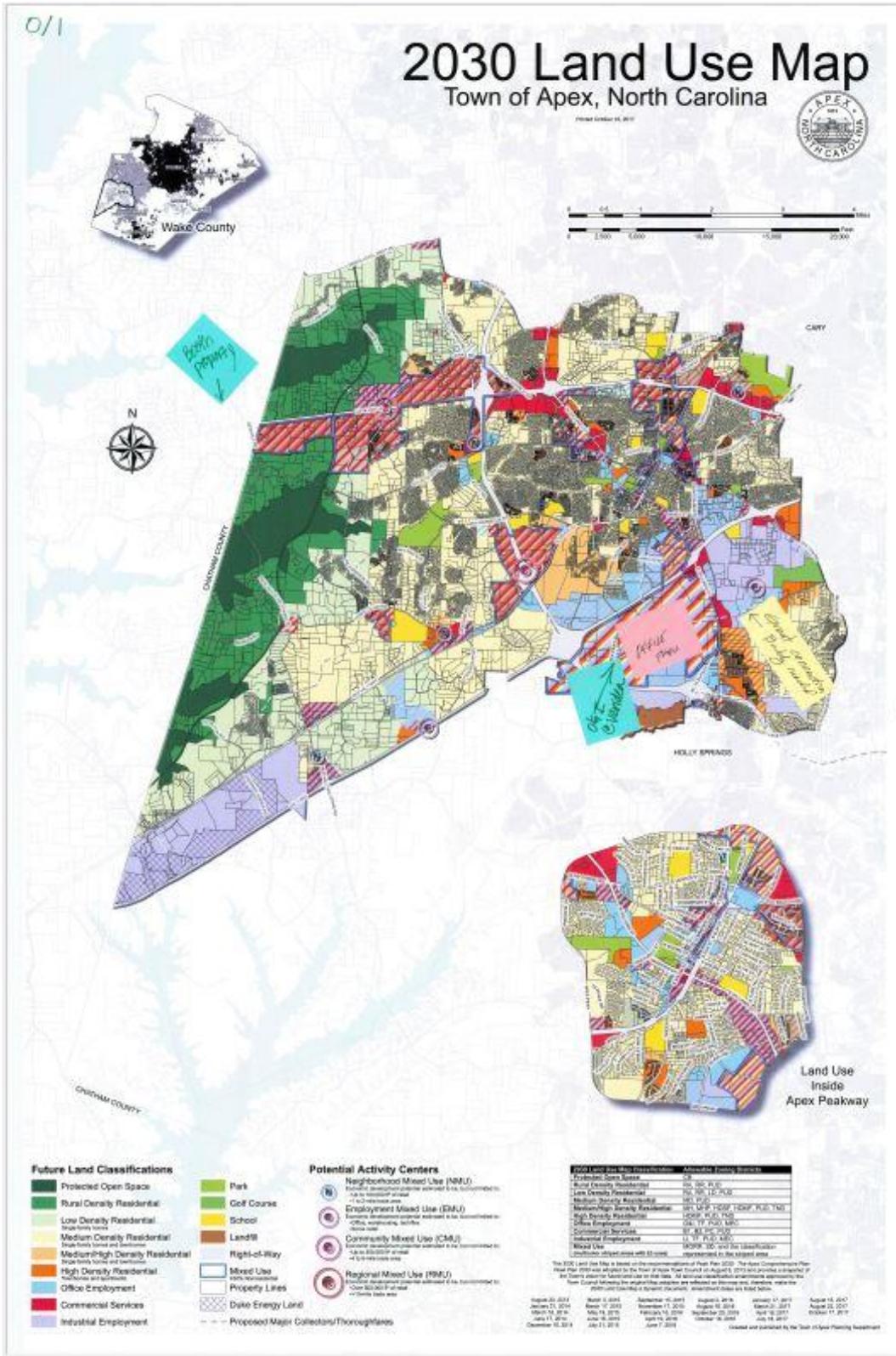
- The group stated that there is a substantial need to move infrastructure forward in the quadrant between Ten-Ten Road, US-1, and NC 540.
- It was mentioned that it is far too easy for Council to not stick to planned strategies for transportation and therefore plans should be made to help supplement these changes, as well as keep things on track.

Mapping Session

- Participants were invited to partake in a discussion/mapping activity. Their comments on each map can be found below and a map is attached for reference.
- Specific Comments
 - Map 1
 - More commercial along 64; good mixed use corridor
 - Make industrial portion of Williams Street industrial, commercial, office, high density residential mixed use
 - Sewer for Veridea Parkway area would make more of an impact than the parks bond
 - Need infrastructure in the southeast quadrant of town north of Holly Springs
 - Map 2
 - How does Chatham Park development impact Apex?
 - Higher density residential along major corridors
 - Think about development impacts from nearby Cary and Holly Springs
 - Should we be looking across county lines?
 - Mixed-use potential south of Humie Olive Road at Olive Chapel Road
 - Infrastructure along Veridea Parkway is sufficient to sustain development
 - Look for mixed-use development near downtown
 - Map 3
 - Booth Property large parcel off New Hill Road
 - Office Park off Veridea Parkway
 - Jessie Drive connection from Ten Ten Road to E Williams Street badly needed









Schools Focus Group Meeting Summary

Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Location: 3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall, 73 Hunter Street

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to explain to participants the purpose and steps of the Advance Apex planning process and to gather input on specific needs and opportunities associated with land use and transportation around schools.

Meeting Outcome

Feedback from the meeting will guide the development of transportation and land use recommendations for Advance Apex.

Meeting Attendees

Participants represented parents, a student, principal, Wake County Public School System Transportation Planner, Wake County Public School System Director of Real Estate Services, Safe and Active routes to school representatives, Police, Chamber of Commerce, Parks and Recreation and CAMPO (our regional planning agency). A list of attendees is as follows:

- Rachel Bradley
- Angela Reincke
- Ann Stephens
- Stephen Sposato
- Betty Paulen
- Amy Sackaroff
- Trevor Autphenne
- Sherry Presnall
- Marlow Campbell
- Amy Camp
- Kenneth Withrow
- Jennifer Delcourt
- Town Staff
- Planning Team Staff

Key Takeaways

- The majority of the group strongly agreed that supporting walking and biking to school should be a priority addressed by Advance Apex and the Town's upcoming Comprehensive Bicycle Plan.
- There was discussion about safety for students, parents, and faculty due to the lack of facilities, education, and enforcement regarding biking and walking. Many of the concerns about safety were related to driver and pedestrian behavior.
- As a whole, the group was split on whether biking and walking around schools was unsafe or fairly safe. Increased sidewalks and bicycle lanes, as well as maintenance of existing facilities, were suggested to help increase safety.

Agenda and Summary

The meeting agenda and discussion items are reviewed in this section.

Meeting Purpose and Format

The role and importance of the focus group and the meeting was explained and supplemented with information in the presentation.

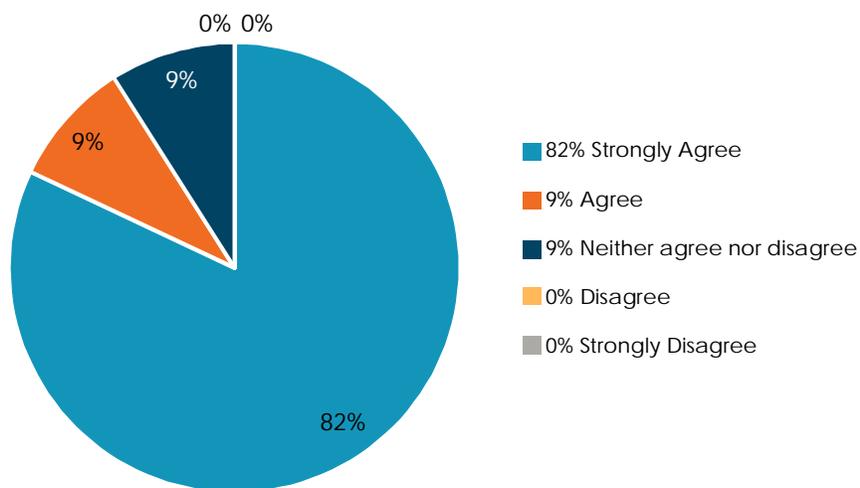
Initial Survey Results

- A selection of results from the online survey were introduced and discussed at the meeting. These results were noted to be preliminary, since the survey was still open at the time of the meeting. Questions that were reviewed focused on Apex’s most important transportation issues, travel to work or school, and other relevant written comments.
- Through the review of these comments, the group offered a couple of reactions to the survey results:
 - It can be difficult to add bike lanes to roads that don’t have facilities noted in an adopted plan.
 - More crosswalks and other precautions near schools would increase overall safety. Currently there are few to no crossing guards or lights which is concerning for parents, teachers, and students alike.

Poll with Discussion Questions

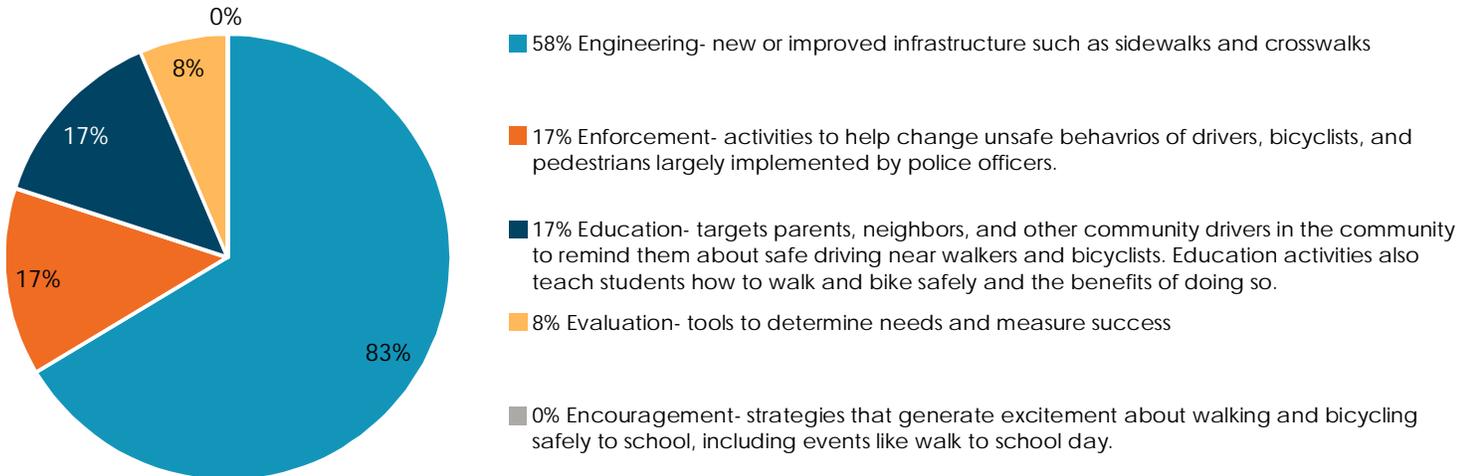
Following the initial survey results discussion, the Focus Group was given the opportunity to take an interactive survey focused on transportation surrounding schools. The survey was conducted through Publicinput.com and allowed respondents to input their answers using their cell phones.

Question 1: Supporting walking and biking to school should be a priority addressed by Advance Apex and the Town’s upcoming Comprehensive Bicycle Plan.



- Although there was widespread support for walking and biking to school, the group noted that it is premature to widely advocate for these modes of travel until the appropriate infrastructure and supporting programs exist.
 - Biking and walking provides an opportunity for exercise.
 - Current safety conditions were discussed, including the recent student pedestrian collision at Apex Friendship.
 - Attendees stated that roads near Apex Friendship are not supportive of biking/walking for children.
 - The group believed that Apex Elementary School is in a location that has potential for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. However, there are segments with unfinished sidewalks and there are safety concerns associated with crossing Apex Peakway.
- Participants discussed concerns about prioritizing funding for walking and biking projects in the area, acknowledging that there are many high-priority roadway needs that should be addressed. The various sources of bicycle and pedestrian funding were also discussed, noting that many bicycle and pedestrian projects can be completed in conjunction with roadway improvements.
- The group thought that with the addition of more charter and private schools, there will be changes in the system and likely more carpooling. During the discussion, it was noted that up to 14% of rush hour traffic is to and from school. As a result, these changes could have a significant impact.
- Participants suggested that if the plan can address safety issues, walking and biking is likely to increase.
- Participants discussed the benefits and drawbacks of remote drop-off locations. While these locations can promote bicycling and walking short distances, their unofficial status can lead to safety concerns or can undermine the success of the school's established circulation plan.
 - Remote drop-off locations were noted along James Street and Tingen Road. Apex Community Park is also used as an unofficial remote drop-off for Laurel Park Elementary School.
 - The group noted that the schools are unable to control the behavior of parents and do not want to create situations with significant risk.
 - From the perspective of the attendees from WCPSS, they need to know when people are in a walk zone, taking the bus, or carpooling.
- WCPSS participants noted that considerations such as greenways, bike, and pedestrian connections are being considered in the school siting process. However, finding available land in affordable locations that support multiple modes of transportation is a challenge.
- The group clearly expressed a focus on walkable communities. Participants noted that transit integration and bus stop siting is an important consideration within this discussion.

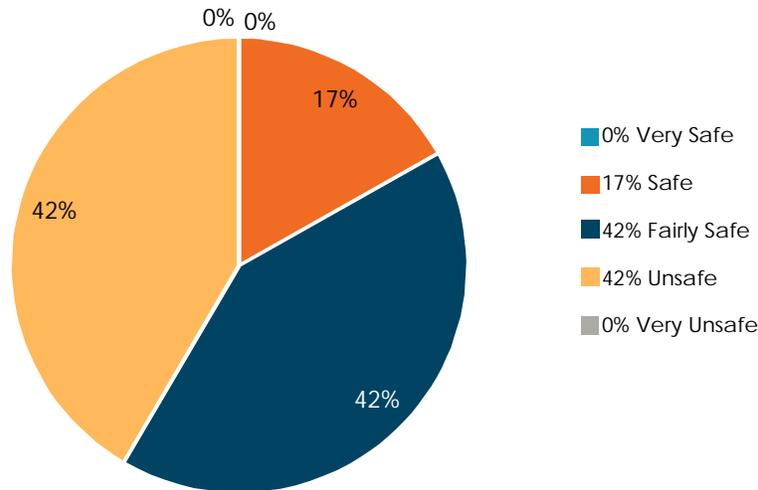
Question 2: NCDOT's Safe Routes to School uses "the five E's" to address Safe Routes to School/ Which "E" is most needed in Apex?



- The group noted that the need for infrastructure goes back to the general problem of development out-pacing transportation.
 - Participants commented that this is the current issue facing schools in Apex. The Town has exploded in such a way where the infrastructure is not there or has been unable to keep up.
- Participants mentioned that funding is a major barrier to the implementation of engineering solutions. It was noted that educating people (bicyclists, pedestrians, bus riders, and motorists) on how to use the system responsibly would lead to a more effective system.
 - The group suggested that further analysis take place to measure the best way to use funding. The role of prioritization within Advance Apex and the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan was discussed to address this suggestion.
- Once safety measures are already in place, participants noted that increased enforcement and the evaluation of each strategy's success is important to consider.
 - Members of the group noted Apex Middle School and Apex Friendship are prime examples of this issue. Parents do not follow the safety practices and educational mechanisms need to be put in place.
 - Participants suggested potentially blocking off certain routes to help people follow the rules set in place.
- The group believed that there are many transportation issues at and around local schools.
- The group noted the trend both in Apex and elsewhere of fewer children riding the school bus, instead choosing to take other modes. Suggestions about modifications to certain bus routes such as modifications to routes or introducing more direct service could be explored as ways to make the school bus more appealing.
- Participants noted issues within some of the on-campus transportation strategies as well.
 - It was noted that carpool is a significant issue, particularly at Apex Friendship. Parents are using the student parking lot and causing additional issues there.

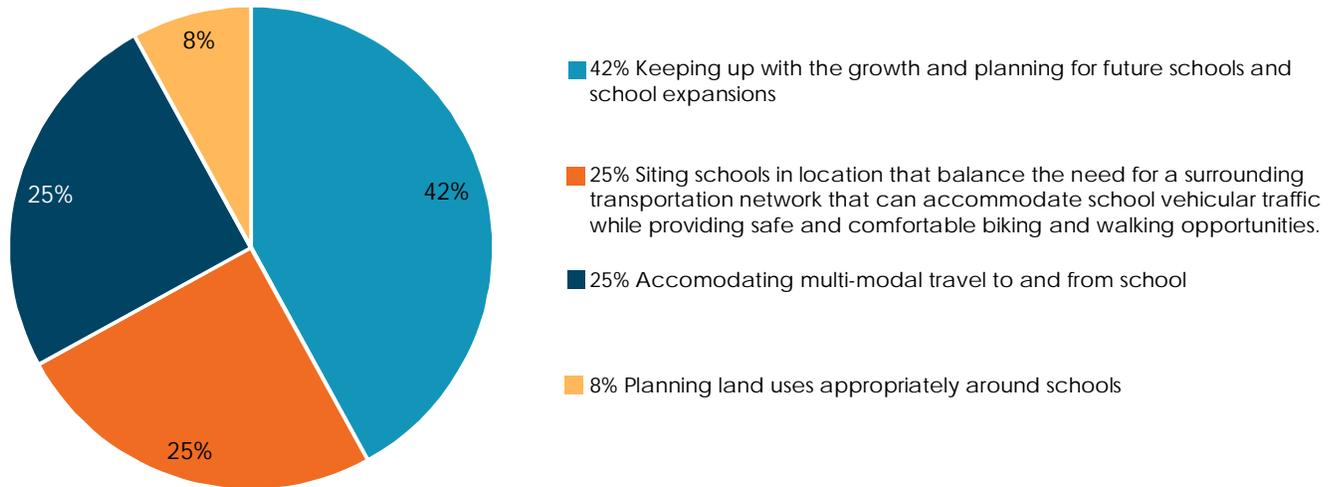
- The group also noted that safety walking from bus stops is a concern, particularly where supporting pedestrian facilities do not exist.

Question 3: As a whole, the multi-modal transportation network around schools in Apex is: Very Safe, Safe, Fairly Safe, Unsafe, Very Unsafe.



- About half of the group found safety conditions around schools to be fairly safe, while the other half found them unsafe. One participant in the group found the conditions safe.
- It was noted that there are safety issues associated with student drivers which are difficult to mitigate. The presence of unexperienced drivers should be a consideration in the identification and implementation of transportation choices around high schools.
- Participants stated that driving conditions around schools are unsafe. The group brought up Humie Olive Road as a prime example. There is a lack of shoulders on the road and it is only two lanes. New housing developments on this road will only magnify the situation. For the Humie Olive Road example, the group noted that addressing carpool lines may help the issue.
- The group mentioned that currently the network is safe for cars, but not much else. There is a perception that no significant multi-modal transportation network exists in Wake County despite the desire for one. *The lack of transportation options and consistency aggravates the safety issues.*
- The group thought it would be interesting to conduct a survey asking, "If it was safe to walk and bike to school, would you?"
 - Participants noted that some people will not walk or bike even though they have the option.

Question 4: What is the biggest challenge related to schools, transportation, and land use in Apex?



- The group listed several challenges facing schools. They can be found below:
 - Keeping up with growth
 - Siting schools
 - Accommodating multi-modal travel
 - Planning land uses appropriately
 - WCPSS participants noted that Interconnectivity is very helpful for school buses. Cul-de-sacs are difficult for buses to turn around in.
- Roads are often NCDOT maintained which causes a push and pull between school needs, town needs, and NCDOT needs. The long term transportation implications around a proposed school site should be considered - a school may be in a rural area now, but needs should be planned early on.
 - Participants noted that certain existing school sites have challenges because they were constructed using standards that are now outdated. For example, NCDOT has not always required ½ mile stacking. Schools built before this requirement have a higher likelihood of having carpool lines that spill out into streets.
 - The group discussed new schools that are being built, and how additional transportation improvements should be considered to help support them.
- WCPSS attendees noted that at a service level, school buses are a form of transit. This characteristic should be kept in mind throughout the design and planning process.
 - Participants noted that apartment design should include school bus stops in their plans.
 - Participants also inquired whether transit easements can be used for school bus stops despite typically being at intersections with sidewalk connections.

Mapping Session and Wrap Up

Participants were invited to partake in a discussion/mapping activity to locate specific areas of interest regarding biking and walking. Site specific comments were made during the discussion and further comments were not made on the maps.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Focus Group Meeting Summary

Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Time: 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Location: 3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall, 73 Hunter Street

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to explain to participants the purpose and steps of the Advance Apex planning process, learn more about the group's vision for bicycle and pedestrian travel in Town, introduce the Town's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan development process, and consider the details about how bicycle and pedestrian mobility can be enhanced through Advance Apex.

Meeting Outcome

Feedback from the meeting will guide the development of bicycle and pedestrian recommendations for Advance Apex. Input will also guide how the bicycle and pedestrian network is related to other transportation modes and surrounding land uses.

Meeting Attendees

This focus group will also serve as the Steering Committee for the Town's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan. The standard focus group format was supplemented with an overview of the bike plan purpose and process. Participants in the November 14 meeting represented several citizen cyclists, Police, Planning Committee of Town Council, Economic Development, Safe and Active Routes to School, Parks and Recreation, NCDOT, CAMPO, WakeMed Apex, and Wake County Public School System.

Key Takeaways

- Half of the attendees believed that the overall quality of the bicycle network in Apex is poor while 25% found it fair and an additional 25% found it good. The group found the existing pedestrian network to be 13% poor, 40% fair, and 47% good.
- The group discussed varying facility type preferences for different skill levels of bicyclists, and expressed a desire for a mix of facility types to accommodate all users.
- Gaps, or lack of connectivity between, sidewalks were continuously mentioned as an issue.
- There is a need for more bike and pedestrian infrastructure, especially along and across major corridors.
- Mixing land use types (e.g., ensuring retail is in close proximity to residential) was also identified as a strategy for promoting biking and walking.
- Attendees were very interested in identifying key origin and destination points and ensuring bicycle/pedestrian connectivity between them.

Agenda and Summary

The meeting agenda and discussion items are reviewed in this section.

Introduction and Purpose of Advance Apex

- Participants were introduced to each other and the project team.

Meeting Purpose and Format

- The role and importance of the focus group and the meeting was explained and supplemented with information in a presentation.

Apex Comprehensive Bicycle Plan

- Alta Planning + Design introduced the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan through a PowerPoint presentation. They discussed the role of the Committee in the plan's development, briefly highlighted outcomes, and discussed the integration of the plan with Advance Apex.

Initial Survey Results Discussion

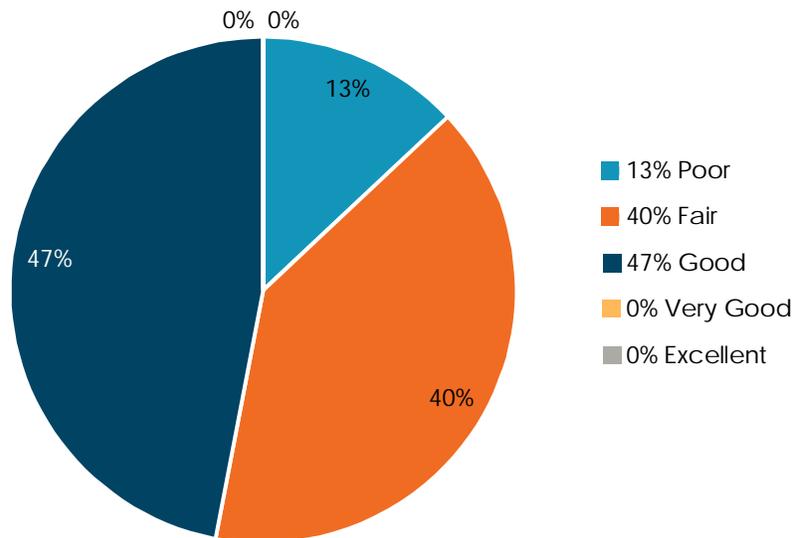
- Feedback from the Advance Apex online survey was discussed with the group. At the time of this meeting, the survey was still open for comment. Therefore, the results shown at the meeting and communicated in this summary were only preliminary.
 - Generally, the group concurred that the most immediate transportation issue facing Apex is congestion. Following that is the disconnect between land use and transportation decisions.
 - The group noted that locating commercial and office employment areas in proximity to residential areas, would facilitate bicycling and walking.
 - When reviewing the question of what tax dollars should be spent on transportation in Apex, the group was unsurprised that widening was ranked the highest. The group felt that recommendations for widening and new location roadways are what the public is used to seeing, thereby yielding a heavy response in the survey.
 - The group's discussion noted that not all solutions are mutually exclusive – many of these funding categories can be implemented in concert with one another.
 - When discussing reasons for not riding a bike, members of the group believed that the introduction of electric bicycles may change the landscape of the top two opinions (“There aren't enough bike lanes or greenways”; “It doesn't feel safe”).
 - Participants stated that debris is an issue on mainly state-maintained roads. The Town has a contract with a street sweeping service to clean locally-maintained roads. This is supplemented with the Town's sweeper.
 - Participants noted that continued maintenance along S. Salem would help as well.
 - The group noted that strategic partnerships, separated facilities, and attractive mixed use are ways to promote travel by biking and walking.

- The group believed US 64, Old US 1, and Olive Chapel Road are ideal for expansion of the bicycle and pedestrian network since they are pipelines to the west. These corridors also serve areas that have seen large amounts of residential growth in recent years.
 - Attendees mentioned that developments along these major roads should include bike/ped interconnectivity not only along the corridors, but across the road as well. Specifically, it was noted that there are too few connections across major roads or to schools.

Poll with Discussion Questions

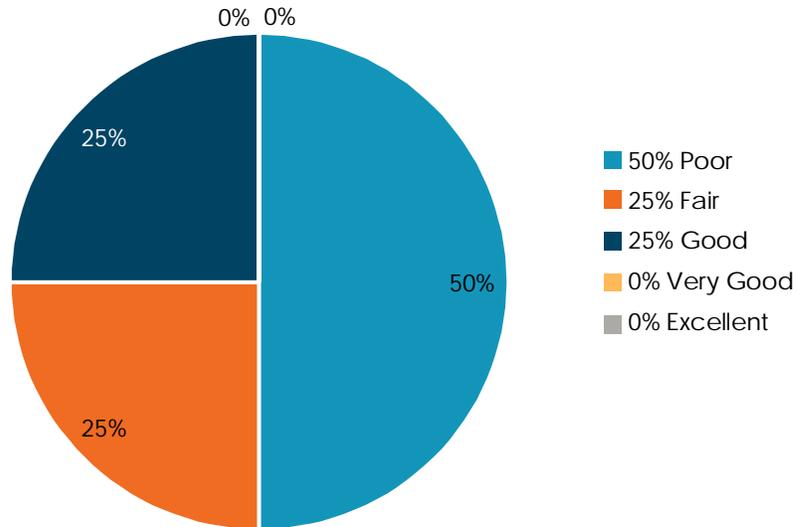
Following the initial survey results discussion, the Focus Group was given the opportunity to take an interactive survey focused on bicycle and pedestrian needs. The survey was conducted through Publicinput.com and allowed respondents to input their answers using their cell phones.

Question 1: Rate the overall quality of the existing pedestrian network in Apex.



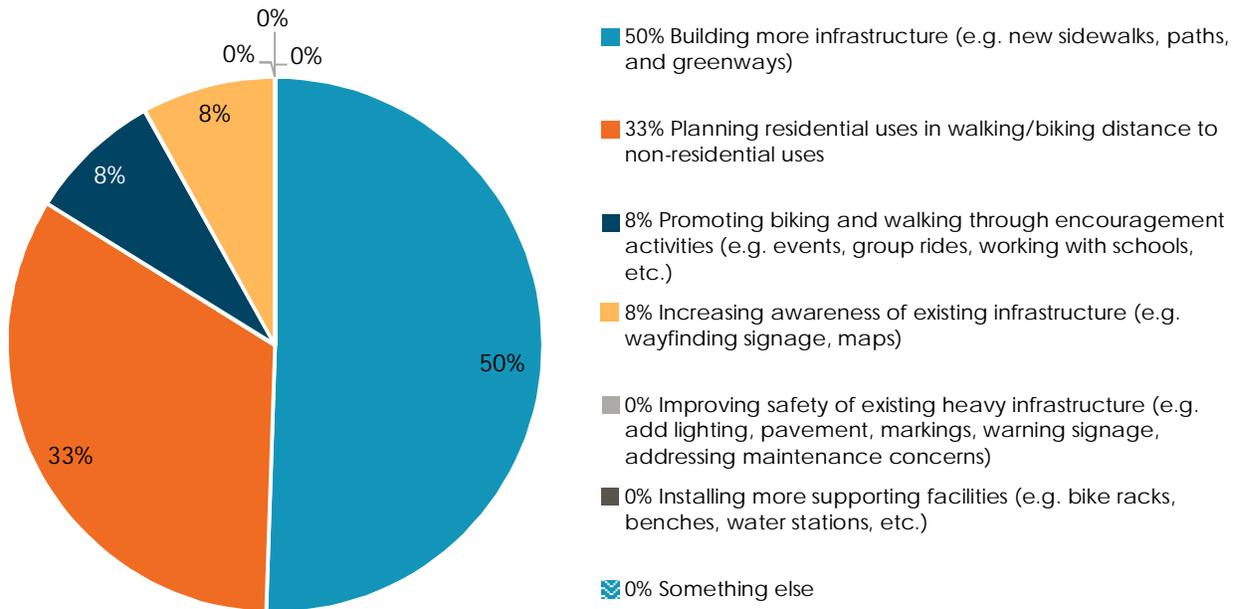
- The vast majority of respondents indicated they feel the current pedestrian facilities in Apex are fair or good. This question led to the remark that significant gaps in the pedestrian network remain.

Question 2: Rate the overall quality of the existing bicycle network in Apex.



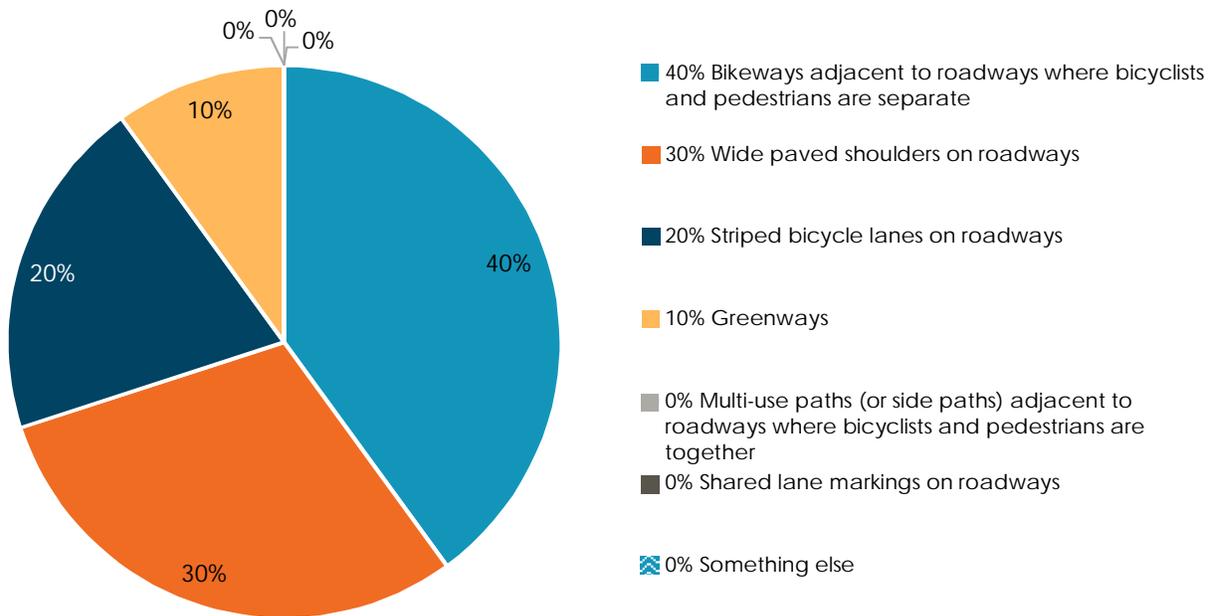
- Participants expressed varying opinions about the quality of the current bicycle network. Feedback was provided from members of the group that voted “poor” because of the lack of dedicated bicycle facilities in many parts of the study area.

Question 3: What would most encourage people to walk or bike in Apex?



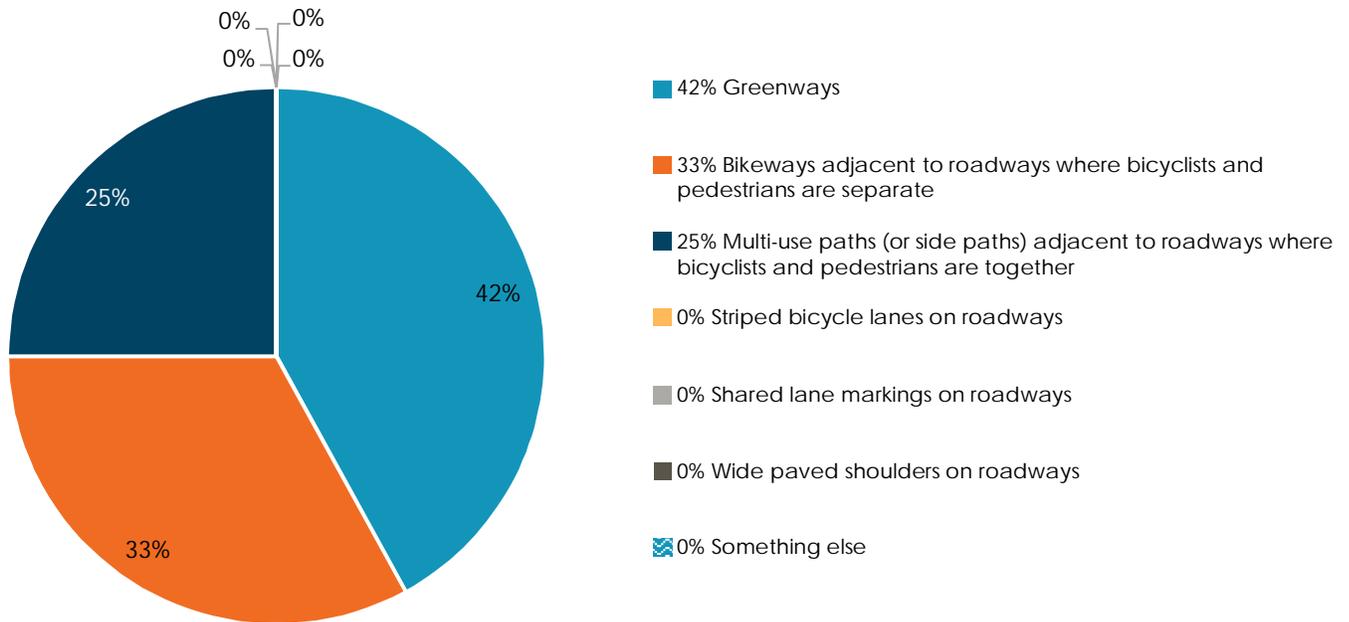
- In the discussion of this question, participants discussed the balance between the overall need for facilities and the importance of prioritizing those facilities to serve key origin and destination points.
- Discussion of the need for wayfinding signage focused around maximizing the effectiveness of the existing network, and tying into the origin and destination points discussion.
- Discussion on the need for encouragement and education focused around the school-age subset of the area, and the notation that bicycle and pedestrian usage is tied not only to infrastructure, but also to the way it is discussed and advocated for in certain settings.

Question 4: What is the preferred type of infrastructure for experienced cyclists?



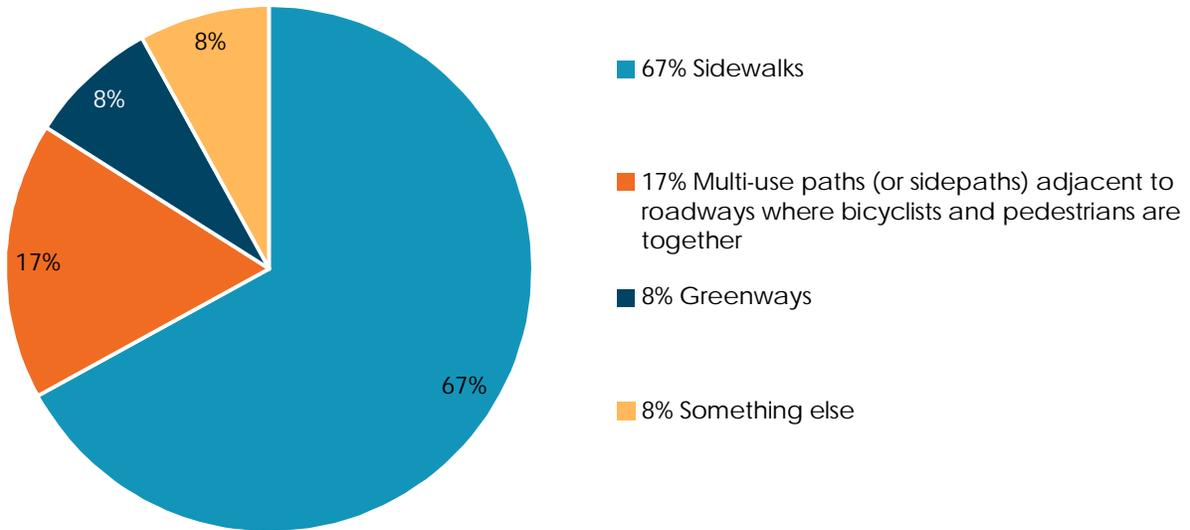
- Participants stated that finding attractive secondary routes for biking is important and that shared lane markings on roadways can be equally important for pedestrians than cyclists.
- The group pointed out that preferred infrastructure is likely related to respondents' purpose for biking.
- The group would like to have downtown Apex tied into the regional biking system to allow people to visit in ways other than cars.
- Attendees mentioned that an increased level of awareness would be helpful so people know they can use the sidewalk. Having bike lanes or other protected bicycle treatments at intersections would make biking more attractive and predictable.

Question 5: What is the preferred type of infrastructure for inexperienced cyclists?



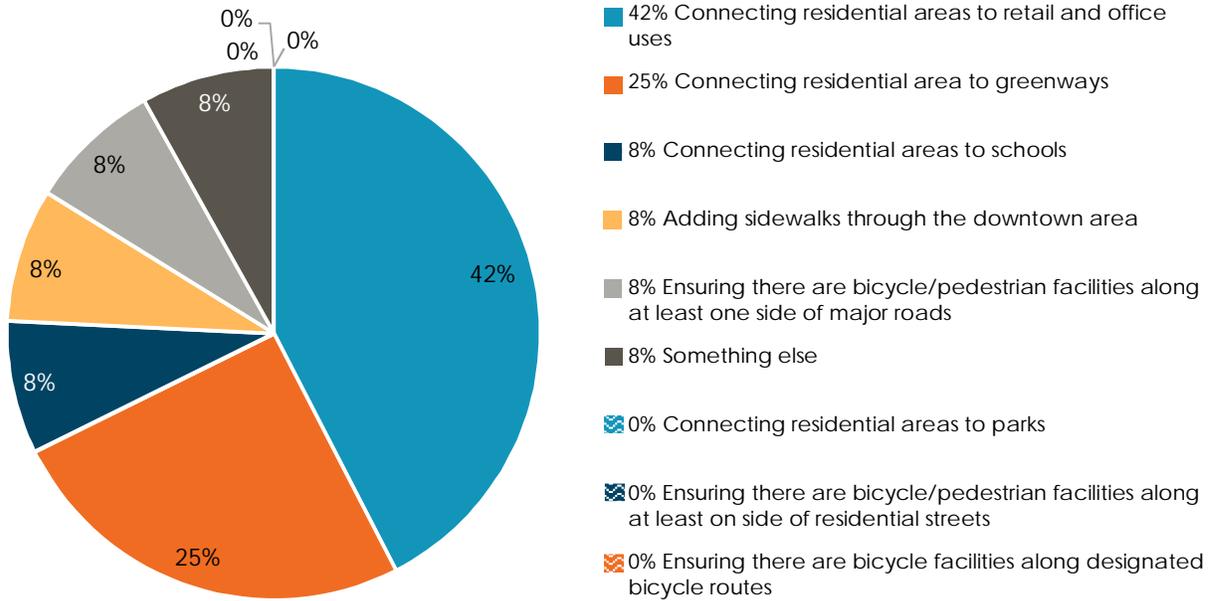
- Participants stated that roads over 35 mph can get scary and that curbs are a bike safety concern because there is no opportunity to “bail out” in case of an emergency.
- The group said that multi-use paths are statistically more dangerous for cyclists as compared to on-road facilities because of the uncertainty of turning conflicts. However, cycle tracks can remediate this issue as long as they are properly planned.
 - Participants noted that wide paved shoulders do not attract the concerned but interested. While a blend of facilities should be considered, the majority of our bike/ped investments should be aimed at this population.
- The group mentioned how popular the American Tobacco Trail is with cyclists. The more connections that can be made that facility, the more barriers can be overcome.

Question 6: What is the preferred type of infrastructure for pedestrians?



- Participants felt strongly that sidewalks are the key element of the pedestrian network.
- Having eyes on the street and appropriate lighting versus a greenway aids in safety. Participants discussed the perception of safety versus the reality, and how that can be shifted given certain travel conditions.

Question 7: What should be the highest priority for new bicycle and pedestrian facilities?



- Discussion around this question reemphasized the importance of linking key destination points.

Pre-Wrap Up

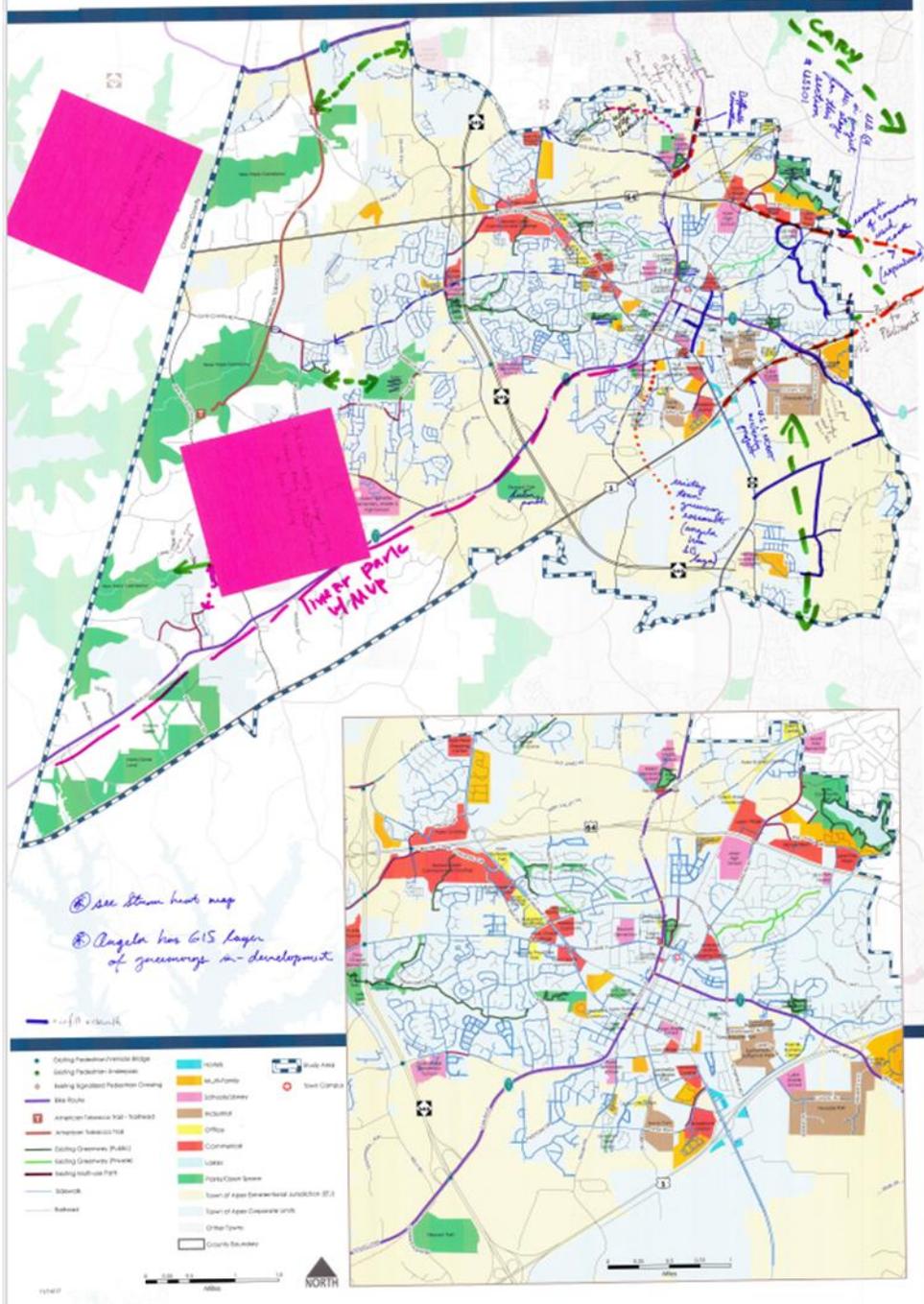
- The project team emphasized how the group’s feedback will be used.

Mapping Session

- Participants were invited to partake in a discussion/mapping activity to locate specific areas of interest regarding biking and walking. Their comments can be found below and a map is attached for reference.
- Specific Comments
 - US 64 is in development stage for the section east of Lake Pine Plaza
 - Davis Drive near Salem Middle School creates a difficult connection
 - US 64 and Laura Duncan Road is a major crossing for students
 - Look at future interchange configuration close to parks, school, downtown
 - Infill sidewalks were suggested in the following areas:
 - Create a neighborhood connector from Bodeswell Road to Parliament Place
 - Provide sidewalks on Ten Ten Road from Pine Hill Business Center to Jessie Drive
 - Provide sidewalks on the Jessie Drive Extension from 55 to Ten Ten Road

- Provide sidewalk on S Tunstall Avenue between Apex Middle School and Vineyard Station Shopping Center
- Provide sidewalk on E Chatham Street between S Tunstall Avenue and N Mason Street
- Provide sidewalk on N Hughes Street between E Chatham Road and Culvert Street
- Pedestrian connections to the Eva Perry Library
- Pedestrian connections between the neighborhoods south of Jessie Drive between Ten Ten Road and 55
- Pedestrian connections to existing sidewalks along Olive Chapel Road
- Provide sidewalk on James Street (from Apex Elementary School to Schieffelin Road); Apex Peakway (from James Road to Old Raleigh Road); Old Raleigh Road (from Apex Peakway to 64)
- Provide sidewalk on Old Jenks Road between W Williams Street and Davis Drive
- Provide sidewalk on Davis Drive/Salem Street from Old Jenks Road to Apex Peakway
- There is no pedestrian access across Ten Ten Road at Lufkin Road interchange area, creating a gap in the system.
- A linear park could be created with a multi-use path along Old US 1
- Consider providing improved pedestrian accommodations on NC 55 as a part of the NCDOT widening effort between US 1 and Olive Chapel Road
- Think about crossing challenges unique to schools; dealing with NCDOT roads for Apex Friendship
- There have been conversations about a parallel bicycle route to I-40 connecting RTP and Raleigh. Could a similar facility be implemented parallel to US 64?

Existing Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Equestrian Facilities



Downtown Focus Group Meeting Summary

Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Time: 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Location: 3rd Floor Training Room, Apex Town Hall, 73 Hunter Street

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to explain to participants the purpose and steps of the Advance Apex planning process and to gather input on specific needs and opportunities associated with land use and transportation in and around downtown Apex.

Meeting Outcome

Feedback from the meeting will guide the development of transportation and land use recommendations for Advance Apex.

Meeting Attendees

Seventeen participants met to focus on the downtown area. Many of the businesses along Salem Street were represented, as well as Apex Baptist Church, the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, and Police.

- Mark Thorpe, The Rusty Bucket
- Pam Thorpe, The Rusty Bucket
- Kyle Denis, Apex Outfitter
- Brian Woomer, Woomer Insurance
- Mike Walsh, Salem Street Pub
- Shane Reese, Downtown Business Association
- Shannon Flaherty, Chamber of Commerce
- Nick Bryant, The Apex Gallery
- Marshall Barnes, Antiques on Salem
- Cynthia Mollenkopf, The Cocoon Gallery
- Tim Overcash, The Beer Dispensary
- Morton Campbell, MC Insurance Group
- John Mark Harrison, Apex Baptist Church
- Town of Apex staff

Key Takeaways

- An overwhelming 83% of attendees believed that parking is the most important transportation improvement needed in downtown.
 - Employees take up a significant amount of parking and therefore there is nowhere for patrons to park.
 - It was mentioned that an extreme investment, such as a parking garage is needed to rectify this issue.
- The majority of the group is in favor of supporting transit to and around downtown Apex.

- The group believed that enhanced and attractive wayfinding would encourage more people to visit downtown.
- The group believed that a downtown study is needed.

Agenda and Summary

The meeting agenda and discussion items are reviewed in this section.

Introduction and Purpose of Advance Apex

Participants were introduced to each other as well as the project team.

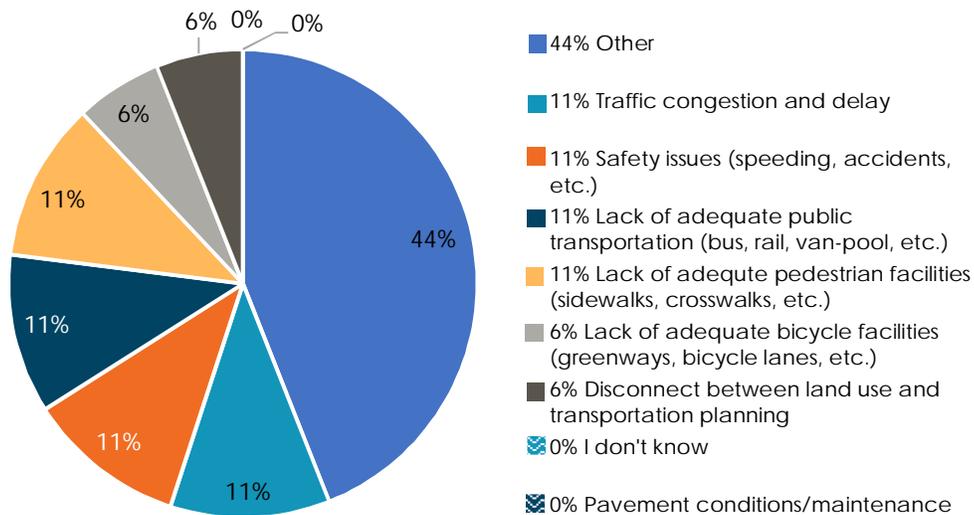
Meeting Purpose and Format

The role and importance of the focus group and the meeting was explained and supplemented with information in the presentation.

Interactive Polling and Discussion with Initial Public Input

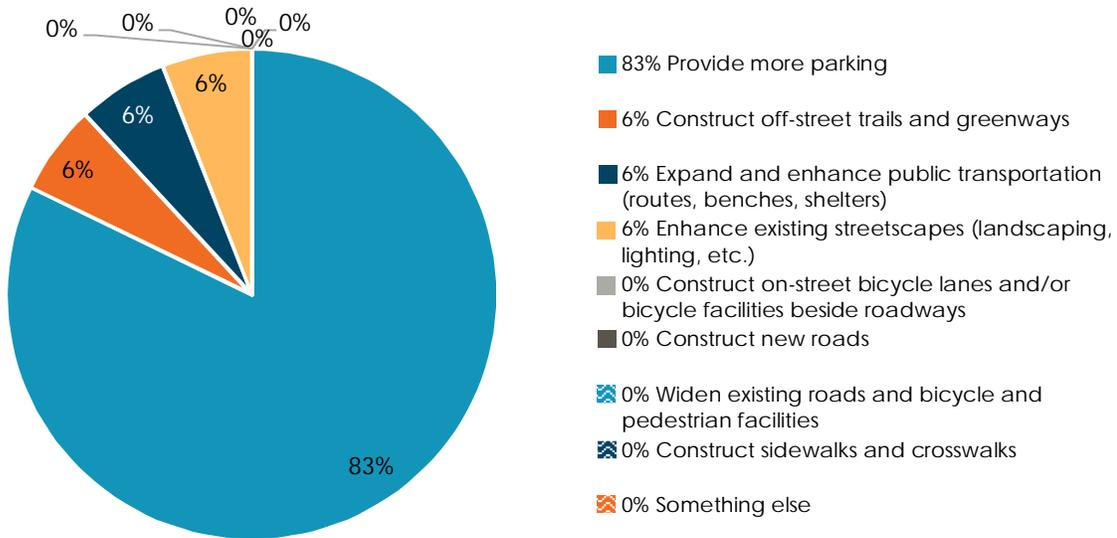
Feedback from the online survey was discussed with the group. At the time of this meeting, the survey was still open for comment. Therefore, the results shown at the meeting and communicated in this summary are only preliminary.

Question 1: What is the most important transportation issue facing downtown Apex?



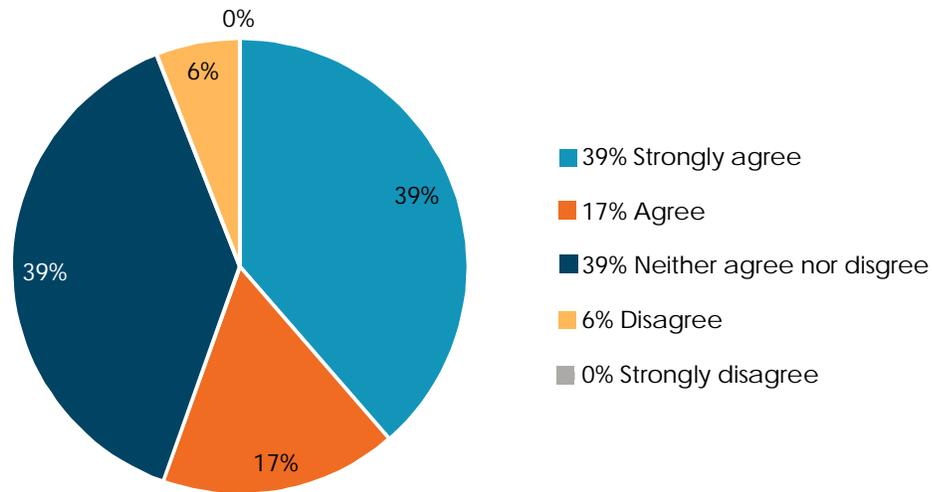
- This question immediately raised an issue that was to become a major theme of the meeting. Attendees responding as “other” within this question were all indicating a deficiency in parking downtown as the most important transportation issue. Subsequent questions allowed for additional discussion on this topic.

Question 2: Which transportation improvement is needed most downtown?



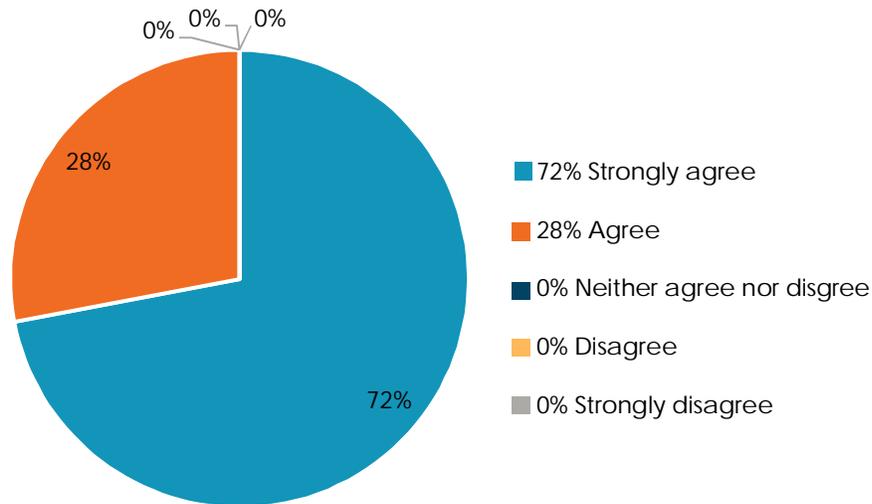
- The group’s biggest concern for downtown was parking. Participants noted parking is a pressing issue in downtown Apex and needs to be solved as soon as possible.
 - Participants pointed out that an extreme investment is needed versus a few spaces here and there for restaurants.
 - It was further mentioned that employees take up a large majority of the parking which is causing other businesses to lose customers because there is nowhere to park even midday on weekdays.
 - It was suggested that the introduction of a trolley such as the one in downtown Alexandria, Virginia would be a good way to accommodate employees that are parking remotely, as well as other downtown visitors.
 - When questioned about whether employees and visitors would be willing to pay for parking the responses were mixed. Some participants thought people would not pay for parking and other thought paid parking would be reasonable. The group discussed allowing free parking in a future parking deck and paid parking on the street so that people would pay for the benefit of parking close to restaurants and retail.
- Participants stated the following:
 - Parking has been taken away for safety purposes, but it has had an impact on downtown.
 - People come to downtown for the experience, retail, and restaurants.
 - There is a need for a parking deck in the downtown area. In the meantime, existing gravel lots should be paved and lighting should be provided.
 - There is an issue with crosswalk safety, in part due to a lack of enforcement of speed limits. Furthermore, there are gaps in sidewalks that make it difficult for pedestrians.

Question 3: Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
“Supporting walking and biking (through infrastructure, funding, enforcement, encouragement, etc.) to and around Apex should be a high priority addressed by Advance Apex and the Town’s upcoming Comprehensive Bicycle Plan.”



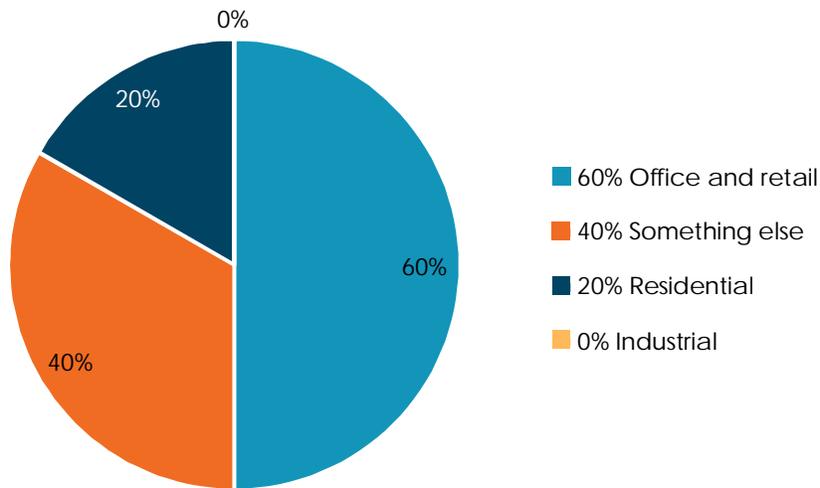
- During the discussion, participants indicated that there are many residential areas in proximity to downtown that could accommodate bicycling and walking connections.
- There was enthusiasm for the dual planning efforts represented by Advance Apex and the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan.
- There was also recognition that many downtown visitors are more likely to travel via other modes, particularly if they are shopping or traveling with children.

Question 4: Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement:
 “Supporting transit to and around downtown Apex should be a high priority addressed by Advance Apex.”



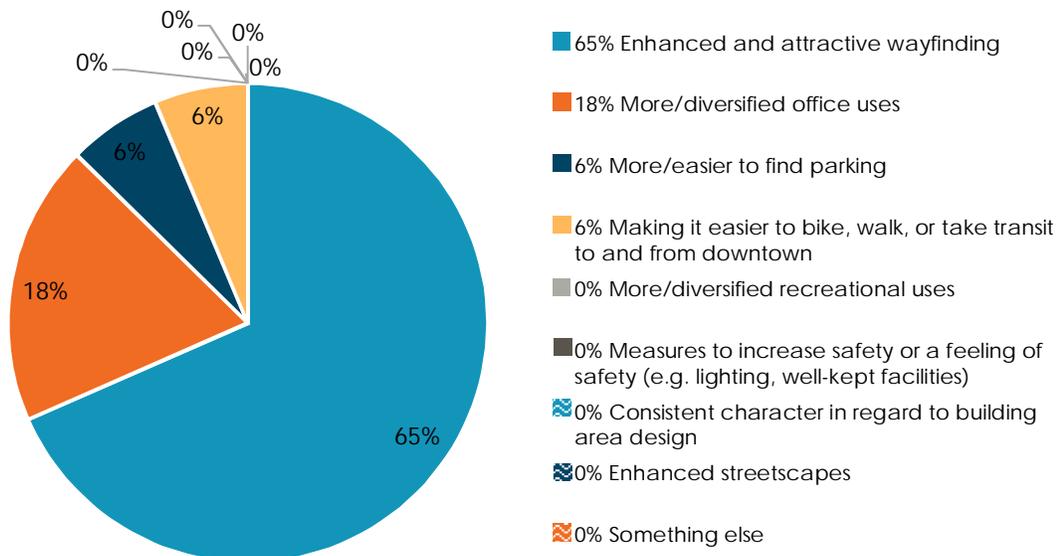
- Attendees stated that people look for consistency and transit should be balanced with sidewalks to ensure users have a way to navigate to their destinations.
- The group believed that a downtown study is needed. This discussion included the idea that transit in the downtown setting should be a key consideration.
- Discussion was held about what types of transit might be most effective within the downtown area. The group stated that shuttle services are needed for events as well as a transit circulator. The current transit route does not directly serve the downtown core, and as such there is room for realignment and improvement.
- The group held a discussion to review regional bus and rail future connections and how Apex could take advantage of these locations to connect with the existing and planned transit services. Accompanying land use patterns for these types of locations were also discussed.
- The group wanted to know how Apex fits into the Wake County transit plan. The Town’s standing transit focus group was introduced at this time, and key ideas such as a downtown circulator were discussed

Question 5: What types of development would you like to see more of in and near downtown Apex?



- It was noted that there was a strong preference for increased office and retail in downtown. One of the participants discussed the need for transitioning land uses between the downtown core and other areas. Current commercial properties in those areas could be complemented by increased density in the future, along with businesses that are in character with the downtown core.

Question 6: What do you think would enhance downtown and encourage people to visit Downtown Apex the most?



- Participants indicated the following in regard to parking, streetscape improvements, and wayfinding:
 - The recently completed Goldsboro downtown streetscape was given as an example of a successful complete streets project.
 - Widening sidewalks would be advantageous, but it would have to be paired with additional parking. This would help with those customers who need short term parking and/or cannot walk a great distance due to health reasons.
 - Participants questioned whether the fire department location is needed in downtown.
 - Participants also noted that wayfinding signs as well as a park are needed in downtown to promote walkable areas.
 - The group believed that talks with the Town traffic engineers about on-street parking should take place.
 - Attendees stated that there are many safety issues with parallel parking, especially with large trucks due to the lack of room. Participants noted that the ordinance should be looked at to determine what is and isn't allowed.
 - One attendee noted that businesses sometimes do not like diagonal parking because of the safety issues backing in and out and the potential for conflicts.
 - The group believed a parking study should be conducted sooner rather than after the plan is adopted.
 - Participants stated that people will not visit downtown if parking is not offered and is not diversified.
- The group discussed the following regarding business cohesion in downtown:
 - Participants noted that a restaurant and/or retail anchor is needed to help spur interest and kickstart additional growth downtown.
 - There was a concern expressed with the mixing of office and retail. There was a desire to maintain primarily retail and other mixed-uses (possibly even residential) within the downtown core, potentially transitioning to include office uses in the outer areas of downtown.
 - Participants would like to see a more formal consideration or study prepared to investigate and propose recommendations for affordable housing in proximity to downtown.
 - It was noted that repurposing existing buildings should be considered when there is the opportunity to do so.

Mapping Session

Participants were invited to partake in a discussion/mapping activity to locate specific areas of interest. Their comments can be found below and a map is attached for reference.

- Specific Comments
 - Lighting on Seaboard Street would enhance the feeling of safety.
 - Make intersection of Center Street and N Elm Street safe for pedestrians with crossing enhancements.
 - Consider angled parking on side streets (Chatham, Saunders, Seaboard by railroad tracks) to provide the maximum number of on-street parking spaces available for downtown businesses.
 - Provide lighting for parking areas around Templeton Street.
 - Consider potential deck locations on Saunders Street where there are currently lots. This will help solve some of the disconnect between motorists and downtown. Ensure that a deck location is in a location where people will consider parking. Expanded transit service is a must for this reaction.
 - Participants like the idea of a trolley – provides a small-town feel. Alexandria is a great example.
 - More EV charging stations downtown – look into enhanced policy language.
 - Potential feature downtown – splash pad, etc.; Chamber property is a potential area.



Other Comments

The comments below were provided to town staff and the planning team following the downtown focus group meeting.

- Add Public Art. A sculpture on the corner that presently has random items and a garden. Create interesting cross walks (mosaics). Benches that are more interesting. Bike racks of different shapes and colors. Murals on the side of the Halle and the fire station. I have a longer list than this but you get the idea.
- Repave Salem Street between Center Street and Chatham Street with bricks/stone. Cary has done this with their intersections in downtown but Apex should do this for the entire section of the street and use more natural looking materials. The Cary look is a little too refined and wouldn't fit the character of Apex.
- Improve the facade of the Firehouse. Lintels, eaves, etc. to make the building more interesting.
- Parking Garage - this is an opportunity to create interesting spaces such as courtyards if the garage is pulled close to the existing buildings. The structure could also house retail / office and could include public art. Since when does a parking deck need to be ugly? Also, the top deck could include solar panels which double as shade for the cars.
- Salem Street parking should remain but some parking spaces should be used for restaurant seating. This can be permanent or temporary and can be done in a very attractive way. This is very common in many towns and can be seen below.

