

Local Service Providers Focus Group

University Hill Farms Neighborhood Plan

Attendees

- Bishop, Madison First Ward
- 6th grade teacher at Hamilton Middle School
- 6th grade teacher at Hamilton Middle School
- Executive Director of Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin
- COO at Independent Living, Inc.
- CEO at Independent Living, Inc.
- Vets helping Vets Coordinator at RSVP Dane
- Family and Self-Sufficiency Caseworker at Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin
- Community Garden Specialist at Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin
- Senior Pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church

1. How long has your agency served the University Hill Farms neighborhood? How long have you worked in the Hill Farms neighborhood?

- I'm not exactly sure when we started renting the building. The church was built in the early 1960s. The congregation now serves more than the neighborhood – a lot of the congregation lives Downtown or in southwest Madison. We will serve out to parts of Fitchburg, Odana Road, Mineral Point. We also have a lot of Spanish-speaking members living in the area.
- I've been at Hamilton about 14 years. I live in the neighborhood, go to Church here, and grew up here.
- It's my third year at Hamilton. I live one block out of the neighborhood. Hamilton does have a very large district – not just immediate neighborhood. It's the largest middle school in Madison and has largest boundaries.
- I've work at CAC for over a year. I work in the community gardens program. We're very multi-dimensional – food pantries, food distribution. I also attended Hamilton Middle School years ago.
- I'm the Director of the Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance. We're in the old Attic Angels office building. The building was built in 1960s. It's now rented out to several nonprofits. We have been there since 1998. We provide services for people in the Hilldale area and multiple counties. We have volunteers that do walk, which is an advantage.
- We're a nonprofit, local organization and provide of in-home services, including Meals on Wheels. We're in the Gardens Assisted Living building on Sheboygan and Segoe.
- I work with Micah on the housing side of the agency.
- I am the Vets helping Vets Coordinator for RSVP Dane. We're in the same building as Paul. I've lived in the neighborhood since 1991. My son went to school with Kris. I do a lot of medical rides, a lot of things with homeless programs.
- I'm the CEO Independent Living. We provide services throughout Dane County and have 91 units of senior housing on Segoe Rd. We have both assisted living and apartments.
- We represent the Hill Farms Pool as well.

2. What should we consider when we prepare the neighborhood plan? What requests have you received from employees or clients? What concerns have been raised?

- **There is growing concern about safety**, and remember that it is based on perception. There were two or three incidents on buses, and now people don't want to go out after dark. That's a little bit of an undercurrent. All of the things you put into master plans – lighting, people concentrations – people feel comfortable and should be able to go whenever. You shouldn't have to limit yourself to daytime activities. The perception is worse than the real danger, but it's the perception that drives people.
- I live in the neighborhood. I'm comfortable walking around, running around.
- **There have been a couple of instances near bus stops**. People like us are more aware. That might lead to more paranoia between old people. **We've heard, "Don't be alone in the pool after dark."** We would like to hear its safe at 9:15 or 9:30. We're trying to teach young people to be aware, not necessarily afraid.
- Is this activity primarily in the northwest corner of neighborhood?
- Correct. **People on Sheboygan Avenue have gotten mugged while getting off the bus, walking to cars, talking on cell phones.**
- A lot of the incidents are happening around bus stops. **Timed lights are important**. Some people who were gone for six months had break-ins.
- I live in the Midvale Heights neighborhood. We've had a number of home and car break-ins the past few months.
- I think its City-wide. I've had several break-ins in my car. I don't keep anything in my car now.
- A lot of people leave a garage door opener in their car. People break-in, go into the house through the garage, and take the keys.
- We had a rash of these things about 20 years ago. Police pointed out points of entry, went house by house, police said we should install more street lights, homeowners got used to watching other people's properties.
- Our neighborhood association will send out reminders to lock cars. Porch lights are on at night.
- We tried to set up neighborhood watch, but it didn't really work. **Are you thinking about adding kiosks, places to post flyers? Can that be included in the plan?** We have tours within the schools, have meals delivered within the County. Paul, I'm sure you have the same problem. RSVP struggles to get volunteers.
- Another thing to think about – the **Neighborhood Association does not include all organizations or multifamily homes in the neighborhood**. The Normandy, multifamily buildings, our building, and others are not allowed membership to the organization. **Also, we receive no information about the community gardens**. Perhaps you can compare all neighborhood associations to make sure that whatever the geographic boundaries are, all residents and businesses are invited. They are usually all single family homes in this neighborhood, but you should ask them to open doors a little wider in terms of rental housing that may exist. My experience in the last 13 years of owning property is we don't get information from them. Instead, we get the smarty pants comments.
- **We'll pay them to join. We get notices from the City.**
- **We don't get membership that is full and equal**. It's troubling that **I have over 100 residents who have no voice in regard to what goes on in the neighborhood association**. When you come to the conversation late, you don't really have a voice. We're interested in the development of the DOT site, but cannot contribute.
- It sounds like the neighborhood association does not include any businesses?
- It's a big deal to let them in. If it's a concern about voting, just let us join the list and pay.
- It seems like there needs to be a larger umbrella.

- I think this plan will make a big difference with DOT, specifically with the community gardens. I am definitely concerned about the community gardens. In 2007, there was a lot of work to do to decide where to move the gardens. To put it very simply, none of the other sites met gardeners' needs. Some of it was walkability and accessibility. Of course you need to bring those people into the conversation. The garden has 60 plots on ½ an acre. The demographics are excellent – all racial groups are represented. 21% are all above 55 years old – that is when walkability comes into play. There aren't really any gardens close to us, several are farther away.
- Could you continue at the DOT location once that 2007 plan happens?
- That is up to the State. They will hire an engineering and architecture firm to decide. We have a voice for some of these things, to a certain extent, but it's difficult. It's totally neighborhood-based. If the DOA decides to go with building process on the DOT site, the neighborhood can have a voice. If the property becomes surplus, it would depend on city zoning.
- How would you find out about this process if not you're not a part of the neighborhood association?
- The gardeners themselves are very active. They have a "save the garden" subcommittee. I don't think they've really mobilized until they realize what the plan will be.

3. How is eligibility determined for your services?

- Anyone who needs help with Alzheimer's comes to us.
- Anyone who visits our office. Income eligibility is 125% of poverty level.
- Depending upon funding sources, the criteria for eligibility will change. We have funding assistance.

4. Are many clients walking, biking, or taking public transit to your organization?

- People walk or bus to the community gardens. Pat Soderholm lives in apartments across the street. She could pull up the percentage of people walking to the gardens.
- The school gets eight buses of kids every morning. Most kids at Hamilton bus in.
- As far as transportation of clients, is there anything the City or neighborhood could do to make it safer?
- Safer, but also more accessible. There are people on the south side that find the Hilldale area hard to get to on weekends. Everything radiates from Downtown. Transfers through Downtown are difficult. We should be thinking about more routes that would make the Hilldale area easier to reach.

5. What type of physical improvements (parks, sidewalks, street crossing) would improve the lives of your clients? Please identify any specific locations?

- How is your parking situation?
- Fine.
- Fine.
- What happened to roundabouts on Segoe? It would be nice if people would stop.
- On Frey and Segoe, if you're trying to turn left and not aware of people walking, you could hit someone off of University. It's a horrible intersection. If you've ever made that left turn with the green area and don't see cars coming from Hilldale...
- I agree. And that's new. They put that in when they put Target in. A helpful idea would be to have lights.

- As service providers, do you access the park?
- We take clients to Wednesday concerts. Those that can walk do, but not many can walk that distance. We transport them and then come into parking area. A driver brings them back. A good portion of clients attend.
- We use Rennebohm frequently.
- Any other park space that needs to be changed?
- What is else in the neighborhood?
- Garner Park.

6. What other public services could be improved?

- How is the school in terms of safety?
- As a parent, I would like to see traffic slowed down. I was hopeful they would put speed bumps in Regent St. They put in the bike boulevard. Between Midvale, Regent, Whitney Way, the speed limit is 30 miles per hour, but people go 40 miles per hour all the time. When you're still on Regent and pass Whitney Way, the speed limit drops to 25 miles per hour, but people hardly slow down. Cars go too fast and it's in the middle of entire neighborhood. It's a nice street to get you from Whitney Way and Mineral Point. There are kids from the school at that intersection. Van Hise, Hamilton, Glenn Stephens – there are so many walkers. The neighborhood is turning over nicely. There are a lot of young families moving here. It needs to be safer.
- Does the neighborhood have a lot of congestion from after school pickup? Is it a dangerous area?
- Then you have people do a y-turn on Waukesha St. by the schools.
- Parents don't understand how the traffic flow works. Is there any signage that would guide passage around the school?
- Could you route buses somewhere else instead of Waukesha? Is that something else the development committee could do?
- It would be nice if Waukesha could be a one-way street.
- You still have congestion.
- The one thing is they don't let them stop in front of the school. They have to drive all the way to the back door. It's dangerous for staff walking across the school parking lot.
- Semi-trucks come in at 7 AM to drop off milk. It's dangerous to be in the parking lot.
- You could have people go in a circle.
- One of the school's assets is the huge open space, green space, and the playground.
- That would be great for community gardens.
- That was an idea. There is a precedent for school/community gardens, but for some reason, I can't remember why it was marked off.

7. What should be included in the neighborhood plan that can improve your organization's services?

- I would say a community garden, just because DOT is not included in plan. There are dirt gardens in the west-central area. I'm not sure if there is a need though. There is a waitlist as of June for 5 families. This year was the first time they could not serve all people on waitlist. That is a City-wide trend. But, I wouldn't like to see a community garden space included in the plan as an alternative to current space. It should be an additional garden to the current gardens.

- They might think because it is a neighborhood plan, the DOT would say, “we don’t need to take responsibility for the gardens on our site.” The DOT land is valuable. Rennebohm is not as valuable.
- Gardens are sometimes seen as a conflict in a park. As far as park space is used, you cannot just put a community garden there. Others think a community garden isn’t necessarily a “recreational use”. I would love to see more community gardens if needed, but absolutely not as an alternative to the current gardens.
- I can foresee problems with kids going into the gardens, taking a tomato. But, I would hate to see a big fence around it.
- I think for gardens it could be great. Gardens have a therapeutic aspect.
- A lot of people don’t have information on them.
- I think that if the neighborhood association has a boundary, they should include businesses and services. I don’t think the City should be giving them money if they do not include businesses and services as members.
- If I understand correctly, the Hill Farms Neighborhood ends at Regent Street.
- It started as a homeowners association.
- I was told that the multi-family homes were in the association originally. Then the Neighborhood Association included bylaws, something excluded the multi-family units. It’s a matter of really having a vote, getting the information at the same time. It’s a little hawkish and I don’t know why.
- In the City as a whole, there is contention between single family owners and multi-family owners. In Midvale Heights, there was a plan that started because the City decided there should be more multi-family housing, which plays out in membership issues. A lot of people feel the City is changing the neighborhood without their say. The neighborhood was probably 80% against a new development, but there are a lot of things going on in the City.
- There is going to be a decision one way or another. But, at least you’re at the table.
- It would be nice to include service organizations in the neighborhood association.
- Sure, we’d join.
- The bigger the pool, the better decisions the organization will make. I would guess that the issues discussed are everyone’s issues.

8. What do we want to avoid when creating this neighborhood plan?

- I would like to avoid taking away green space. Take it away to make parking lots, if there’s any way to avoid that... I don’t like what they did at Hilldale with the parking ramp. They took away views and people don’t want to park there.

9. What else should we be considering as we plan this neighborhood? Challenges? Opportunities?

- We had a business focus group a few weeks ago. They did not have a network for sharing ideas. Is that a desire for service providers?
- Overall response is no.
- I think there is a lot that is good in the neighborhood, with the transitions of younger families moving in. There is a long standing notion that there are a lot of older people in this neighborhood, but it is vitality associated.
- The July 4th parade was great – lots of kids and a long parades.

- There are so many kids. It's great. And there are a lot of houses for sale.
- Why isn't the DOT site in the planning area?
- The State does not have to respond to City ordinances. The way the City approves development, it looks to long term planning that is in place for any long term development there. We're hoping the DOA ends of keeping that parcel. If the community gardens are viewed as an asset to the neighborhood, they would want to keep it.
- It would not have a legal standing, but it would be important in the plan.
- So how do Downtown neighborhoods come up with a plan for State property?
- Before it had been proposed that the gardens are moved to Rennebohm Park. Gardeners would prefer to not move from the current site.
- Where in Rennebohm?
- On Segoe Road. They would need to build over the drainage pipe, bring in soil, and put the gardens on top.
- You're fairly flat at DOT. You would need to bring in a pile of dirt there. The topography is not easily accessible. It's not conducive to gardening. Should you figure out new space for it, or maintain it there?
- With Hilldale and all that's happening in that area, can that be coordinated well with everyone and everything else going on? It's an advantage to have Hilldale there. They have been reaching out to the community, talking about plans.