

# Senior Focus Group

## University Hill Farms Neighborhood Plan

### 1. How long have you lived in the University Hill Farms neighborhood?

- 8 months
- 20 years in the immediate area; home was built just off of Old Middleton Road; total of 40-50 years
- 4 years
- 8 years
- 1 year
- 4 years
- 4 years
- 1 year
- Less than 1 year
- 3 years
- Many years, including Spring Harbor
- I've already had a great deal of experience with University Hill Farms. Our backyard backed up to the farm. They didn't ask us to build. We had skunks, coyotes. We had everything.

### 2. What would you have liked to have known about the neighborhood within your first six months of living here?

- I wish I would have known about some sort of neighborhood walking area. Also, specifics about catching the bus.

### 3. Are you satisfied with your current place of residence? Its location? Its nearby amenities?

- I love the park and the bike path.
- It would be nice if there were more lights in the park. We walk on the path that cuts through to the band shell. Some people use walkers. It's very dark.
- The lighting situation is getting worse towards the end of summer. It's getting darker earlier.
- Maybe a few more benches now that they've added a few more sports areas.
- Benches are sparse. State employees take a lot of them on their lunch breaks.
- It would be nice if they could plant mature trees. We need more shade.
- We're in a tremendous area, as long as they utilize it correctly.
- We need a soccer team so we can utilize the park more.

- The concerts are over now. We're in a dry spell. Is there something we can do at that space?
- More programming in that shelter when weather is good would be great.
- What about food carts where people can go buy lunches?
- Is there such a thing as a local library?
- Well, you have Sequoya.
- That would be great for activities.
- I wish there was a bus that goes down there. We have to pay \$7 to use the bus here.
- Melissa: Can you use Metro? We're really thinking about how Metro can serve this area.
- Where I came from, we had a pass to get on the bus.

#### 4. What would you change about the neighborhood? Where would those changes happen?

- I used to walk over to the mall and enjoyed it. The last time I went there was 3 years ago. I'm getting older now. It would be nice if there was some housing closer to the shopping area.
- I need something convenient and within walking distance. Walking has gotten more difficult. There's a stairway going down Sawyer Terrace. It would be nice if there was a ramp there too. Right now, Sawyer Terrace goes to Target, but it would be nice to go to the mall too.
- I sure wouldn't want to go down a ramp in a wheelchair there. That is a steep hill.
- We need more ways to connect this side of the street to the other.
- The darn traffic goes so fast on Segoe Rd.
- One place that could use a continuous sidewalk is up on Segoe crossing University in front of the police building. I walk up to University and cross there a lot. The sidewalk runs out in front of the police building.
- It used to be the Dept. of Revenue building, but there is a sidewalk all the way to McDonalds.
- It's just a short distance, if they could just complete that walk down to where those businesses are, like the Lodge...
- Melissa: One of the problems is that's Shorewood. I do have one question: the new development on Whitney Way and University Ave. will have medical and retail. Is that too far to walk for you guys?
- Caretaker: That's probably too far for most of them. Is there any reason they would go there?
- Melissa: It's going to be a nice urban area. There is going to be a lot of life there, which will feel very different from what you've got at the mall. One of the things this neighborhood planning process will address is the site across the street. Four Lakes Driving School, Glass Nickel Pizza, how should that area be redeveloped?

- Retail, office, and apartments.
- The RSVP building has a farmer's market. I go into the parking lot with my walker, go up a steep curb, then if you're walking down the sidewalk. There's no entrance into the parking lot.
- Melissa: Again, we're talking about creating stronger connections.
- Or if I want to see a movie, there needs to be better connections for walkers with a walker going into that area.
- Is that parking lot going to be demolished when Hilldale redoes its building?
- Melissa: They have to go in front of various committees for approvals. I sit on the Urban Design Commission for the City of Madison. Commission members really listen. I will send you dates and times of meetings to post on walls here.

## 5. Are you satisfied with the range of housing options available in the neighborhood?

- One of your items on the survey is about housing. Is there vacant land? What do they mean about additional housing?
- Melissa: We asked the neighborhood what kind of housing they want to see. Everyone said single family. There isn't room for more single family housing. There are opportunities for increased density, like townhomes. There are some vacant lots, big parking lots. There are some ways in which we can think about how to use that space.
- One of your options doesn't say a retirement home. This is the reason we're here—because it's one of the only retirement homes in the City.
- Caretaker: I've talked to seniors who don't want to leave their neighborhood because they get to see life – kids, bikers, walkers, families.
- Melissa: One trend is that people want to age in place. Staying in the neighborhood may be very important. Do you have waitlists here?
- Caretaker: We're CBRF.
- It sounds like we're going more to seniors in townhouses and the single housing is getting weaker and weaker. Unless I misunderstood you, there are fewer people concerned about single family housing, it's hard for them to maintain. What we're seeing now is all the rental housing being developed Downtown.
- Melissa: The vacancy rate is less than 1% in Madison. The Constellation on E. Washington is leased 100%. People are not buying as much. It's young professionals, empty nesters.
- Caretaker: Urban Land Interests is building all over town.
- Melissa: The neighborhood feels kind of segregated. You have a cluster of single family homes, student housing, and senior housing. Any recommendations?
- I think you're in a bad situation here. You're in a neighborhood in transition. There are more young families here, more and more youth moving into the facilities.
- What's the plan? Is there more senior housing going up?

- Melissa: Let me ask you. There is some housing that is age-restricted, then some de facto senior housing. **Is this a good place for senior housing?**
- **Yes. Shopping this close is excellent.**
- Caretaker: There are a lot of phone call requests. **There are a lot of people with interest in the Gardens because of the surrounding area.**
- Melissa: Are people looking to rent or buy condos?
- I think people our age just want to pay rent. Maintaining a house is expensive on a limited income.
- Caretaker: A lot of people don't want that responsibility.

**6. Are you satisfied with the transportation conditions/options available to you? How much do you walk to activities and services within the neighborhood? What is that experience like? Where are problems or gaps in the sidewalk system?**

- Caretaker: **Transportation is an issue.** How do they get to shopping, the Library, the YMCA, a pool? How can they afford to?
- The closest bus route is the transfer station.
- Caretaker: You can all ride bikes here. Who can ride a bike? (3-4 seniors raise hands)
- Melissa: Is there **a B-cycle station near?**
- Not in Hilldale.
- **It would be great!** For young kids too.
- I'd like to see **more bus shelters.** There's only one in the neighborhood that we use regularly.
- There are several along Sheboygan Ave.
- **Segoe could use a bus shelter.**
- The bus is getting used more and more, it's always full.
- Melissa: Bus ridership has gone through roof in the past two years.
- The bus drivers are exceptionally helpful.
- Caretaker: I'd like someone from Metro (Chuck Kamp) to come talk to us about routes.
- Would the Bus Rapid Transit System be like the one in the Bay Area where there is an express bus?
- Melissa: We wish. We are looking at a system that is similar to a hub and spoke. We would need to integrate that into the greater system.
- Caretaker: **It would be nice to have a better route to get to the YMCA. They have a pool and classes.**

**7. Do you use the parks? For what uses?**

- They're trying to get people out of their cars and on the bikes and walking. The park creates a good neighborhood.

- Caretaker: Gardens would be great.
- Every Saturday, I get coffee with my friend and just watch people go by.
- Caretaker: I think the park could be used more.
- I think there should be a few plays in the park.
- Senior acting class.
- Caretaker: Maybe the bikes, or a community garden. Opportunities for people to mingle, to live life.

#### 8. Do you feel you are well integrated into the Hill Farms Community?

- Part of our little neighborhood.
- I don't actually feel I'm a part of the neighborhood. I felt that way when I owned property. I feel like a guest here.
- Melissa: That's interesting. The young people who live here are also uninterested in owning. I think about creating a sense of community through other means of owning.
- I didn't know there was a neighborhood association until a couple of months ago. We're not included. It's hard to be involved.
- Melissa: There is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, Halloween event...
- Caretaker: We don't know about these events.
- Is there any community center nearby?
- The West Side Community Center
- They post things here. We have residents who go over there occasionally.
- They serve lunch there every other day. Dinner on Saturday. It's nice it's here. They offer a lot of variety.
- Melissa: I don't suppose you join the pool?
- It'd be nice. But we don't primarily because of the cost. What is it, \$300?
- I thought those all belonged to the apartments?
- The apartments do have pools. You can join this one. It's a private pool.
- Caretaker: No, and they ought to give them a daily rate!
- They should put together a 10 page booklet, sort of a "Welcome to Hill Farms, here's what you can do here."

#### 9. What should we focus on as we create the neighborhood plan? What do we want to avoid?

- Just make sure there is room for the Great Dane to expand.
- Melissa: That's funny because one of the Steering Committee members wants a neighborhood bar.
- When is the DOT going to leave?

- Melissa: There has been money bumped around in the state budget to implement that plan. The entitlements have expired. Apparently, Scott Walker is going to find something to do with it. I think they would reuse that building and develop around it. It's a full redevelopment plan.
- If you're going to do that, they might have land left over. How about a senior center over there?
- Melissa: That's something we could put over here in Hill Farms. We could advise to actually create this cluster of senior housing.
- Is that Pi building going to be imploded?
- That's Shorewood.
- Have you guys been informed of what stores will go in there? Tell them about us seniors.

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

- I think you have to think about the buildings on Segoe. Associated Dentists is moving out of that area, that area could get really ugly really quick with empty buildings.
- Melissa: Should that be an extension of Hilldale?
- I think that's an opportunity for retail to go to housing. When I was in Europe, I was so amazed that those neighborhoods. They create an energy center with different uses.
- I understand the developers are from Massachusetts. If they give some thought to all of this... but if we have too many of the same types of buildings.
- Melissa: A developer's timeframe is 1 – 3 years. A planner's is 10 – 20 years. We rub up against each other for that reason.