

## **CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

## II. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

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Community character is not one of the elements required in the Smart Growth legislation. However, the importance of this issue to Village residents meant that it must be central to and set the tone for any Comprehensive Planning document for this Village. Hence, it is Chapter II of the Plan with the hope that it will set the tone for and influence everything that follows. Throughout the planning process, it became clear that the notion of community character is central to the self-definition of the residents of the Village of Shorewood Hills. Though difficult to define, Village residents feel that it is essential to the high quality of life in the Village.

The Village prides itself in a general sense of community, civility, and friendliness. This is also expressed in a strong tradition of resident involvement and community dialogue on virtually aspect of Village life. The Village's strong sense of civic spirit is reflected in the many special committees who dedicate untold volunteer time in making the Village a better place to live, and who have participated extensively in the development of this Plan. This spirit is also reflected in the Village's wide array of quality public services, and the many community-sponsored events that are scheduled throughout the year.

Community character is also expressed the Village's remarkable array of residential architecture, winding streets, triangular parks, hilly terrain, shoreline, stands of tall trees, and community gathering points. The later includes the grounds of the Shorewood Hills Elementary School, which serves as a major focal point and unofficial 'Village Commons'.

Preserving this character emerged as one the Village's top concerns during the planning process. The Village encourages design, development and participatory practices that further the Village's community spirit and its sense of place. The Village recognizes that its special character can be eroded incrementally through the loss of historic structures and the introduction of new structures that do not reflect or complement the Village's intimate surroundings. The Village seeks an environment where homeowners are free to express individual design options, but within a common framework that emphasizes a common scale and sense of proportion and a shared sensitivity toward the impact of individual design decisions on overall neighborhood character.

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### A. RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

#### 1. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The community encourages the preservation of the Village's many historic structures that reflect both the Village's history, as well as the major architectural movements of the region and country. Many of these structures can be found within the Village's original plats: College Hills and the Shorewood Plats. **Indeed, the United States Department of Interior has registered these two original plats as National Historic Districts (College Hills Historic District and Shorewood Historic District).** The Village strongly encourages the restoration and sensitive remodeling of historic structures in a manner consistent with the Department of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation (see appendix). The Village also encourages property owners to avail themselves of State historic preservation tax credits for certified rehabilitations of designated historic properties, **particularly in these areas.**

## 2. NEW HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

### **ORIENTATION**

~~The community seeks to maintain the qualities that contribute to its intimate village atmosphere. Such qualities include a generously landscaped environment; homes that front directly toward the street; and garages that are either located behind, or recessed from, the front facade. To the extent practicable, these traditional design and site planning principles are encouraged in all new residential construction projects.~~

#### **a. SCALE/SIZE**

~~The average home in the Village is only 2,290 square feet and most homes the majority of residences in the Village are under \_\_\_\_\_ square feet in size and are less than 30 feet in height. Over time, these dimensional standards have established a consistent architectural scale that helps unify neighborhoods that otherwise contain a wide diversity of architectural styles. To avoid the intrusiveness often associated with new construction in historic neighborhoods, the Village strongly encourages new construction projects to observe the existing architectural scale suggested by the surrounding neighborhood. Special care should be exercised to avoid: abrupt changes of height; the obstruction of views and solar access; and the casting of shadows on adjacent properties.~~

#### **b. EXTERIOR MATERIALS**

Materials should be chosen for their energy efficiency and for their ability to complement both surrounding properties and the natural landscape. Traditional materials such as wood and masonry are generally preferred. Historic restoration activities that



~~should strive to repair and replicate original architectural features in terms of finish, textures, and dimensions are also preferred. Re-siding work should avoid damage or concealment of distinctive architectural elements, or dimensional changes to window openings. The use of synthetic materials should be limited to minor architectural elements. Reflective materials are strongly discouraged.~~

#### **c. STRUCTURAL ARTICULATION**

The Village of Shorewood Hills exhibits a wide range of architectural forms and styles that reflect a history and spirit of architectural experimentation. The introduction of new and innovative designs is ~~not discouraged provided that~~ encouraged especially if new structures observe some of the basic design rules-of-thumb noted above. ~~Some basic guidelines include the use of proportional doorway and window openings that are given strong architectural emphasis, and accented by protrusions or recessions from the façade plane. Unembellished roof lines, and blank exterior walls—unadorned with~~

~~frequent window openings, or other surface breaks—are strongly discouraged. In all cases, the basic architectural forms and shapes of new structures should draw upon the diverse architectural vocabulary of the Village and region.~~

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## B. COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

### 1. **GOAL:** Preserve and protect the natural and manmade character of the Village through: education, responsible public stewardship, active citizen involvement, and cooperation with surrounding units of government.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Protect, enhance, and strengthen, the charm and character of Village neighborhoods.
2. Know your neighbor and contribute to your community.
3. Increase volunteerism.
4. Review and revise zoning ordinance provisions for building size and lot coverage.

#### **Policies:**

~~Promote and facilitate community-compatible redevelopment plans.~~

1. Protect the natural environment, including mature trees.
2. Maintain parkland and replant trees.

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## C. COMMUNITY CHARACTER RECOMMENDATIONS

- ~~• Set up an informal and non-binding design review process involving a subcommittee of the Plan Commission and future building permit applicants. Evaluate new projects on the basis of the above listed design criteria.~~
- Educate homeowners of the benefits of having their properties listed on the National Register either individually or as part of an historic district. (Tout the availability of State income tax credits for historically appropriate rehabilitations and restorations.)
- Organize annual home tours to celebrate the Village's historic and architectural richness. (Proceeds to fund a historic preservation resource library; the purchase of preservation easements on threatened properties; or placards for homes of architectural distinction).
- Maintain a library of instructional historic preservation resources, references, and guides at the Village Hall.
- Provide a link on the Village's web-site to the Wisconsin Historic Preservation office, as well as historic preservation web-rings.
- Establish annual awards for best maintained/restored "heritage homes."
- Review the tree ordinance to address tree maintenance/preservation on private property.
- Amend the zoning ordinance to establish floor area ratio (FAR) standards that limit the scale of new single-family residences.
- Review the landscaping and lot coverage requirements of the zoning ordinance to avoid the overbuilding of residential lots.
- Mark the boundaries of proposed historic districts – or the original plats – with period-appropriate signs.
- Expand membership and activities of the Garden Club and Parks Committee.

- ~~• Consider working with the school district to create an official “Village Commons” at the school grounds. Consider constructing a new Village Hall at same.~~
- Adopt an exterior lighting ordinance to help minimize glare and unimproved efficiency.
- Explore the installation of personal drop boxes for Village residences who wish to have them.