

CHAPTER FIVE: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

V. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The This chapter pertains to the Village’s Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource base. Given the Village’s urban setting, and its lack of agricultural land uses and activities, the discussion will necessarily focus on the latter two categories. Specific emphasis is placed on the Village’s considerable historic resources – most notably its rich collection of historic and *avant-garde* architecture. Much of the information included in this section has been summarized from: *The Village of Shorewood Hills Intensive Survey Report*, January 2000. This report included a great deal of original research, as well as extensive citations from a previously written history of the Village by Professor Thomas Brock, published in 1999. The reader is referred to these and other documents for further reading.

1. HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY

Shorewood Hills contains perhaps one of the most remarkable collections of early to mid 20th Century residential architecture in the Midwest. It is also home to one of the most photographed houses of worship in the United States.

While the oldest remaining structures in the Village date from the late 19th Century, the Village is perhaps better known for its outstanding collection of historic buildings constructed in the post-Victorian era. The Village’s architectural legacy owes much to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (**add other architects of note here**) whose association with the Madison area is well documented. Two of his most famous works; the Pew House and the First Unitarian Meeting House, are located within the Village. Several other residences, designed in the “Prairie School” style, are also located in the Village. Many of these are interpretations of the Prairie style from Wright followers such as George Elmslie.

(Maybe add Bromley’s octagon house or others with unique characteristics.)

Also in the Village are a large number of Craftsman and Bungalow style houses, as



Shorewood Hills contains many houses designed in the Prairie and International styles.

well as numerous International style homes constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. Together with the Prairie School houses, these styles chronicle the evolution of the *Modernist* movement in North American architecture from the early to mid 20th Century.

The Village also has an impressive collection of houses designed in more conventional, or period, styles, as well as several excellent examples of vernacular adaptations of these styles. Perhaps the most common of these is the English Tudor.

2. PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICTS

(These have now been adopted. Don't yet have an ordinance – NEED TO GET ONE!) (Add Tom Brock's Bulletin article about the historic districts.)



This stone wall along Topping Road contributes to the visual richness of the Village, and is an important part of the community's cultural resource base.

The previously cited Shorewood Hills Intensive Survey Report prepared in 2000, noted a total of 508 resources of “architectural interest” in the Village. These included 57 resources listed in a previous architectural survey completed in 1979-80, and 451 newly identified resources. The report completed in 2000 identified two large concentrations of historic resources that would likely be eligible for historic district status. Both districts are exclusively residential in make up, and include large sections of the original College Hills, and Shorewood Plats. The report also mentioned a third collection of buildings that include the Veterans Hospital Complex, as potentially being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic district nominations are pending before the State Historic Preservation Office. The only structure individually listed on the National Register is the famous First Unitarian Meeting House.

At present, the Village does not have a historic district ordinance or a historic district committee/commission empowered with the legal authority to oversee development activity or exterior remodels in its historic neighborhoods. The Village’s Historic Preservation Committee has however, been actively promoting these efforts for several years.

In the absence of such an ordinance, any listed site, structure or district - without further designation as a State or national “landmark” - is not automatically protected from demolition or radical alternation. National Register listing brings with it only financial incentives in the form of

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

State Income Tax Credits

The State of Wisconsin offers a 25% state income tax credit toward the costs of residential historic restoration projects within designated historic districts. To qualify, a property must be located in a state or national register district; the project must be pre-qualified to meet certain historic preservation standards; and the costs of restoration must exceed \$10,000.

A tax credit is a much stronger incentive than a tax deduction in that the *credited amount is deducted directly from the individual's state income tax bill* (not on taxable income) on a dollar for dollar basis. For instance, a \$50,000 restoration would qualify for a direct \$12,500 tax credit that can be taken over as many years as needed until the credit is exhausted.

Preservation Easements

Preservation easements involve the purchase or donation of a property right; namely, the right to demolish or radically alter a historic residence at will. Generally, the easement holder – a preservation or land trust – has the legal authority to approve or prevent major exterior alterations to the affected property. Donations of easements to qualified non-profit preservation trusts usually qualify as charitable contributions for tax purposes. The most common use of preservation easements are for properties listed (either individually or as part of a designated historic district) on the State or national registers of historic places.

historic preservation tax credits. Legal protections are not a feature of the program. Generally, such legal

(INSERT HISTORIC DISTRICTS MAP HERE)

protections can be best handled at the local level through the means discussed above (a process that also involves the creation of a separate design review committee to oversee exterior renovations of listed properties).

(Add something about the Village not wanting any sort of architectural review panel or board.)

An alternative method involves the use of the conditional use process to control demolition and the replacement use or structures within historic districts. This is done by designating select historic areas as *historic district overlay zones* in the zoning ordinance, and then applying requirements for preservation on top of the base regulations already in place for the district. Such a process can keep the review of demolition permits directly under the purview of the Plan Commission and helps prevent the worst excesses of tear-downs in designated historic districts.

Under this process, demolition could be allowed as a conditional use only if certain standards for the preservation of overall neighborhood character are met. The conditional use standards would relate to how the proposed demolition and replacement use “fits” with the established neighborhoods character. Many of the guidelines listed on page [redacted] could serve as the basis for these standards. Others may include requirements that preserve natural landforms and features including stands of mature trees.

A map of the proposed historic districts is shown on the preceding page.

REGULATING HISTORIC PRESERVATION THROUGH THE CONDITIONAL USE PROCESS: PROS AND CONS

Advantages

- Regulates demolition of historic structures, and design review for replacement structures under a *single* process.
- Better at controlling all aspects of site design including landscaping and tree preservation.
- Doesn’t require the creation of a design review committee (although recommended).
- Preservation standards are general in scope, thus affording greater discretion in use.

Potential Drawbacks:

- In the absence of a design review committee, places additional burden on the Plan Commission to interpret the conditional use standards, and devise appropriate design conditions on proposed projects. (May result in inconsistent, inappropriate or arbitrary application of the standards if no design expertise among members of the Plan Commission.)
- The “blanket” application of conditional use standards subjects all properties within the overlay area to the conditional use review process. May overburden the Plan Commission in times of heavy development activity.
- Generally less effective in controlling change in architectural character where major exterior renovations don’t involve actual demolition or building expansion.
- Generally more effective in preserving overall neighborhood *character* than individual historic structures.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Most of the Village's archaeological resources have been traced to Native American settlements along the lakeshore. These include several effigy mounds located on the grounds of the Blackhawk Golf Course that have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Perhaps the most famous of these is the "goose mound" that overlooks Lake Mendota.

4. NATURAL RESOURCES

The Village's most remarkable natural resource is perhaps Lake Mendota itself. While not technically *in* the Village, the lake has figured largely in the history of the Village, and has contributed greatly to the community's identity and its quality of life. Recent years have seen an increase in lake levels brought on in large part by new development throughout Dane County and the additional stormwater runoff such development has brought. This burst of regional development has also been blamed for much of the recent flooding in the Village due to the additional 'hardscape' within the region. Besides occasional flooding, and rising lake levels, the added run-off has resulted in a greater incidence of "non-point" source pollution entering the regional watershed.

Clearly, the problems relating to flooding, pollution and rising lake levels are region-wide problems that call for intergovernmental action. This need has been well articulated in previous proposals and studies that address the flooding problem and its potential solutions. Without cooperation from surrounding communities, local mitigation efforts aimed at reducing runoff will have only a limited effect. Nevertheless, the Village must continue to insist on sound stormwater management practices in all new developments and seek creative, and perhaps unconventional ways, to deal with the problem at the local level.

Given the severity and multi-faceted nature of the problem, the ultimate solution may include a combination of 'engineered' and planning based approaches. The former may include improved stormwater conveyance, underground detention, and floodproofing, while the latter may emphasize preservation of remaining infiltration areas, reducing impervious surface coverage, conventional detention practices, and even the promotion of rain-gardens. It should be noted that only the planning based approaches truly lend themselves to *reducing* rather than just channeling runoff, and consequently are seen as more effective in limiting the migration of polluted runoff within the watershed. More effective control of erosion and sedimentation, are also generally seen as advantages of the planning-oriented approaches.



The grounds of the Blackhawk County Club contain numerous Indian effigy mounds.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL 'POCKETS'

Although the Village contains no officially recognized environmental corridors, or large conservancy areas, substantial stands of mature trees and pockets of largely undisturbed

woodlands are interspersed throughout the community. The largest of these is the 1.3-acre, Tessa and Hans Reese Woods located near Davis Quarry Park. An overgrown Oak Savannah, this site was donated to the Village in 1972, and serves as an example of the type of natural land cover that once blanketed the Village. Other natural areas include the partially restored “Chuck Koval Park” (formerly “Outlot A”) between Wood Lane and Edgehill Drive, a large part of John C. McKenna Park, and the east side of Post Farm Park. Several of these have been considerably restored. The Parks Committee has a strong commitment to preservation of the village natural areas. (Add something about the Post Farm Garden Plots.)

Elsewhere, fragmented groupings of mature trees, mostly on private lots, help preserve much of the natural character of the Village. The most common species include bur oaks and elms. Many of these are 75’ or greater in height and provide a handsome canopy for many of the Village’s stately streets and neighborhoods. The Village has recently passed a local tree ordinance to help prevent the further loss of mature trees. Such ordinances have gained in popularity, especially in mature residential communities where they are frequently used in concert with other ordinances (including those intended to prevent ‘tear-downs’) to preserve community character and aesthetics.

Although quarrying and agricultural activities played important roles in the Village’s early history, no extractive or farming activities currently take place within the Village. A large area of community gardens is located nearby on University property across from the Eagle Heights residences.

B. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

1. Goal: Preserve and protect those features that reflect the unique history and natural geography of the Village.

Objectives:

1. Preserve Village green spaces and enhance scenic areas.
2. Strengthen historic preservation *consciousness* within the Village.
3. Eliminate lake pollution originating from the Village.
4. Protect and maintain individual trees, wooded terrain, and other aspects of the natural environment.
5. Preserve historic sites, structures, and neighborhoods.
6. Get additional historic properties listed on the State and National Registers.

Policies:

1. Promote energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in all new developments.
2. Encourage property owners to preserve historic buildings in a manner consistent with the Department of Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation.
3. Promote development that is sensitive to established neighborhoods and natural land-forms/features.
4. Seek opportunities to acquire additional parkland for passive recreational use.

5. Encourage landowners to preserve woodstands on private lots.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review and amend if necessary, the Village's tree ordinance to protect trees on private lots.
- Alert property owners to the availability of State income historic preservation tax credits for historically appropriate rehabilitations and restorations (newsletter, web-site article, posters at Village Hall.)
- Maintain a library of instructional historic preservation resources, references, and guides at the Village Hall and/or links from the Village web-site.
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish floor area ratio (FAR) standards to limit the scale of new single-family residences in historic neighborhoods.
- Review the landscaping and lot coverage requirements of the Zoning Ordinance to avoid the overbuilding of residential lots.
- Celebrate the Village's architecture by developing a walking tour guide - and promoting an annual tour of homes - within the Village's historic districts.
- Establish an historic preservation land trust to purchase or receive donations of historic preservation easements on the Village's most remarkable properties. (Easement donations are treated as tax-deductible charitable contributions.)
- Consider introducing historic district zoning overlays and conditional use process to control the removal/reconstruction of structures in Village historic districts. (Would involve the development of neighborhood preservation standards).