

CHAPTER FOUR: AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

IV. AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As with most of the area outside of the original plat for the City of Madison, Shorewood Hills' land was farmed before it was developed. Major farms that were later developed include the Thomas Isom farm (VA & UW hospitals), the Jacob Breitenbach farm (the College Hills plat), the Lewis Post farm (Post Farm park and adjacent housing), the David Stephens farm and quarry (the Shorewood plat), and the Alfred Merrill farm (the Country Club). The Village is now fully built-out and surrounded by the City of Madison, and no farmland remains. Given the Village's urban setting, and its lack of agricultural land uses and activities, this chapter will necessarily focus on natural and cultural resources. 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, which studied the Village's architectural heritage to determine eligibility and boundaries for potential historic districts. The 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 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 Shorewood. The United States Department of Interior has registered these two 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 (www.nps.gov/history/standards.htm). The Village also encourages property owners to avail



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



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.

themselves of State historic preservation tax credits for certified rehabilitations of designated historic properties, particularly in these areas.

B. 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: the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Unitarian Meeting House.

While the oldest remaining structures in the Village date from the late 19th Century, the Village is 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 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. The Pew House is a prototype for Wright’s Usonian designs, which used prefabricated items for construction. The house, constructed in 1940, was designed around the natural features of its Lake Mendota shoreline site. The Unitarian Meeting house was constructed by Marshall Erdman between August 1949 and August 1951. Wright’s initial estimate for the project was \$60,000; bids came in between \$350,000 and \$700,000. Marshall Erdman, who was just starting out as a local contractor, offered to do the job for \$102,000. Even with discounted prices from some suppliers and the Unitarian Society pitching in by hauling stone to the site, the final cost ended up more than doubling to \$214,487. Wright had to prove to the Wisconsin Industrial Commission (which was responsible for approving public buildings) that the distinctive auditorium roofline would not collapse. Since its completion, the building has undergone expansions in 1964 and 2008.

Many residences designed in the “Prairie School” style are located in the Village. Some of these are interpretations of the Prairie style from Wright followers such as George Elmslie. Other architects of note include Frank Riley, who designed 17 homes in the Village, William Kaeser (14 homes), Herb Fritz (9 homes), the firm of Law, Law, and Potter (6 homes), and the firm of Beatty and Strang (8 homes). Other architects

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES

State Income Tax Credits
 The State of Wisconsin offers a 25 percent 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. Projects must be completed within two years, unless a five-year period is requested at the time the application is submitted. The maximum credit per project is \$10,000, but multiple projects can be submitted for a single site.

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 \$40,000 project would qualify for a direct \$10,000 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.

and firms that have designed multiple homes in Shorewood Hills include: Balch and Lippert, Henry T. Dysland, Flad and Moulton, and Edward Tough. Many of the firms named will sound familiar to area residents today: Law, Law and Potter became Potter Lawson; Beatty and Strang became Strang; and Flad and Moulton became Flad, all of which are still influential architectural firms and active in the Madison area and beyond.

A large number of Craftsman and Bungalow style houses are also in the Village, as well as numerous International style homes constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. Together with the Prairie style 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.

C. HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The previously cited Shorewood Hills Intensive Survey Report 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 were eligible for historic district status. Both districts are exclusively residential in nature, and include large sections of the original College Hills and Shorewood Plats. The report also mentioned a third collection of buildings, including the Veterans Hospital Complex, as potentially being eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Shorewood Historic District was certified by the Wisconsin Historical Society on November 29, 2002, and the College Hills Historic District was certified on December 9, 2002. Both districts are in the State and National Register of Historic Places. The only structure in the Village individually listed on the State and National Registers is the First Unitarian Meeting House. Map 4-1 shows the Village Historic Districts and landmarks.

Many residents may not be aware that they might be eligible for significant tax credits for repair and rehabilitation of houses that are in one of the Village’s two historic districts. Any house that is within one of the districts and is designated as “contributing” to a historic district is eligible for tax credits. An owner of a house that contributes to historic district status can receive a 25% tax benefit for repair and rehabilitation. The program is administered by the Division of Historic Preservation of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Details of the tax benefits can be found at the Wisconsin Historical Society web site: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/hp/architecture/tax_credit.asp or from the State Historic Preservation Officer at (608) 264-6493. This office can also tell whether a house is eligible.

Note that a tax credit differs from a tax deduction in a very important way. When income taxes are figured, a deduction reduces your income for purposes of determining how much you owe the state in taxes. A tax credit, on the other hand, is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in what you actually owe in Wisconsin taxes. If a credit is not used up in a given year, the unused credit can be carried into the following years until it is used up. This program does not affect property taxes.

At present, the Village has an ad-hoc Historic Preservation Committee, but it is not empowered with the legal authority to oversee development activity or exterior remodels in historic neighborhoods. The Village's Historic Preservation Committee has however, been actively promoting these efforts for several years. The Village does not have a historic district ordinance.

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

An alternative method involves the use of the conditional use process to control demolition and the replacement of 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 in the housing chapter could serve as the basis for these standards. Others may include requirements that preserve natural land-forms and features including stands of mature trees.

While the Village wishes to preserve the current character of the community, there is little desire to have overly restrictive architectural reviews of residential property. Any additions or new homes built as a result of tear-downs must follow existing Village ordinances, and should occur at a size and scope appropriate to their surroundings. However, such things as color or architectural style will continue to be up to the judgment of the property owner.

D. ARCHEOLOGICAL 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 Country Club 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.



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

E. WATER 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. Lake Mendota continues to be negatively impacted by added run-off from increasing suburban development, which has resulted in a greater incidence of non-point source pollution entering the watershed. Non-point source pollution is more difficult to control, since it is not a result of a single source (like a factory), and instead results from general runoff from lawns and roads, which can be contaminated with things like fertilizer and oil.

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. Stormwater management is discussed further in the Utilities and Community Facilities chapter.

The City of Madison recently requested the DNR, which has jurisdiction over the lake's water level, study the water level that is maintained for Lake Mendota at the Tenny Park locks. Lake levels have been kept artificially high (up to four feet over natural levels) for a number of years, which negatively affects the shoreline and natural areas like Cherokee Marsh along the north shore of the lake. A long-term study of lake levels involving the communities that surround the lake has been advocated by the DNR. The Village will remain vigilant of the situation and coordinate with relevant governmental units to make sure its perspective on Lake Mendota water quality and water levels is heard.

Given the severity and multi-faceted nature of stormwater and flooding problems, 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 later may emphasize preservation of remaining infiltration areas, reducing impervious surface coverage, conventional detention practices, and even the promotion of rain-gardens. The Village has enacted a stringent stormwater ordinance that requires properties to make substantial improvements in stormwater management as they are redeveloped. The ordinance allows for creative use of the above methods so long as water quantity and quality requirements are met. 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.

F. 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" between Wood Lane and Edgehill Drive, a large part of John C. McKenna Park, and the east side of Post Farm Park.

The Parks Committee has a strong commitment to preservation of Village natural areas. Village parks are shown on Map 5-2 in the following chapter.

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 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.

G. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

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. The Village does have community garden plots located at Post Farm Park. The community garden consists of 59 large (20 foot by 20 foot) and 23 small (10 foot by 10 foot) plots that are assigned to Village residents each year. Water, compost, and wood chips are provided on-site. The gardens are overseen by a committee, which is charged with assigning plots and maintenance. Another community garden area is located nearby on University property across from the Eagle Heights residences.

H. THREATENED & ENDANGERED SPECIES

Wisconsin has 15 plants and animals on the Federal list of endangered or threatened species. The state list is more extensive, and contains over 100 plants and animals. In addition, the DNR, as part of the state's Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) maintains a list that includes species that, while rare, have not been included in the official endangered or threatened species lists. Specific sightings/ranges are not publicly available for most of these species, so it is difficult to precisely determine what rare or threatened species may be present in Shorewood Hills. The DNR maintains a general list and map of species known to be present in Dane County. The list includes 45 aquatic animals, 27 aquatic plants, 18 natural aquatic communities, 35 terrestrial animals, 42 terrestrial plants, and 11 natural terrestrial communities. Shorewood Hills is shown as having both terrestrial and aquatic occurrences of rare species.

I. WETLANDS, FLOODPLAINS, SOILS

Map 4-2 shows the natural landscape features of the Village and surrounding area, including steep slopes, hydric soils, environmental corridors, wetlands, and floodplains. Steep slopes are subject to increased erosion, especially when disturbed with construction or earth-moving, and should be carefully monitored if such activities occur. Hydric soils are associated with high groundwater levels during at least part of the year, and can result in additional expense for building construction in some instances. Hydric soils in the Village are mainly found along University Avenue between Rose Place and Schmitt Place, with a sliver east Wellesley Road as well. According to the Wisconsin DNR wetland inventory, there are no wetlands in the Village. Because of the generally steep grades along Lake Monona, there are no floodplain areas in the Village either. Environmental Corridors are designated by the Regional Planning Commission and generally follow stream corridors, large parks, wetland boundaries, or connect large natural areas. There are no environmental corridors in the Village, but there are several in the surrounding area, especially on the University campus.

J. METALLIC AND NON-METALLIC MINERAL RESOURCES

There are no known deposits of metallic or non-metallic mineral resources within the Village. Because the Village is already completely developed and is surrounded by the City of Madison there are no real prospects for extraction of metallic or non-metallic mineral resources.

K. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

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

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Preserve Village green spaces and enhance scenic areas.
- b. Strengthen historic preservation *consciousness* within the Village.
- c. Encourage extraordinary stormwater management measures to reduce pollution of Lake Mendota.
- d. Protect, maintain, and restore trees, wooded terrain, and other aspects of the natural environment.
- e. Preserve historic sites, structures, and neighborhoods.
- f. Get additional historic properties listed on the State and National Registers.

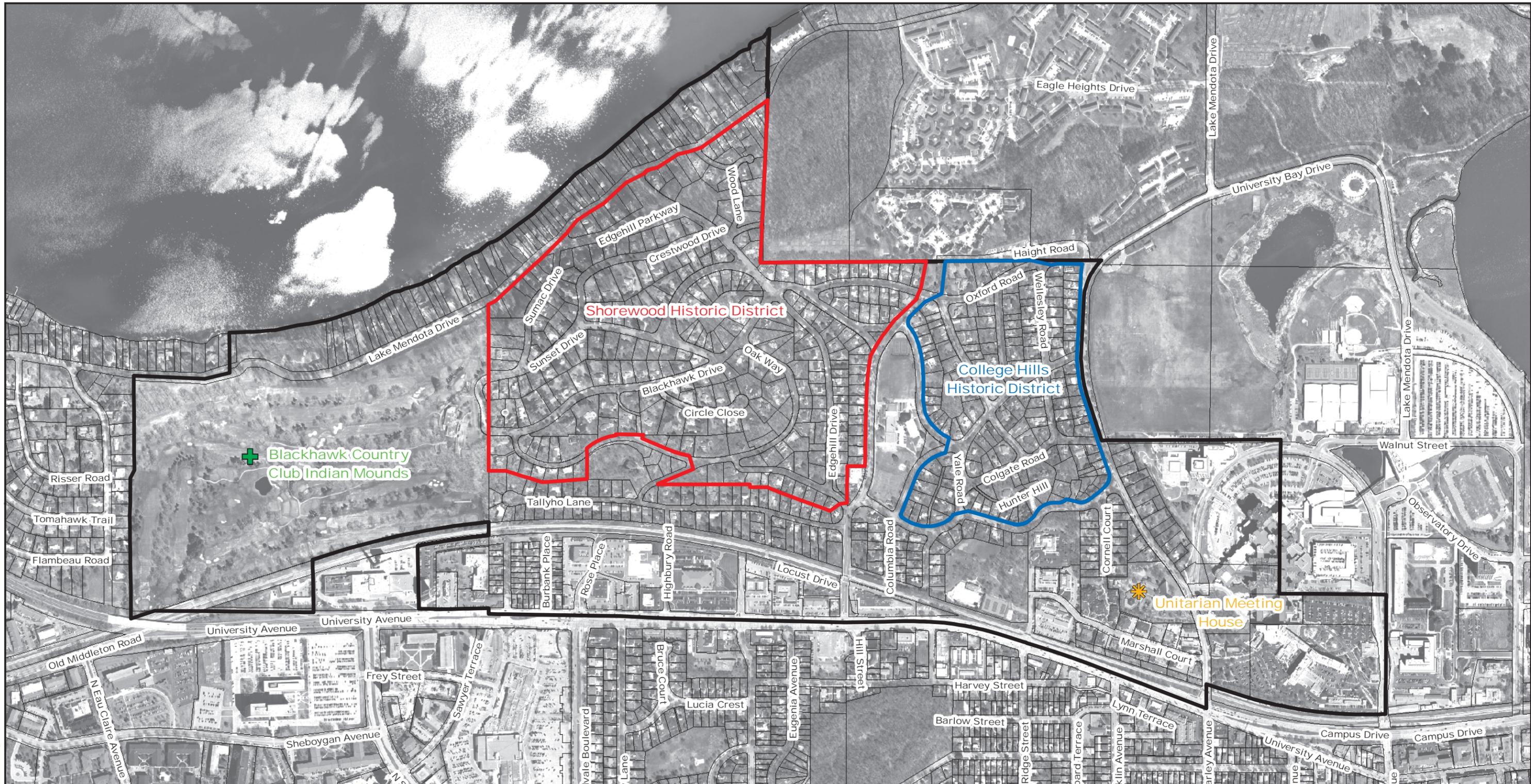
POLICIES:

- a. Promote energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in all new developments.
- b. Encourage property owners to preserve historic buildings in a manner consistent with the Department of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation.
- c. Promote development that is sensitive to established neighborhoods and natural land-forms/features.
- d. Seek opportunities to acquire additional parkland for passive recreational use.
- e. Encourage landowners to preserve woodstands on private lots.

L. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the Village's tree ordinance, and amend if necessary.
- 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.
- 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.)
- Provide a link on the Village's web-site to the Wisconsin Historic Preservation office, as well as historic preservation web-rings.
- Investigate alternative methods for historic preservation.

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Data Sources:
Dane County Land Information Office
Village of Shorewood Hills
Vierbicher

Legend

- Shorewood Historic District
- College Hills Historic District
- + National Register
- ✳ State and National Register
- Village of Shorewood Hills Boundary

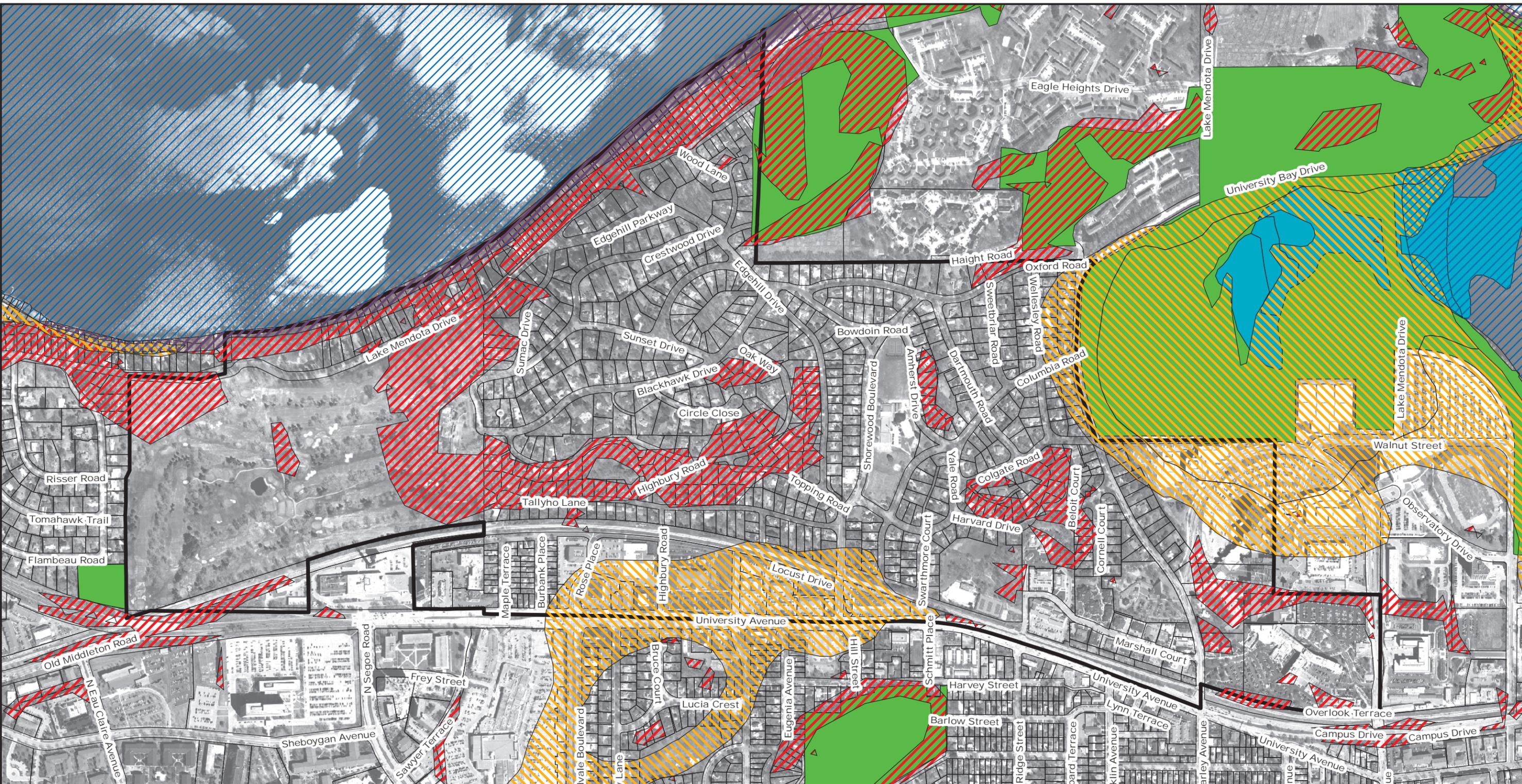
Map 4-1
Historic Resources
Village of Shorewood Hills
Comprehensive Plan

June 2, 2009

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planners | engineers | advisors



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Data Sources:
Dane County Land Information Office
Wisconsin DNR Wetland Inventory
Dane County Regional Planning Commission

Legend

-  Slopes Greater Than 12%
-  Hydric Soils
-  100-Year Floodplain
-  Wetlands
-  Environmental Corridor
-  Village of Shorewood Hills Boundary

Map 4-2 Natural Landscape

Village of Shorewood Hills
Comprehensive Plan

June 2, 2009

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