

**Community Input
Vision for the Future**

Part II

Community Issues

On December 3, 2008, the Village of Greenhills hosted a community meeting at Molloy's on the Green Banquet Hall. Stakeholders identified what they saw as the Village's strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. Participants were also asked to select or "vote" for what issue, idea, or statement was the most important to them. The Greenhills Planning Committee reviewed the comments, sorted them out, and consolidated them in manageable groups with homogeneous themes. The themes are listed from the most "voted" to the least one.

Strengths: those assets we want to maintain, build, and leverage:

- Green space, greenbelt and parks: surrounded by green
- Greenhills: the small town feel
- Government and community services: Volunteer Fire Department, great Police Department, Community services, Recreation Complex/services, Infrastructure
- Federal Government Planned Community: history and design
- Location and accessibility
- Safety: low crime
- Pedestrian friendly: walkable community
- Urban design of the community and its adaptability to "new urbanism"
- Destination retail and services: library, post office, pool, Commons, places of worship
- Diverse and affordable housing

Weaknesses: those situations or issues we want to remedy or exit:

- Business district: Vacant Johnny's Toys, and physical condition of shopping center, underutilized space and lack of businesses that cater to local residents (grocery, gas station)
- Property maintenance: [lack of] enforcement of codes that result in poor condition of properties
- Housing: too many housing turning into low-rent investment properties, aging housing stock that cannot easily be modernized, Dewitt Landing/Potterhill housing
- Education/Schools
- Public facilities and services: upkeep and maintenance of parks and public places, accessibility issues for seniors
- Sources of revenues: taxes are too high, there is not enough commercial tax base
- Public Image/Branding: lack of a public identity/recognition, beautification of Commons area
- Declining population in an aging community
- Greenhills defined: small mindedness, unwelcomed new residents, division

Opportunities: those resources, events, and leads we want to take advantage of:

- Business district redevelopment: Johnny's Toys and underutilized shopping center present many opportunities for redevelopment
- Public image/Branding: build a stronger public image by reinforcing "street" appeal (Winton Road), the history of the Village, and reinforcing the "new urbanism" characteristics of the community
- Infrastructure: beautification (new town square, Commons), improve sidewalks, bike paths/walking trails, youth activity center, expanding library and parks. Wireless internet
- Housing: redevelop residential areas, newer infill house, more owner-occupied, OLR into housing

- Activities/ events: activities for seniors, farmers' market
- Education/ schools: adult education, charter school, improve schools
- Redevelopment sites: Damon & Winton corner, OLR, unused green space, lower fields behind middle school

Threats: those situations and trends we want to counter

- Image and branding: deterioration of Greenhills and surrounding communities, losing historic district, resistance to change
- Housing: functionality of housing, decrease in housing value, lack of property maintenance
- Revenue sources: not enough of a tax base to pay for municipal services, state and federal government funds cut to local governments, higher taxes
- Population trend: aging population, no new families to replace them, decreasing median income
- Education/schools: school district performance and declining student enrollment a threat to property value
- Business district unattractive as a destination: shopping center
- Infrastructure: aging infrastructure, lack of community transportation
- National trends: potential state library cuts, eminent domain, regionalization, and metrogovernment

On March 26, 2009, a second community-wide meeting was held at Molloy's on the Green. The event that gathered over 120 people allowed Greenhills stakeholders to review a draft of a Vision for the future, and provide feedback on preliminary goals and strategies for implementation. Participants showed vivid interest in the proposed ideas. Some comments and suggestions made it clear that there were, on certain issues, divergent points of view. It was decided to provide stakeholders the opportunity to come together and discuss at length those issues.

On May 21, 2009, three focus group sessions were held at the Community Building. The sessions centered on the following topics: Housing and Historic Preservation, Greenbelt, and the Village Center. The purpose of the meetings was to find the common ground on seemingly conflicting aspirations of the community to base final recommendations for the Village.

For example, there has been a movement to designate part of the Village as a Historic District. A couple of questions arose: how to balance a historic district designation with the expressed interest to promote infill housing? Is there a legitimate reason for property owners to fear restrictions that a historic district designation may bring? What is the price residents and property owners are willing to pay to bear the honor of a historic district designation? What are the possible financial gains?

The "greenbelt" evokes images of a continuous belt of undeveloped land and lush vegetation around the village of Greenhills. In ownership terms, the greenbelt is not continuous, but a patchwork of numerous owners, including individual property owners, business owners, the school district, the park district, churches, and the village. To complicate the picture more, there is a "greenbelt" zoning district designation that includes not only the "belt" but also the land along Winton Road, and in the heart of the community, the golf course/recreation complex area. On the other hand, Winton Woods Park completely surrounds the Village and is the true and even larger greenbelt of Greenhills. However, when Greenhills residents say "preserve the greenbelt," what does it mean? Who is responsible? What are the costs to maintain the greenbelt? Do you treat differently the land along Winton Road and in the golf course?

The concept of a “Village Center” seeks to create a central hub of community life that includes the shopping center, the recreation complex, the commons, the buildings that frame the commons, the Winton Road Corridor, and the adjacent residences. The “center” is conceived as a mixed use development where higher densities are allowed in designated areas. What does it mean to be the “Center” of the Village? What should a resident expect from the “center?” How can current business owners partner with the Village and the Park District to grow business? How to develop a win-win relationship between Greenhills business center/community and Winton Woods and the Park District? What can the Village do to foster redevelopment of the area?

Participants included residents and property owners from the historic district, historic preservation consultants, property owners of parcels located in the greenbelt, property owners of parcels located in the “village center,” business owners and business operators, representatives from the school district and the park district, green development designers, elected and appointed officials, steering committee members, and guests from Milford (for the community’s experience in creating an inviting atmosphere for development in the Historic Milford district) and Glendale (for the community’s experience in creating and administering Historic District guidelines).

It is important to note that residents are passionate about schools. Some have expressed interest and concerns about public schools: their location, performance, consideration to secede, suggestions to create a charter school, among others. Realistically, the Village of Greenhills has no power or control over the Winton Woods City School District. The School District is, by Ohio Revised Code, a separate entity, with its own boundaries, taxing powers, rules and regulations, and elected leaders who sit on the Board of Education. It was suggested that residents work within the School District structure to lobby for any desired changes. At this point, the Village of Greenhills acknowledges the importance of a successful school for the community, and will continue to strengthen communication and collaboration with the School District for the benefit of its residents.

After thorough consideration of the community input; evaluation of existing conditions, experts' presentations and readings on trends (socioeconomics, development, zoning, communications, technology, and more); and lengthy discussions of what Greenhills should be in the future, the Steering Committee crafted a Vision for the Future. It is the intent that this long-term vision sets the tone for the implementation of strategies that, in a cumulative effect, will fulfill the picture envisioned of Greenhills in 2029.

Collective Vision Greenhills – 2029

Greenhills, a National Historic Landmark, is a progressive community that seamlessly connects strong neighborhoods to a vibrant Village Center and the natural environment. The Village embraces its tradition of innovative planning, design and sensitivity to the environment.

Commerce within the Village is a key component to the community's quality of life and ongoing financial stability. At the heart of Greenhills is a vibrant, welcoming, mixed-use Village Center where citizens have access to a variety of shopping and cultural opportunities. Eco-friendly, sustainable buildings populate the Village Center, providing a broad range of employment opportunities.

The Village is a friendly, well-maintained, and accessible community where neighbors are active, caring, and informed. Families and residents of all ages enjoy parks, public spaces, tree-lined streets, neighborhood events, and places of worship, volunteer opportunities, safe neighborhoods, and recreational, art, and cultural amenities. The Village supports, recognizes and utilizes the time and talents of its residents and organizations; and helps shape and form the community now and in the future.

The Village works in unison with public and private entities to foster a commitment to high quality education. Volunteers and citizens work to provide exceptional educational opportunities for all ages. Innovative school facilities and programs play an integral part in the cultural and civic life of the community.

The Village of Greenhills is an inviting residential community that offers a wide variety of sustainable housing choices that meets the needs of residents of all ages. A system of pedestrian paths and walkways links historic and new neighborhoods. The Village offers a small town feel and strong sense of community.

The Village of Greenhills invests in its open spaces, parks, recreation programs, tree-lined streets, walkways, and community services. Greenhills leads by example and is widely recognized for its distinguished police, volunteer fire, and administrative services. The Village is responsive to the needs of its citizens and encourages active public involvement. Bicyclists and pedestrians can easily reach adjacent communities and Winton Woods-Hamilton County Park.

Redevelopment in Greenhills is characterized by its practice of mixing retail, housing and office spaces which maximizes the use of available land resulting in a stable and diverse local economy. Best practices have streamlined the development process fostering increased interest in the overall redevelopment effort. Innovative developments and alternative modes of mobility have renewed the interest in inherent benefits of community focal points.