

Friday, September 4, 2009

The Greenhills Journal

Page 11

Resident advocates for Greenhills history

BY KELLY K. KNOX
Staff Columnist

Judging by the way Betty Downs can recite Greenhills history, one would never know she's not a native. Although she has only lived in Greenhills for a few years, she has developed a deep passion for the preservation of the community.

In fact, her passion runs so deep that she has visited both of the other two New Deal-era "greenbelt communities" within the past few months in her search for ways to advocate for the revitalization and preservation of Greenhills. She also recently donated a book to the Greenhills Library about Greendale, Wis., entitled *The Little Village That Could ... and Did*.

"These communities are so unique," said Downs. "I feel safe here and never feel threatened. Because of the design, I can walk anywhere near here. Greenhills is worth preserving."

When her husband, Bill, retired a little over three years ago, the couple moved to Greenhills to be near family. Downs immediately sensed something unique about the community and began to investigate.

Most recently, her investigation took her to Greenbelt in Maryland in April, and then to Greendale in Wisconsin in June. Along the way, she learned that both of those other communities that started as Depression-era housing experiments have discovered unique ways to keep their communities thriving through the decades.

"Greendale has Reiman Publications, which publishes *Taste of Home* magazine," Downs said.

"The magazine has attracted a large commercial and industrial section to Greendale, and they also now have the largest shopping mall in Wisconsin. They also have a visitor's center with a test kitchen for *Taste of Home*, a nice restaurant featuring live music, and a pizzeria. All of these attractions have really revitalized the interest of Greendale's citizens, without losing

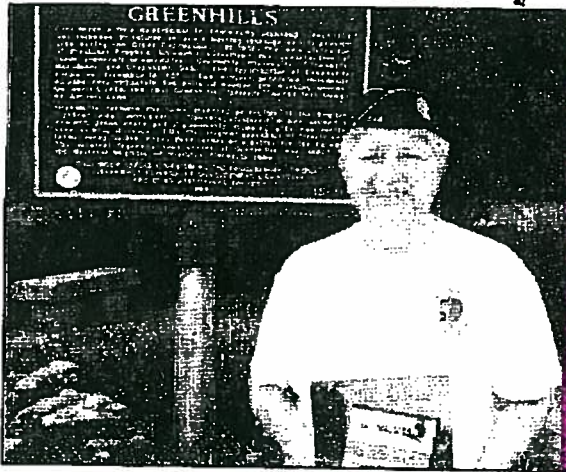


Photo Courtesy of Kelly Knox
Betty Downs is a strong advocate for Greenhills, past and future.

the historical integrity of the community."

Similarly, Greenbelt has a sign at the entrance to the town labeling it "The Best-Kept Secret in Maryland." The town's residents have put great effort into marketing Greenbelt as a friendly and open bedroom community serving the greater District of Columbia area, thereby developing a large tax base through attracting many wealthier area residents.

"Greenbelt has a museum in one of the original houses with furnishings and appliances original to the era in which these communities were built, and they have put a lot of effort into developing a nice shopping area that people like to visit," Downs said.

Through her travels to these sister towns, Downs has developed some ideas about how to further revitalize and preserve her adopted home of Greenhills.

"It's hard for people to accept change," she said. "I can understand how people who have lived here their whole lives don't want things to change."

But the community has already changed. Downs pointed out that not many years ago, homes in Greenhills were passed down with-

in families and it was very difficult to find a home for sale. Now, however, Downs sees homes for sale on nearly every block in town.

"Greenhills needs to find a savior," she said. "We need to attract a large company or business that can put some money into the town. Reiman Publications in Greendale is a great example of how that can work. That company has embraced Greendale and has helped turn it into an attractive place for people to visit and a desirable place for people to live." During her short residency in Greenhills, Downs has been active in civic and social activities both within Greenhills and The American Legion, where she is an active and enthusiastic member of the historic Greater Cincinnati Woman's Post 644.

But her time in Greenhills is drawing short, and she and her husband are planning to move soon to a piece of land they have purchased in her native state of Alabama. However, a piece of her heart will remain in Greenhills, and she plans to return often to visit family.

"I believe in Greenhills," she said, "and I believe the people here will find a way to preserve it. There's too much to lose if they don't."

VILLAGE OF GREENHILLS

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY.....

"DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN"

Molloy's on the Green
10 Enfield Street - Behind the Pool
Thursday, September 10, 2009
7 p.m.

The Village of Greenhills and the Steering Committee for the development of the Comprehensive Plan invites and encourages all citizens, residents and businesses, of the Greenhills community to participate in the "Presentation of the Draft Comprehensive Plan" which details the future vision for the Village of Greenhills.

The Steering Committee has been working diligently on this process and is excited to bring to the community the Draft Comprehensive Plan for the future, its goals, objectives, strategies, and timetable.

For the process to be successful we need your participation and feedback. Also needed are open minds about the future direction of the Village by everyone with a stake in our community.

For more information, please contact Jane Berry, Village of Greenhills, 11000 Winton Road, Greenhills, Ohio 45218, Telephone: 513-825-2100, Email: jberry@greenhillsohio.org

Historic Greenhills photos

Photo Courtesy of Matt Vollmar
Pioneer Automotive owner Matt Vollmar sent this photo of the Greenhills Center from 1938.



Waycross
Community
Media