

Greenhills Comprehensive Plan  
May 21 Workshop  
Greenbelt Group  
Facilitator: Andy Dobson

**Participants:**

- Tim Zelek, Hamilton County Parks District (substitute for Sally Bauer)
- David Eichert, resident
- Steve Baymel, Alois Center (substitute for Susan Gilster)
- Greg Miller, Alois Center
- Steve Mathews, Winton Woods School District
- Pat Migliozi, ODNR Forestry
- David Moore, resident
- Norb Schomaker, resident
- Joel Suggs, resident (joined by wife and kids later in meeting)
- Wendi VanBuren, ODNR Forestry
- Bud Wolterman, resident and councilmember
- Bev Ventura, resident and Steering Team member
- Barbara Bradford, resident and Steering Team member (substitute for Kyle Bradford)
- Greg Miller
- Steve Boymel

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

- The "greenbelt" is a zoning district, a physical collection of wooded property owned by various parties (village, residents, speculators, schools, and park district), and an integral part of the village's identity and history that needs preservation from development and a pending natural threat in the Emerald Ash Borer
- Greenhills has had a Tree City designation for over 25 years
- Alois Center has national reputation as model Alzheimer's clinic
- In 1949 when zoning was established, federal government still owned the village
- 1988 Village Charter requires that any change to G-1 Greenbelt zoning (rezoning) requires a community referendum--charter allows residents to vote but not property owners
- Church lawsuit over G-1 zoning was based in part on previous code text that allowed churches within the zone--when village amended code the churches became non-conforming uses and filed lawsuit

- MobilComm property annexed in 1980s, was never zoned G-1 although it abuts greenbelt property, annexed for tax revenue
- Alois Center expansion project is going out to bid and may break ground within a month--property is not zoned G-1 although the school district owns property behind Alois that is--this property is not used for anything
- Mark Janson: speculator that purchased 10+ acre parcel of land zoned G-1 from Sheriff's Sale around 15 years ago--is not doing anything with property and is behind on property taxes (could be up to \$13,000)--Village interested in purchasing property but Janson is unwilling to sell for a reasonable price--property is essentially unable to be developed due to zoning and rugged topography

### **What does the greenbelt mean?**

- micro-scale: privacy for property owners that abut it, natural beauty
- community-scale: identity, what makes Greenhills unique, how they can market the community to new residents and investors
- Preserving greenbelt vital to abutting property owners--they paid more for their property and it is protection for their investments

### **Ideally, the greenbelt is: (what does the greenbelt mean to you)**

- preserved forever
- the community's identity
- peace and quiet
- having green space visually
- is calming
- nature sanctuary
- play in it
- actual wildlife
- privacy
- living on the greenbelt
- peace, quiet, privacy forever
- open space
- wildlife
- have a wooded setting in an urban environment
- privacy
- natural setting
- peace and harmony
- left untouched
- park usage and open areas to give a sense of country outdoor living with urban convenience
- there aren't many city-slickers
- a unique selling (marketing) proposition
- gives a small town feel

- knowing no one will build behind us

### **Opinions on what to do with greenbelt**

- don't touch it for any reason
- sell for development--land is going to waste otherwise
- some uses are OK, others are not, depending on the location and specific project

### **What can be done in greenbelt?**

(greenbelt zoning includes greenbelt, commons, and golf course, and they all are covered by charter provisions--we're only talking about greenbelt here)

- passive recreation
- active recreation
- trails and paths (on non-park property, should only allow path to connect to larger trail system within Winton Woods)
- nature center
- camping
- forestry management
- mountain biking
- bridle paths
- lot splits (dividing up Janson property among abutting lot owners)

### **Preservation of Tree Canopy (EAB and management of invasive trees) – Existing conditions**

It is difficult to determine one overarching policy or idea for what should or should not be done with every greenbelt property--different locations and different potential uses bring up many variables, and the group discovered this through conversations about different issues. For instance, clearing in G-1 is prohibited. But ODNR reps explained the imminent threat from EAB and how clearing of dead trees and honeysuckle will be vital to mitigating impacts and preserving the forested areas.

Several in the group were unaware of the nuances related to the greenbelt--who owns what, what exactly is an is not allowed under G-1 zoning, abutting greenbelt vs. actually owning a property, etc.

There are concerns with the precedent any kind of construction within greenbelt areas would establish

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is on its way to Hamilton County and based on the number of ash trees in Winton Woods will have devastating impact on the greenbelt. Ban on cutting trees will severely limit ability to manage infestation and prepare for re-planting.

### **Recommended Action:**

The ODNR reps started a discussion about a board, committee, or working group to form to deal with education of EAB and its impacts. The group would include Greenhills

officials and property owners, ODNR experts, and Hamilton County Parks representatives. Dave Moore expressed an interest in helping manage this group, as he has been involved with tree planting in Greenhills for many years.

### **Greenbelt Zoning – Existing Condition**

The only legal challenge to the G-1 zoning district was from the two churches, and they won their case. Even though the village charter was enacted after these cases, there is still question of how exposed legally the village is under the current zoning/charter scheme. The charter has never been challenged.

The greenbelt exists today balanced by zoning and charter controls and the willingness of current property owners to live with the restrictions in the G-1 district. It is unclear how different property owners may feel about this situation.

### **Recommended Action:**

The group decided to ask the Village's legal counsel to look at the current zoning/charter regulations and determine what exposure there may be and how things could be improved. After lengthy discussion, some agreement was reached on what uses and improvements could be allowed within the greenbelt.

There was some sentiment from the group that if a challenge to the G-1 district is possible, then "bring them on". However, it seems unwise to leave the situation potentially open to a lengthy, expensive lawsuit that the village is not guaranteed to win.

The group wants to contact a realtor to discuss how the greenbelt can be a better marketing tool for Greenhills.