

Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan

Meeting #6 (1/31/23)

Discussion Notes

Distributed 2/9/23



Handouts for Meeting #6

- Expansion of selected Objectives and Strategies within Goal F. Quality Amenities and Services and within Goal D. Desirable Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Breakout Discussion Questions #1 and #2
 - Zoning Map, with boundaries of the Village Historic District
 - Gates Mills National Register Historic District map from 1991 Nomination
 - Excerpt from Gates Mills Codified Ordinance – Building Code Chapter 1313 Architectural Board of Review – Section 1313.091 Design Review Standards
 - Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) Fact Sheet
-

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance

Chip's Table:

Jennifer Pinto
Ann Zoller
Mitch Bass
Kelly Siemborski
Nat Smith
Sean O'Brien

Sandra's Table:

Rick Marabito
Sharon Bodker
Cynthia Zins
Keely Davidson-Bennett
Dana Haas
Sean O'Hagan
Deej Lincoln
Elizabeth Horvitz

Other Attendees

Jay "Chip" AuWerter, Village Council
Sandra Turner, Village Council
Kristin Hopkins, FAICP, CT Consultants
Sarah Sitterle, AICP, CT Consultants

Meeting Introduction

An overview of the night's discussion activities for the meeting was provided. Each table began breakout discussions of Topic #1 regarding specific objectives under Goal F. Quality Amenities and Services.

BREAKOUT DISCUSSION #1:

Goal F. Quality Amenities and Services - Strategies F.2, F.3, F.4, F.6 and F.7

Notes from the table discussions are provided below for each question.

Question #1: F.2. What role should the Village play (via services and/or community amenities) to support older residents so they can remain in the Village – in their own house or neighborhood?

<u>Chip’s Table</u>	<u>Sandra’s Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that there is no resource currently available that identifies all of the available services. • Concerns raised about not wanting to reinvent the wheel, but rather identify and connect residents to available services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Example: services at the Mayfield Village Senior Center that are available to Gates Mills residents. • Suggestion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify the gap between what people are looking for and what is available, and ○ Then decide where and when to spend resources. • Discussed and refined a recommended approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify what people want first. ○ Create a Committee or Task Force to address connecting residents to services. ○ Identify resources available. ○ Make recommendations on program(s) needed locally. • At a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a directory/list of existing programs – a resource guide ○ Seek out residents who would be interested in volunteering. • Suggestion for a word change to Objective F.2., to read “Explore existing” rather than “Design” community amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that as part of a community, all people should be taken care of; there are a number of services provided by the county/others that Gates Mills should help promote. • Suggestion of things that could easily be done now to assist residents, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ daily welfare checks conducted by police/fire departments, ○ lock boxes for seniors, ○ “first alert” program, where seniors opt in, ○ “vial of life” program, ○ transportation programs with vetted volunteer drivers. • Noted that the Village does have some programs for older residents. Could post list of services that are already provided by the Village, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ police and fire department home safety assessments, outreach during weather related and other emergencies, daily wellness checks, house key storage at the police department for emergency access to home, etc., ○ outreach for socialization by community organizations to members during confinement. • Discussed possibly establishing a committee to determine what is needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to communicate with residents to identify their needs (e.g. survey residents). ○ Identify what the Village has and make services better known. ○ Identify what’s already being done by others and publicize opportunities. ○ Investigate Community Partnership on Aging program (which the Village could join for \$20,000 per year). Requires coordination. • Suggestion to change wording in Objective F.2., from “Design” to “Identify and communicate” community amenities.

Question #2 – F.3. & F.4. What role should the Village play (via services and/or community amenities; relationship with Mayfield School District) to attract and retain younger wage-earning families?

Chip’s Table	Sandra’s Table
<p>F.3. Village Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted that the Village provides some services - need to figure out what services currently exist & better ways to communicate. • Suggestion that the Village coordinate with Mayfield School District on publicly-funded daycare to see if there is interest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comment that Gates Mills Elementary School has playground and would be a great place for publicly-funded daycare. Another option is the Gates Mills Environmental Center. ○ Question asked if Village should subsidize cost for residents. ○ Noted it would require voter approval, but that could be a value proposition to Gates Mills to make more attractive. • Question asked about how to engage younger residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a working group. ○ Survey residents to find out what they need. ○ Consider intergenerational activities/strategies. • Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Babysitting services (could be offered at the Community House). ○ Neighborhood based volunteer opportunity for older children to check on older residents (potential to provide volunteer credit for college applications). • Discussion noted several current event offerings that are popular including New Resident Happy Hour, Halloween, Popsicles in the Park, Christmas Eve, 4th of July. <p>F.4. Mayfield School District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions asked about Council’s Liaison Committee with the Mayfield School District: 	<p>F.3. Village Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the Community Survey results, a member noted that some community events were paused during the pandemic. • Another noted that for a small Village they did a great job with events - especially noting that events are organized/hosted by volunteers. • Suggestions/questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See what other communities are doing for families. ○ Is it time for the Village to have paid staff? ○ Is there a need for a parks and rec department? • Members discussed community events and who organizes them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noted the Improvement Society and Positively Gates Mills Committee and village staff ○ Another noted that it was a combination of organizations and a group of parents that have been instrumental in the success of events and sports such as soccer and t-ball. Lots of people involved with the parade. ○ Wondered whether now there may be a “hole” after the pandemic, and that volunteerism needs to be regenerated. ○ Group rejected need for a parks and recreation department. The culture of village recreation is built on the identification of needs and creative solutions by residents. • It was noted that the Village has a Recreation Committee, which monitors the calendar. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was asked whether the role of the recreation committee needed to be redefined. • Noted that this objective was just one in the Plan that helps to attract new wage-earning residents. Other parts of the Plan include meaningful strategies, such as: bike paths, Village Center enhancements, etc. • It was suggested that it would be useful to ask people who recently sold a house in Gates Mills why they moved out. <p>F.4. Mayfield School District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that having a relationship with the school district is important. The School Liaison Committee began in 2011 and has created important relationships with school personnel, and promoted the school district. Question asked how Village residents can get involved. • Discussion of what “more community use” for the elementary school means. Is that really necessary/desirable? • Members discussed the percentage of Village school-age children that attend public school and whether it had always been that way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was previously noted that the current enrollment at Gates Mills Elementary School (GMES) (K – grade 5) is 97 students, of which 39% (38 students) are GM residents. ○ Enrollment at GMES has been higher in the past at 125 students.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is information getting reported back? ○ What is the group’s role? ○ Do members speak on behalf of Gates Mills at the meetings? ○ Or, are meetings only to provide information? ● Members noted a need for advocates for Gates Mills in communicating with the Mayfield School District. ● It was noted that the Schools Liaison Committee was proactive and growing and there was a need to support and work with them. It was mentioned that an Advisory Committee member is the new Chair of the Liaison Committee. ● Members expressed concerns that strategy F.4.2.d regarding the replacement strategy for GMES was detrimental to communications with the Mayfield School District and should be deleted. ● A member noted that other communities such as Shaker Heights and Laurel have community and school partnerships where there are continuation-based preschools that make it easier to enroll in the elementary schools. It was noted that such a preschool for GM residents would be feeding ground for GMES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member noted it was difficult for GM residents to effectuate improvement to the Mayfield School District because it serves four communities with different needs. We are a small part of the district. ● Another member noted that families send their kids to private schools for various reasons, and some families may move to GM because of the variety of school choices available nearby. Having lots of choices is a good thing. ● It was also noted that in order to ensure a spot in a specific private elementary school, families send their kids to that school’s daycare. ● A member mentioned they had volunteered with the school district noting that to have a voice, participation is necessary. Noted that residents have many choices on where to send their children and the Plan should not tell people that they need to send their children to MCSD. However, it is appropriate to say the Village wants to make sure GMES is a strong school and to make people aware of it. <p><u>Discussion on GMES:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member suggested that Strategy F.4.2. should be revised to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include statement that GMES is a high performing school with rich diversity and provides a vital connection to the Mayfield School District. ○ Delete phrase: “but has shifted...that draws beyond the Village” because it is seen as deficit-oriented and there are better ways to characterize the school. ● Other GMES-related comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GMES is one of the highest performing schools in Cuyahoga County. ○ One member offered the following information and opinion. GMES is on 9 acres; the building is small and over 100 years old, and is the most expensive of the district’s buildings to maintain. Use of the building as a school is not the “highest and best” use. Suggested that the Village should consider what happens if the MCSD decides to close the building. An open, informed discussion of what happens if the school closes is important. ○ Others disagreed and supported the consensus opinion that the school district supports maintaining GMES. The Village should not send the message that it wants the school to close, making it seem that the school is unimportant. ○ The Village does not determine what happens to the school if it were to close, and does not have responsibility for the operation of the school district. That is the School Board’s responsibility. ● It was also noted that the Environmental Center also serves GM residents, and perhaps it is possible to encourage the Center to have more of a focus with Gates Mills.
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Question #3: F.6. & F.7. How proactive should the Village be in making improvements, such as working with the electric company to bury the electric lines and pursuing improved cellular and internet service?

<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about current Village pursuits was provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Village is working on the cellular issue; a new tower is being proposed at Gilmour Academy as there is no cell service/reception there. The new tower will help to cover parts of the Village, but not all. ○ Village discussions about rebuilding existing tower on Carpenter Road halfway up Old Mill Road, from 150 feet to 250 feet for more coverage. • Question was asked if the Village needed to improve the cell service. Unanimous response from members that cell service was bad. • A member noted that the cellular service can be converted to WIFI. • It was noted that the Village had been talking to fiber optic companies as an alternative to Spectrum internet service. Members mentioned Spectrum service generally okay. • Members mentioned that electric power was the bigger issue. • Village cost to bury power lines would be \$2 million per mile. Not all of the Village's lines are along roads, some are in wooded areas and would raise the cost to bury them underground. • Suggestion - Village figure out where most vulnerable areas are with the biggest problems and address those first. • Noted that taking existing utility poles out of the Village Center would be expensive. Epping Road looks pastoral with no power lines. Power provided there from Sudbury Road. • A member mentioned that the location of feeder lines should be identified. • A member asked whether the power company was given direction about cutting trees away from power lines. Noted that First Energy operates on their own and butchers trees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted that electric service was bad, but didn't know the specific areas with problems. • Noted that cellular service was bad too. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One member lives near the cell tower on Carpenter Road and does not get cellular service at their house. ○ Other members noted not being able to start calls within the Village limits if in their cars. ○ Another member noted they had no cellular service at all at their home. • Reported that internet service was okay, but some did not have good service or no service.

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table's discussion at the conclusion of the breakout session. The report-out summaries are found in the addendum on page 8.



BREAKOUT DISCUSSION #2:

Goal D. Desirable Housing & Neighborhoods

For Breakout Discussion #2, Chip provided commentary on Discussion #2 topics. Related to the Historic District discussion, he noted that the Village has adopted its own set of regulations and local historic district boundaries as shown on the Village Zoning Map. He also noted that the purpose of a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) is to provide a tax incentive to encourage housing investment in areas of the Village where investment is not currently happening.

Notes from the table discussions are provided below for each question.

Question #1: D.1.2. Do you agree that the regulations and boundaries of the Historic District should be reviewed?

<u>Chip’s Table</u>	<u>Sandra’s Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member didn’t view the Historic District boundary and regulations as significant issues, especially if the only boundary adjustment needed was to add the other side of Berkshire Road. Considered the Historic District issues to be lower level “C” issues. • Another member suggested that it would be better to address the scenic corridor issues rather than expanding the historic district boundary. • Further discussed the significance, or lack thereof, with some of the properties currently in the Historic District and that some could be removed. Noted that if the Village can’t figure out a reason why the boundaries were drawn the way they were they could be changed. • One person suggested that it was better to be over-inclusive with properties in the District. • A member asked if there were rules and regulations for properties in the Historic District. Noted that the regulations were in the Building Code. Properties with design changes also involves the Historic Subcommittee of the Architectural Board of Review in the project review. • One option suggested was to have different standards of review if a house can’t be seen from the road. Different flexibility allowed with design, i.e. recent case with 1950s era ranch house torn down and replaced with modern house. Couldn’t be seen from road so allowed modern architectural features. <i>Note: this is consistent with the way the scenic corridor design guidelines would work, in that the guidelines would regulate the “view from the road”.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One member talked from personal experience about the current operations of the Historic District Subcommittee (HDS), which is a standing subcommittee of the Architectural Review Board (ARB), and suggested that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Village should have more extensive written (and illustrated) guidelines. (Currently, there is a list of 10 undefined design review standards, such as: <i>“The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved as much as possible. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property should be avoided.”</i> 1313.091(b)); and ○ Only GM residents should be appointed to the Review Committee. (Currently, membership for each board (ARB and HDS) consists of 8 members (5 voting members and 3 non-voting practicing registered architects); any member of either board that is a registered architect is not required to be a GM resident. 1313.04(a) and (b)) • A member noted the additional cost involved in renovating an old historic house because the code requires that all renovations be done in a historically correct manner (e.g.: <i>Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be preserved as much as reasonably possible.</i> (1313.091(e)). • Another member knows people who wanted to move to GM but heard from others about their bad experiences with the historic district review process, so they looked elsewhere. • Discussion about the need for transparency in the review process because the current process is subjective. • There is a need for coordination with applicants to be sure they know ahead of time what is expected, otherwise, it is a frustrating experience. One member noted that if you hire one of the architects on the ARB/HD Subcommittee to do the plan for your home project, you’re more likely to be approved quickly. • Agreed that process needs to be reviewed and the lack of written guidelines is problematic.



Question #2: D.1.3. Do you agree that the Village should investigate the possibility of establishing a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) to spur reinvestment in certain areas of the Village where it is needed?

<u>Chip's Table</u>	<u>Sandra's Table</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members thought that strategically, it was a good idea to investigate. Noted that a process should be set up and vetted.• A member noted that is unlikely the whole Village would qualify.• Another member noted a specific example of a property that had been purchased by a person across the street from it and it remains in disrepair.• Noted that it was a difficult for families to buy a house and also do renovations to that house.• Members agreed it made sense to investigate the potential of establishing a CRA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A member noted that a vast majority of the houses in the Village needed work.• Discussed whether or not there is a need for incentives. A member noted that there were 76 building permits issued in 2022; not sure there is a need if so many people are already making improvements.• Question raised about whether there are areas of the Village where investments are not occurring.• Suggestion that if we want to entice younger families, the Village needs to have incentives.• Suggestion that a CRA could help keep the historic character because it makes it more financially feasible to renovate.• A member noted the need to investigate the need for a CRA, and that the locations should be targeted. Consider including green building standards. Noted that people should receive help to navigate the process.

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table's discussion at the conclusion of the breakout session. The report-out summaries are found in the addendum on page 8.

NEXT STEPS

At the next meeting (#7) the group will revisit topics related to the Village Center and Housing. The group will decide when the next Town Hall meeting will be scheduled.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ADDENDUM – REPORT OUT SUMMARIES

Sandra and Chip provided a summary of their table’s discussion at the conclusion of each breakout session.

BREAKOUT #1: GOAL F. QUALITY AMENITIES AND SERVICES - STRATEGY F.2

Sandra noted that for Question #1, the group thought that the available resources for senior services should be cataloged. The group thought that there was a need to better understand the needs of senior residents. The group thought that the Village should pay attention to their aged and disabled residents and make sure that people knew about the Village services. The group suggested there were resources like the Community Partnership on Aging.

Chip reported on Question #1 that the group agreed that there was a need to catalog services. The group felt that there was nothing to communicate the array of services to residents. He noted that the group thought that money shouldn’t be spent until research was done. The group identified that a database would be helpful once it was known what older people are looking for. He mentioned that the group thought identifying people who need wellness checks by neighborhood would allow for a volunteer opportunity to check on neighbors. The group thought that under strategy F.2., the word “design” could be changed to “research” or “catalog” or “document and communicate.”

Sandra noted that for Question #2, Strategy F.3., COVID had cut back on a lot of events. The group noted that so much is volunteer led and that was a strength of the Village. She mentioned that the group did not see a need to invest in a recreation department. The group thought a strategy should be to catalog and promote events.

Chip reported that for Question #2, his group felt the same way about cataloging events. The group discussed working with the Mayfield School District to place a preschool at the Gates Mills Elementary School or Environmental Center. The group wondered whether the Village should subsidize the preschool. The group mentioned identifying what young families were looking for. It was mentioned that a babysitting system could be set up possibly with the school district. He noted that the group was unaware of the school district Liaison Committee and had questions about what they were really doing. The group wondered how interactive the Committee was and how to get GMES more involved with the Village. The group wanted strategy F.4.2.d. removed because it may send the wrong message to the school district.

Sandra noted for Question #2, Strategy F.4., that the group had a lively discussion. She noted that the Village was not going to have an influence on the school district’s decision on the GMES building. The group discussed the school Liaison Committee as a way for the Village to stay involved and contribute to GMES. She mentioned that the Liaison Committee helped keep everyone informed about what was happening with the Mayfield School District.

For Question #3, Chip reported that his group placed a higher priority on the electrical service problems. The group discussed various issues and costs for burying electric lines and know that Council is aware of the problems. The group mentioned cell service also being bad and that there was an effort to build a new tower at the Gilmour Academy. He noted it was unknown why there was bad cell service in the Village. The group noted that internet service was okay. Sandra’s group noted that people have terrible cell and internet service and routinely lose power.

BREAKOUT #2: Goal D. Desirable Housing & Neighborhoods

For Question #1, Chip reported that the group felt the Village Historic District boundary was not a high priority item. The group thought the scenic corridor protection was important and would be included as part of Goal A.1. He noted that the group was not aware of what was done to establish the National Register Historic District as that work was done in 1991.

In response, Kris Hopkins provided a recap of the National Register District Nomination from the early 1990s and the distinction between the National Historic District and the Village Historic District shown on the Gates Mills Zoning Map.

- She explained that a local architect/historic preservationist had recorded and evaluated historic structures to be included in the 1991 “Gates Mills National Historic District” nomination. The nomination noted that the national district boundaries encompassed 200 contributing properties (with a variety of architectural styles) and another 60 structures considered non-contributing due to their age. The national district also encompassed a “large amount of open space,” comprised of both large estates and undeveloped lots, in order to create a single, contiguous district.
- She also noted that the boundaries of the locally designated Village Historic District were updated in 1992 to “make the boundaries of the Village Historic District match the boundaries approved by the National Register of Historic Places in 1991” (GM Planning and Zoning Code Section 1113.03).
- There are major distinctions between the National Historic District and local Village Historic District:
 - In the National Historic District, a property owner may be eligible for federal technical assistance, federal income tax incentives, and grants to rehabilitate his/her historic property provided the work complies with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The program is voluntary in that a property owner is obligated to follow the rehabilitation standards only if the owner is seeking assistance.
 - In contrast, most changes to a property in the Village Historic District are required by Chapter 1313 to be reviewed by the Historic District Subcommittee (in addition to the Architectural Review Board) before getting a building permit. According to the Cuyahoga County parcel data, the Village Historic District encompasses 2,070 acres (37% of the Village).

For Question #1, regarding the Historic District regulations, Sandra noted there was some discussion on the importance of the Village Historic District and that the process needed to be addressed. For Question #2 on the CRA, Sandra noted there was a lukewarm response among the group. She noted that members thought a slow approach was best. There were some concerns among the group that the program may attract people who want to flip homes for resale. There was discussion whether Gates Mills needed the CRA program.

Chip’s group noted for Question #2 on the CRA that they were all in for investigating the program. The group discussed how some of the need had dissipated and if the old need returns with difficulty selling properties, then it can be considered. The group mentioned that it was a burden for young families to buy and refurbish homes.