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Dear Neighbor:

I am very pleased to introduce *Great Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home.*

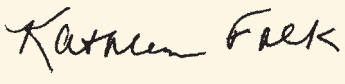
All Dane County communities work hard to preserve, as we grow, the things that make our county a great place to live. We all want to use our land wisely and efficiently, and to preserve our environmental and agricultural heritage. We want healthy neighborhoods where we can walk and bike as part of our daily lives. We want neighborhoods where our family and friends of different ages and backgrounds can also be our neighbors.

In 2000 I issued my report, *Farms and Neighborhoods: Keeping Both Strong. Farms and Neighborhoods* recognized that, to keep Dane County such a wonderful place, we have to preserve farming, *and* we have to have great neighborhoods where people want to live, work, shop, recreate, and more. In *Farms and Neighborhoods,* I proposed launching an educational campaign to demonstrate the benefits of "great" neighborhoods. Dane County has been privileged to work with 1000 Friends of Wisconsin to launch that campaign with the release of *Great Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home*.

Great Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home aims to make our job of creating great neighborhoods at least a little easier by giving you a better understanding of why they make sense, what makes them work and how we can build them again. *Great Neighborhoods* describes the different parts that make up neighborhoods, and how they fit together to make them walkable, diverse, safe and attractive. It explains how we forgot the lessons of great neighborhoods that once were common knowledge, and how we can work together to improve existing neighborhoods and build new great neighborhoods.

It is my strong hope that Great *Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home* will help you in your efforts to make great neighborhoods in Dane County. Thank you for taking the time to learn from this book, and for your commitment to great neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Falk
Dane County Executive

INTRODUCTION

Over the past half-century, we Americans have experienced incredible transformations in how we live – many of them for the better. But not all.

Before World War II, the typical way of organizing cities and suburbs in America was by neighborhoods. Since then, developments have been very different: spread out, automobile-dependent, and designed only for a single use. We forgot what it means to build a neighborhood – a place that is more than the sum of its houses. Not only did we forgot how to build neighborhoods, we have also lost track of what they had to offer. The "American Dream" – a nice, safe place where you can feel at home and raise a family – is supposedly not to be found in a neighborhood at all, but exclusively in a large house on a large lot among other same-sized houses.

Of course, America's neighborhoods never really went away. Many of those who stayed in cities despite the migration to the suburbs in the 1950s and '60s worked diligently to preserve and enhance their neighborhoods. Since the 1970s, they have been joined by people returning to neighborhood living – a trickle at first, and now a river that sometimes exceeds urban housing supply. And in the 1990s, two complimentary trends emerged: one, patching the holes in old urban neighborhoods with new "in-fill" projects that responded to their urban context; and two, creating new "traditional neighborhoods" from scratch, typically at the edge of cities and suburbs.

The essential quality shared by all of these places – the traditional and the neo-traditional, the centrally located and the peripherally located, the maintained, the restored, and the newly constructed – is their "neighborhood-ness." They all have the qualities that make them "Great Neighborhoods." They are diverse, walkable, compact, safe, urbane, vibrant, and attractive.

This handbook will explore what makes Great Neighborhoods work, who prefers them and why, and what barriers exist to creating and reviving them. In short: how we can make them happen.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

Great Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home is a resource book for people who want to improve existing neighborhoods and to create great new neighborhoods.

We used to create walkable, diverse, safe and attractive – or great – neighborhoods as a matter of course. These are now referred to as "traditional" neighborhoods. But in the last 50 years or so, we changed how we built our communities, and forgot many of those neighborhood-building lessons. More recently, a growing number of people are rediscovering the value of traditional, or great neighborhood design, and are searching for the knowledge and tools to get back to designing great neighborhoods.

This book is for you if:

- You have heard about traditional, or great, neighborhood design and development, and want to learn more.
- You are a citizen who is concerned about making your neighborhoods and community walkable, safe and attractive for all residents.
- You are an elected or appointed decision-maker in your community and you want to expand your base of knowledge about neighborhood design.
- You are active in the neighborhood development business and are looking for knowledge and tools to make better neighborhoods.

GETTING THE MOST FROM *GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS*

Great Neighborhoods: How to Bring them Home is structured to meet the needs of a range of readers: from those new to great neighborhood concepts, to those who work with neighborhood development issues on a regular basis.

Great Neighborhoods uses a variety of illustrative and navigational guides to help the reader find the contents that best meet their needs. Each chapter starts with a brief highlight of its contents and ends with a brief summary. The book uses pictures and graphics to illustrate and emphasize concepts. Descriptive section titles and text boxes serve as guides to chapter contents and main points.

The chapters are organized to provide increasing levels of details. Chapter 1, *Why Great Neighborhoods?*, discusses why great neighborhoods are important. It describes how great neighborhoods lower public costs, increase housing and transportation choices; enable healthy lifestyles and environment; and build social connections and strong communities.

If you are new to the concepts of great neighborhoods, you may want to jump from Chapter 1 to the summaries, pictures, and call-out boxes of other chapters. This approach will give you the big picture from which you can target your exploration according to your interests.

Neighborhoods are for people. So, rather than start by talking about streets and buildings, dimensions and densities, *Great Neighborhoods* starts Chapter 2 by discussing the people of Dane County. *People and Their Homes,* shows that we are a diverse community, and have a wide range of housing needs and desires. It shows how great neighborhoods accommodate housing types to meet those needs and desires.

As the title to Chapter 3 implies, *A Neighborhood is More than Homes: Places to Work, Play, Shop, Learn and Gather.* Chapter 3 describes the neighborhood parts other than homes, and how they can fit into neighborhoods.

To understand great neighborhood design we have to know more than the different pieces; we have to know how to link them together. Chapter 4, *Fitting the Pieces Together to Form a Neighborhood*, discusses how walkable distances shape the optimal size of neighborhoods, how streets provide the skeletal and circulatory structure of a neighborhood, and how the buildings and open spaces work together and with streets to make great neighborhoods.

While chapters 2 – 4 give details about three dimensions of neighborhood design, Chapter 5 discusses the fourth dimension: time and the recent history of neighborhood development. Chapter 5, *Modern Land Development Patterns – How we got Here and the Rules that Guide Development Now,* explains historical factors that changed the way developments were built after World War II. It discusses the rise of the automobile, federal programs such as creation of secondary mortgage markets and construction of interstate highway systems, and private policies such as exclusion of city neighborhoods from mortgage lending. It explains how land use rules – or codes – were created to perpetuate this form of development. (If you are the type of person who needs historical context before delving into design details, you may want to jump ahead to this chapter.)

After the first 5 chapters, you have a good idea how to create great neighborhoods, how we got away from these practices, and the barriers, such as land use codes, that stand in the way of creating more great neighborhoods. Chapter 6, *Making Great Neighborhoods Happen: It Takes Everyone Working Together*, how we can get back to making great neighborhoods. It discusses how citizens, public officials, developers, realtors, financiers and other all have a role to play, and all have to work together. It describes tools, such as Traditional Neighborhood Zoning Ordinances, that can make great neighborhoods easier to build.