

## 2025 SOUTHERN VILLAGE HOMEOWNERS SURVEY

The following is a condensed version of some of the concerns expressed by homeowners in the recent survey the SV BoD sent out this spring. There were 79 respondents total, and at the May 16, 2025 board meeting, these concerns were discussed in some depth. A synopsis of the concerns and the Board's responses are outlined below.

- 1) Some homeowners were not in favor of the new corner "pocket" parks that were erected at Edgewater and Brookgreen, especially considering other expenditures they felt were bigger priorities.

BOARD NOTE: The pocket parks were approved and budgeted under a previous Board, before the fall of 2023, when it became apparent that significant expenditures for re-working the retention ponds were necessary. Due to the need to address the retention ponds in order to conform with the Town of Chapel Hill requirements, it was necessary to cut back on other items in the neighborhood operating budget in 2025, specifically:

### a) Tree Maintenance

Though traditionally our neighborhood dues cover tree maintenance (in 2024 for instance, more than \$60,000 was spent on trees), at least for 2025, we are relying on the Town of Chapel Hill to maintain our community street trees. Technically they are under the Town's purview, and our budget this year was severely diminished with pond repairs. So far, the Town has been responsive; they have removed several trees along with their stumps, and they will be replacing them with new trees in November.

### b) Pond Maintenance

As stated, the pond work was an unexpected and costly expense. The work on the pond at Highgrove (dredging) and the pond at Parkside (complete reworking, dredging and replacement of the pipe) has been completed. The pond at Scroggs did not need repairs at this time, and the pond at Brookgreen repairs (pipe replacement) will be done in 2026.

### c) Existing Parks and Playground Maintenance

The Board has already addressed safety issues at two playgrounds. An entire swing set was replaced at Edgewater, and the play bridge at the Market Street Park was repaired.

The SV BoD commissioned a Reserve Study in 2023, performed by Giles Flythe Engineers, in part to inform when we should plan to replace playground equipment. The schedule is:

Calderon Park 2028

Replace Market Park playground equipment 2031

Replace Meeting Street Park playground 2034

Replace Fan Branch Park playground 2038

Replace wood split-rail fencing at Central Park 2039

Replace wood timber stairs at Central Park 2045

Brick flatwork at Brookgreen/Edgewater park 2048

## 2) Other Issues

### a) Pesticide on Playgrounds

Mill House, our property management company, has confirmed with Ruppert Landscaping, our contractor for maintaining public grounds, that no pesticides are used in any of the parks, though some spraying for a townhome group across the street from one of the parks may have been confused with pesticide being sprayed in the park.

### b) Grit/Walking Paths, Erosion and Gullies from Wash-outs

In order for paths to be created or added to, the town of Chapel Hill requires a border to be erected around them, and as we learned from creating borders in the corner parks, this is an extensive and expensive process that also requires permits and inspections. The Board will consider adding borders so paths can be created and fresh grit can be added to existing paths in the 2027 budget, but at this time, unfortunately, the Board has decided the funds for these projects do not exist in the 2025 or 2026 budgets.

### c) Management of Wildlife in Ponds

The aerator in the Brookgreen pond was found to be broken and caused a fish kill; it has been repaired. Additionally, we are beginning to use non toxic means of controlling algae.

BOARD NOTE: The ponds are not meant to be neighborhood maintained wildlife refuges, so while the birds, fish, turtles and other animals they attract are certainly a wonderful addition to our neighborhood, significant HOA funds cannot be spent on nurturing them, at least at this time.

#### d) Basketball Court

In the last few years, considerable funds have been spent resurfacing the court and controlling water flow over and around it, with the addition of drainage and landscaping. The Board acknowledges further work needs to be done, for instance, specific water absorbing trees can be planted, but again, the 2025 and 2026 budgets do not allow for expenditures for this.

#### e) Mulch in Arlen Park/Erosion

This is a natural area with a path, the Board does not feel it's appropriate to mulch it.

#### f) Soccer Field

Professional aeration and seeding is planned for this fall, as for the last few years the Board has allocated minimal funds to this regularly used field, and neighbors have been maintaining it. It now needs professional attention in order to recover.

### 3) Budget for Major Projects/Sufficient Reserves

The Board is doing everything it can to budget responsibly, with a priority of maintaining what we have as opposed to creating new projects. We will follow the funding projections of the 2023 Reserve Study to build up our reserves to the recommended levels needed for Southern Village upkeep as per the Study.

### 4) Townhome Reserves

BOARD NOTE: There seems to be a mistaken belief in the community that townhome reserves and alley reserves were used for pond maintenance. This is not accurate.

Also, monthly spending and balances have historically been posted on the southernvillage.org website, however because it is a public website, this practice was ended.

#### 5) Sidewalks

Mill House can notify the Town of Chapel Hill regarding needed sidewalk repairs, or neighbors can use the “see it click it and fix it” app to notify the Town of problems. One Board member has reported an uneven sidewalk area to the Town using this app, and has seen signs the Town is looking to address it.

#### 6) Alley Resurfacing

The 2023 Reserve Study projects the following alley resurfacing:

Mill and resurface asphalt paving Phase 1 -- 2032

Mill and resurface asphalt paving Phase 2 -- 2036

Mill and resurface asphalt paving Phase 3 -- 2048

So far in 2025, approximately \$36,000 has already been spent for substantial repairs and resurfacing. Mill House will continue to address specific areas of concern as they arise; otherwise, the above schedule will be followed for resurfacing.

#### 7) Gas Powered Leaf Blower Ban

BOARD NOTE: By and large, residents report appreciation for reduced noise, particulates, and fumes, though a small group believed the ban was an overreach by the board. The biggest complaint about the ban is the idea of neighbor reporting on neighbor.

The Board acknowledges the drawbacks of the system of reporting, however they really do not see an alternative, so the practice of receiving reports of GPLB use from neighbors and sending a notice will continue. However, please note, while warnings have been issued, no fines have been levied, and the Board hears responses from neighbors who have been wrongly accused of using GPLB and clears those complaints.

#### 8) Transparency on Bids

Bids are the purview of Mill House Properties and the SV Board. Typically 2 or 3 bids are obtained for each project, which are circulated to the Board, who then discusses the pros and cons and votes on accepting a bid. At times, the lowest bid is not accepted, because the work from a higher bid may be better quality.

#### 9) Email Communications from the SV Board

BOARD NOTE: We reserve blast emails to the whole neighborhood for timely issues of great importance; the Board feels overusing the community's email boxes would diminish regular attention to the blasts that are deemed important enough to send. Meeting minutes, etc are posted on the SV website and available to homeowners.