

Response: Clarifying Village Role in Columbia Road Property Subdivision

Thank you for sharing your concerns and for engaging in these important conversations about the future of our community.

We understand the disappointment many feel about the recent tree clearing near Sweetbriar and Columbia. As a Village that deeply values its trees, green spaces, and ecological health, the impact of this development is not taken lightly.

That said, it's important to clarify the Village's legal and procedural role in this matter, based on guidance from our Village Administrator, Attorney, Engineer, and Planner:

- **Certified Survey Map (CSM) Process:** The property at 2816 Columbia Road was subdivided through a Certified Survey Map (CSM) process. This process does **not** require a public hearing under state law or Village ordinance. The CSM was reviewed by the Village Engineer and determined to meet all zoning and lot size requirements.
- **Board Action:** The CSM was brought before the Village Board and approved in a public meeting, as documented in the official minutes. The Village does not have discretion to deny a legally compliant land division.
- **Tree Removal:** The Village has no authority to prevent a private landowner from clearing trees on their property unless specific protected species, landmark trees, or zoning overlays apply. In this case, no such limitations were in place and the property owner met with the Village Forester to identify and preserve trees within the Village right-of-way.
- **Lot Use History:** We understand there was interest in developing the parcel differently, but ultimately, the current property owner exercised their right to pursue a subdivision in accordance with existing rules. The Village could not favor one buyer or proposal over another, nor prohibit a legally permissible use.

We recognize that this outcome has prompted broader conversations about tree protection, development standards, and transparency. While the Village was required to follow the law as written, we are open to reviewing our ordinances to ensure they better reflect community values moving forward.

We appreciate your passion for Shorewood Hills and welcome continued dialogue as we work to clarify the issue and move forward together constructively.

Sincerely,

John Imes

Village President

Shorewood Hills