

## **Statement of Purpose, Intentionally Welcoming Community (call to action draft)**

Union Corners Senior and Co-housing has been pitched as an intentionally welcoming community for LGBT because SASYNA and adjoining neighborhoods are commonly seen as places where many LGBT already reside and feel welcomed and included in community. As relates to senior housing in Dane County, specifically (work of Caroline Werner), experience and research show that many retirement centers claim to have no LGBT residents. In most cases, this is because the elder LGBT elect to return to the closet as the only place where they feel safe. The resources an elder needs to survive in a group environment place unique demands on individuals, and fear and need for safety often lead to regression as a result.

While we anticipate that with evolving acceptance in culture and a post WWII population, many who likely will not go back in the closet without commotion, forcing eventual change, the current pressure on the elder 'out' or partially out individual is enormous. The decision to hide ones status is one to decrease risks of alienation and maltreatment (among others), securing a restrictive and sheltered 'safety'. Add to this the challenges elders have with changing mentation and abilities, and the high level challenge that 'out' behavior requires of an individual, and one can more easily understand the evolution of this group concern.

This call to action is aimed at council and actively participating community members. It begins with the specific needs of the LGBT population in senior housing at Union Corners. The need for being thoughtfully receptive to the other (intentionally welcoming), will not go away and applies to populations beyond LGBT.

Brief definition: Intentional implies a thought out and considered action. Welcoming is a friendly greeting or reception that comes from the heart.

In the SASY Vision statement of 2000 (*italics below*), the neighborhood pledges to work for the safety and security of all residents. To this end I ask that we pledge to explore our role in welcoming in order to deepen our understanding of the cultural and societal barriers individuals may experience. Included in this must be the role that unconsidered privilege plays in this equation. SASY will play a role in building a welcoming ethic that supports the goals of the 2000 vision statement for Union Corners and our neighborhood at large.

*SASY Neighborhood Vision Statement, 2000:*

*The Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Worthington Park Neighborhood envisions diverse, community-oriented places, activities, and people. Achieving this vision will require community, citizen, public, and business interests to continually work together. This will be a neighborhood where vibrant residential areas, community activities, and business corridors continually build upon each other's strengths. The neighborhood must continually face challenges, including ex-urban commuter traffic, rising housing costs, and stressed community services. This neighborhood plan contains detailed proposals to address these challenges and to move toward the vision of a neighborhood in which:*

- *traffic is calmed for a safe and pleasant walking, bicycling, and transit environment;*
- *mixed-use, urban in-fill, and owner-occupied housing are developed so the elderly will be able to stay in their homes and all people will be able to flourish throughout the neighborhood;*
- *social services/community facilities serve all residents;*
- *schools are maintained to the highest standards;*● *all residents feel safe and secure;*● *each neighborhood is represented and supported;*
- *strong, community-supported businesses preserve the human-scaled neighborhood character;*
- *neighborhood parks, waterways, and rail-trails are linked by park-like neighborhood streets;*
- *East Washington Avenue is an attractive, safe corridor; and*
- *District Alderpersons work with neighborhood associations to develop and utilize a mechanism to keep track of public improvement projects funded by the City, County, or State so that the neighborhood has input into the planning process.*

*In short, neighbors want to improve on the many great qualities in their neighborhood and keep an eye to its long-term sustainability.*