

Southside Village UX Research Interview Summary

Tanya Neplioueva, September 30th, 2021

Overview:

All users interviewed agreed that their favorite aspects of living in SSV are the well-maintained, beautiful neighborhood and the design and layout of the homes. 3 out of 4 users interviewed mentioned also liking the convenient location and their friendly neighbors.

All users agreed that availability and cost were their primary considerations when purchasing their home. 3 out of 4 users interviewed also mentioned that the lock and leave, low maintenance aspect of the neighborhood was a draw for them. Ultimately, though, each user interviewed agreed that their decision to purchase in SSV came down to timing and unit availability.

All users interviewed had never lived in a neighborhood with a homeowners' association prior to purchasing in SSV. While 3 out of 4 of those interviewed were fairly recent SSV homeowners, all participants agreed that the the main role of the HOA in their life was regulatory.

Users described the role of the HOA in their lives as strict, controlling, restrictive, intrusive, and enforcing. Despite this, all participants who had lived in the neighborhood for longer than a year described their optimism about recent changes to HOA leadership and an improved relationship with the members of the board.

- 75% have felt that HOA regulations are too restrictive
- 100% of users interviewed would currently find HOA regulations by referencing their paper copy of the document
- In general, users who were more interested in gardening described the HOA as having been too intrusive in the past.

User Goals for SSV Living

- Affordable cost
- Regular maintenance and upkeep of outdoor spaces
- Clear instructions about who to contact for specific issues or concerns
- Home personalization
- Indoor remodeling projects that do not require HOA approval are highly customizable to one's own taste
- Want easier access to information for external improvements (paint, stains, etc)
- Recommendation from trusted neighbors for vendors
- Would like broadening of 'nitpicky' gardening restrictions
- Socialization
- Get together with small groups of like-minded individuals
- Gathering at private homes
- Larger community events

Obstacles and Setbacks

- Strict HOA regulations lead to lack of trust within the community, 'ratting on each other'
- Emails with unimportant information are too numerous
- Immediate communication about urgent notifications is lacking, not everyone checks email every day
- Unsure of events, lack of committees with leadership and communication about socials
- Residents do not have access to email list of neighbor contacts & do not have a way to communicate with each other
- Some residents are reported to have been quite unfriendly to visiting families with children, makes grandchildren and visiting family feel unwelcome

Specific Considerations for the SouthSide Village Website

Public facing:

- Showcase the beauty of the neighborhood.
- The portion of the site that is accessible to the public should maintain the privacy of individual homeowners while offering basic information about the perks and facts of SSV neighborhood life.
- Regulations should be publicly accessible, especially for potential new homeowners to be fully informed of existing neighborhood guidelines.
- Emphasize the (largely) lock and leave aspect of the community, 'we like that it's off our plate'
- Outside of city limits but with all the amenities of Asheville

For residents:

- Concise information is needed about outdoor regulations, so that residents can confidently move forward with projects without needing to involve members of the board for small questions.
- Make very clear who is responsible for what, who do I contact for _____?
- Resident information about individualized fees and invoices should be kept private.
- Approved resident exceptions to HOA guidelines should be kept private.
- Consider relaxing some of the more strict regulations for gardening so that the neighborhood can benefit from well-maintained but individualized beautiful outdoor spaces.

How can SSV be more financially and environmentally sustainable for the long haul?

Conclusion:

The new SSV website should focus on the optimism of this new phase of SSV HOA leadership, with friendliness of the community and opportunities for inclusion and relationship building.

The informative aspects of the site should be concise and communicate information clearly. The site is also an opportunity to give neighbors a platform to communicate with one another about common interests and goals.