



Interview with...

Ellen Weiss

**Ellen Weiss is a volunteer who connected to SCOPE through the Aging: The Possibilities initiative. Ellen took SCOPE's past community studies seriously and applied their recommendations to her area of interest.**

**What brought you to Sarasota?** My husband and I lived in St. Paul, Minnesota for all our lives until we moved to Sarasota in 1997. We were tired of harsh winters and wanted to move to a place where there was no more frost, sleet or snow! I saw a magazine which listed the Sarasota-Bradenton area as the #1 place to live. We visited and later decided to move here, drawn by the cultural activities and the beaches. This area has so much to offer.

**What do you appreciate most about this community?** We appreciate all the amenities including the beaches and wonderful people. We've met some great people – from those local folks who grew up here to those who moved here (like us) looking for new friends. I appreciate the efforts the businesses and nonprofits put forth to make this an outstanding place to live. SCOPE too has impacted the quality of life.

**How did you begin working with SCOPE?** I read an article in the newspaper early on – it was about an upcoming forum on housing and aging. I wanted to get involved with SCOPE so I attended the meeting. I enjoyed participating in *Aging: The Possibilities*. I was a realtor and earned a CAPS designation (Certified Aging in Place Specialist) from the National Homebuilders Association, something my involvement with the SCOPE study inspired me to take on.


**What are you doing in the community now?**

I have retired from real estate. I was appointed to the City of Bradenton Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. We look at different issues and report back to the City. For many years I was very active with The League of Women Voters in Minnesota and was privileged to serve as the League President. During my tenure, I participated in an affordable housing study. Through that study I became, and remain, an advocate for affordable housing. I also worked for the City of St. Paul Housing department. This knowledge has carried through in my participation with Bradenton's Affordable Housing Committee. The availability of affordable housing is even more important now due to the current economy with people losing their jobs and homes.

**“I hope I have made lives better in our community. I have benefitted from being with talented and wise people.”**

I appreciate the area I live in. Recently, I took my past experiences and the research from the 2050 Comprehensive Plan and have designed a neighborhood or community. I laid out the ideas and concepts that I felt are essential to creating a vibrant community. I have enjoyed reading Dr. Gene Cohen's books, *The Creative Age* and *The Mature Mind* and took his conclusions into consideration as well. For example there is an environmental component – green homes, energy efficiency, and incorporating universal design principles. There would be different types of housing including workforce housing and options for different kinds of living – for example, granny flats and co-housing arrangements would be allowed. Mobility options would be comprehensive with walking and bicycle paths in a natural setting. It would be a great setting for neighborhoods where everyone counts or matters.

**What is your hope for Sarasota County?** My hope is that we become a leader in community design and function. This will help attract businesses and others to live and work here. We are in an exceptional area with many amenities including world-class colleges and institutions. These things are all benefits for businesses to develop or move here.



**“My hope is that we can be a leader in community design and function.”**

**What have you learned through your community work?**

Everyone benefits. There are many who care about the community and are doing things that are important for all residents. We have learned a tremendous amount through SCOPE. SCOPE has done a lot. I hope I have made lives better in our community. I have benefitted from being with talented and wise people.



*“SCOPE inspired me to take this on.”*



**“to connect and inspire citizens to create a better community”**

To learn more about SCOPE, visit [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org)

Interview by Suzanne Gregory, SCOPE Staff, 4.20.10