



**SITE DEVELOPMENT AND MASTER PLAN**

# **THE VILLAGER**

**MADISON, WISCONSIN**

**PROGRAM • MASTER PLAN • IMPLEMENTATION**

**PREPARED FOR:  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
CITY OF MADISON, WISCONSIN  
MAYOR DAVID J. CIESLEWICZ**

**OCTOBER, 2005**

# SITE DEVELOPMENT AND MASTER PLAN FOR THE VILLAGER • MADISON, WISCONSIN

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# PART ONE: SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS STUDY

## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION: THE VILLAGER

The purpose of this Site Development and Master Plan is to understand the specific character, limitations and opportunities of the Villager and incorporate those issues with the vision of the neighborhood residents to create a workable Master Plan for the site.

The property which the Villager currently occupies was part of Burr Oaks Golf Course from the 1920s to 1959. The only building present at that time was a small clubhouse. A bowling alley and an insurance building were constructed in 1960, both of which were incorporated into the existing shopping center, which was constructed on the property during the mid-1960s. The buildings within the shopping center have undergone several renovations, including the conversion of the bowling alley to office space in the early 1990s. Single family homes were located at the southern end of the property until 1965 and along the northern end of the property until 1990. The property is connected to City water and sewer system.

The Villager has major frontage along South Park Street, which is the major gateway into South Madison, Downtown Madison, University of Wisconsin, and major health facilities in central Madison. It is a highly visible property, close to the Beltline and Badger Road intersections, and has the potential to transform the vitality of the area. The residents of the area would like to see the Villager transformed into a retail, office and service center.

According to the November 17, 2003, appraisal the property consists of:

- Site area: approximately 396,741 sf in size (9.11 acres), consisting of six parcels, three of which are in the City of Madison and three of which are in the Town of Madison.
- Frontage: Approximately 694 feet along South Park Street, its eastern boundary. It is bounded on the south by Hughes Place and by Ridgewood Way to the north.
- Building Areas:
  - 169,400 sf Total Gross Floor Area
  - 122,583 sf Above Ground Gross Floor Area
  - 38,000 sf Basement
  - 8,817 sf Enclosed Mall Area
  
  - 150,081 sf Leasable Area
  - 7,000 sf Storage and Mechanical
  - 12,319 sf Common Area
- Zoning: C-2
- Existing Land Uses: Retail, office and government services.

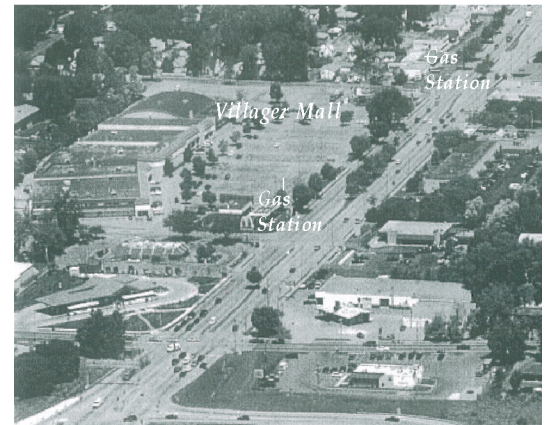


Fig. IN-1: Looking north on South Park Street. Villager Mall at upper left.

### PLANNING PROCESS

The following major steps were conducted in the planning process:

1. Review of past plans and studies (see Appendix A: Review of Past Plans and Studies).
2. Research of existing site conditions and limitations; assembly of Base Map (see Appendix B: Base Maps).
3. City Staff meetings. Five meetings total from March 31, 2005, through September 22, 2005.
4. Neighborhood Steering Committee meetings. Five meetings from April 7, 2005, through October 25, 2005.
5. Presentation of Site Inventory and Analysis Study (see Appendices A and B).
6. Interviews with Stakeholders (see Appendix F: Key Findings from Stakeholder Interviews).
7. Public Meetings. Two Neighborhood Meetings, and two Open Houses on April 25, 2005, and August 18, 2005 (see Appendix E: Neighborhood Forums).
8. Update of Opportunities Analysis and Exploration of Market Potential (see Appendix D: Opportunities).
9. Presentation of Building Program (see Part Two: Building Program).
10. Sharing of Initial Master Plan Concept with directly affected parties.
11. Refinement and Presentation of Master Plan Concept (see Part Three: Master Site Planning - Concept Plan).
12. Presentation of Implementation Strategy (see Part Four: Implementation Strategy).

## VISION: PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

The goal for The Villager is to redevelop the site into a vibrant gateway to South Madison with uses that support and reflect the neighborhood and community-at-large.

### PRIMARY DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

The following planning principles and goals were identified through review of previous studies:

1. Framing the Park Street Corridor
2. Street-Oriented Commercial Development
3. Community Interaction
4. Urban Design
5. Street Circulation and Parking
6. Pedestrian Circulation & Safe Street Crossings

In addition, the participants of the neighborhood forum identified a number of other issues to keep in mind during planning, along with the completion of a visual preference survey. The full results can be found in Appendix E: Neighborhood Forum, but among the highlights were the importance of the diversity of the area, the need for livable wage jobs, more focus on pedestrian and less on auto, the need for a public gathering space, the desire for owner-occupied housing, a space for a farmer's market, the concept of a "Main Street" design, streetscape improvements, and an area for green space.

The visual preference survey favored images that showed people in an urban or market type space. Most reactions were about streetscape and spaces. The spaces and streetscapes that were rated highly were lively, had places to sit, were tighter in scale and looked safe. The spaces that did not do as well tended to be harder in character, having less landscape and trees, and were larger in scale.

## SITE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### PHYSICAL SITE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The Villager site is a little over nine acres in area, and is bounded on the east by Park Street (a very busy multi-lane arterial street) on the north by Ridgewood Street (a quiet residential street) on the south by Hughes Place (a moderately travelled street which will most likely become more busy in the near future as plans for a splash park and stop light at the corner of Park Street go forward), and on the west by a multi-building two-story residential complex.

The site is accessed by car primarily from Buick Street, due to the stop light at that corner. A proposed stop light at Hughes Place may change that dynamic.

The grade falls from a high point in the northwest corner of the site about 10 feet to the southeast corner of the site.

The Park Street Corridor: Urban Design Guidelines restricts buildings along Park Street to four stories in height, and buildings away from Park Street may be up to six stories. The South Madison Neighborhood Plan recommends 2-5 story commercial buildings incorporating a main street design concept, a wider buffer along Park Street to enhance pedestrian movement, new single family townhomes along the northern edge, and the improvement of sidewalks along Hughes Place and Ridgewood Way.

### ECONOMIC/USE CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Existing tenants wish to remain, and the community service uses at the Villager (Harambee, Dane County Health Department, etc.) are vital to the community and are the reason the Community Development Authority (CDA) purchased the Villager site. Additional retail and office uses are recommended for the diversity of the site and economic health. Most retail uses envisioned would need to be regional draws, since the neighborhood alone would not be able to support them. The proximity to the Beltline and heavy Park Street traffic make this viable.



Fig. IN-2: Fig. 4 from Achieving the Vision: Implementation Strategies to Achieve Redevelopment within the Greater South Madison Area, analysis diagram for Villager Mall.

# REVIEW OF PAST PLANS AND STUDIES

The following is a list of 12 documents related to the Villager Mall or its immediate area which were reviewed. The reviews can be found in **Appendix A: Review of Past Plans and Studies** found at the end of this document. Those items that directly relate to the Villager or the Park Street Corridor were given the highest priority. Studies or portions of studies which took a more general approach to the South Madison area were given the next level of importance, followed by more detailed studies of specific blocks around but not adjoining the Villager. In addition, within the document Park Street Revitalization: Possibilities to Reality there is a summary of 37 documents regarding the South Madison Area from the time period of 1956 through 1997, none of which were included in this review as the salient points of these documents have found their way into more recent studies. The list of studies in this review are presented in order of relevance to the current planning effort:

1. Villager Mall: Phase I Environmental Assessment - Gannett Fleming, Inc / April 2004  
*Environmental Analysis of specific Villager Mall Site.*
2. South Madison Neighborhood Plan - South Madison Neighborhood Steering Committee and Department of Planning and Development / October 2004  
*Reference for neighborhood improvements, development and revitalization efforts.*
3. Achieving the Vision: Implementation Strategies to Achieve Redevelopment within the Greater South Madison Area - Department of Planning and Development with Badger-Ann-Park Park Street Redevelopment Committee and Todd-Beltline Redevelopment Committee / July 2004  
*'Area A' within the report is specific to Villager Mall.*
4. Park Street Corridor: Urban Design Guidelines - Schreiber Anderson, University of Wisconsin Departments of Urban and Regional Planning and Landscape Architecture / March 2004  
*General design guidelines, and 'Section E: Special Conditions' focuses on Villager Mall.*
5. Park Street Revitalization: Possibilities to Reality - Schreiber Anderson/Vandewalle Associates / July 2001  
*Analysis and design recommendations for Park Street corridor.*
6. Town of Madison Site Redevelopment Strategy and Concept Plan - Vandewalle/Taurean Group / July 2002  
*Identification and recommendation for specific sites along the South Park Street corridor.*
7. Town of Madison Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan - PDI, Inc. / June 2001  
*Redevelopment potential, infrastructure and streetscape improvements.*
8. Town of Madison Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan - PDI, Inc. / September 2001  
*Revision of above-mentioned plan.*
9. Boundary and Project Plan Amendment for TIF District #26 - City of Madison / 2003  
*To allow for capital improvements (streetscape amenities) along South Park Street.*
10. Wingra Creek Parkway Master Plan - City of Madison / December 2004  
*Environmental concerns and recreational opportunities for Wingra Creek.*
11. Wingra Creek BUILD Project Summary Report - City of Madison / 2004  
*Conceptual designs, market feasibility study and redevelopment assessment strategy.*
12. Penn Park Master Plan - City of Madison / 2002  
*Near and long-term improvements for Penn Park.*

## GENERAL SUMMARY

Common themes throughout the studies, other than the Phase I Environmental Assessment, are evident. The brief introduction to the history, economics and geography of development in Madison and the South Madison area describe the area surrounding the Villager as a traditional home to many immigrants and people of minority status. As a result, South Madison in general has faced problems that often accompany diverse and economically low and moderate income communities. Many efforts have been made over the years to address these challenges, reflected in the high number of studies done for the area. The most common issues mentioned are run-down or outdated underutilized properties and business districts, specifically mentioning the Villager, modest residential units and higher rate of rental units than the city at large. Other issues mentioned include aesthetic and environmental concerns around parks and Wingra Creek, traffic and pedestrian safety concerns, and the need for an identity for the area. Newer reports recognize Park Street as a "gateway" to downtown Madison and the University of Wisconsin campus from the Beltline. The Villager is recognized as a "priority site" for redevelopment in these recent studies, all of which recognize its conversion over the years to office and civic functions, but calling for its redevelopment to include a strong retail element.

# CONCLUSIONS AND INITIAL CONCEPTS

## CONCLUSIONS

The Villager as a building is not in bad shape, but it is not functional for its uses (long, deep, windowless spaces) and the sea of asphalt in front of the mall along Park Street and along Ridgwood Way makes for an unfriendly and unsupporting face to the neighborhood and the Park Street Corridor. The configuration of the parking is also not very useful, and some spaces because of their distance to the building are underutilized.

The neighborhood is active and supportive of the redevelopment of the site. They recognize the importance of the services located at the Villager Mall, but also see the opportunity for more jobs, additional retail and the opportunity for a civic gathering space. In general, neighborhood residents want a new Villager that is vital and reflective of the diversity and needs of the neighborhood.

There are a number of opportunities here, a full dialogue of which can be found in **Appendix D: Opportunities Analysis and Market Potential**. The Villager has the opportunity to connect and be connected - as a gateway and neighborhood center it could become the catalyst for connecting residents to their neighborhood and the neighborhood to the rest of the City of Madison.

## INITIAL CONCEPTS

Based upon this study and the recommendations of other recent studies regarding the Villager, the redesign of the site will take a phased approach. Phase I will most likely include the Library and Retail, with some new Office space. The Library is preparing its plan for new space, as well as Planned Parenthood, and the Retail makes sense from an economic standpoint to help generate income for future phases.

Phase II may bring the remainder of Harambee back together with the library and Planned Parenthood spaces, along with the development of some townhomes or other owner-occupied housing.

Phase III would see the construction of the grocery store and Dane County addition to the Harambee building, if it was not completed in the previous phase.

Phase IV may see the northeast and southeast corners of the property developed as well as the civic space or green space. At this time, depending on the scale of the corner buildings, a parking structure may also be developed to serve a larger scale building.

Finally in Phase V, the redevelopment of the education portions of the site may occur. This was considered for a later phase not because of need, but because there may be investment in the existing building for these uses.

During these phases, as tenants of the existing mall are moved out to new buildings and those portions of the Villager Mall existing building demolished, other existing parts of the mall may be renovated, windows added or updated in some way depending on how long that portion may continue to be used. It is not out of the realm of possibilities that some portion of the existing Villager Mall will remain as a part of the final design.



Fig. IN-3: Existing Villager Site Plan with immediate context.