

Overview: Meadowridge Branch Library  
December, 2007

The Meadowridge Branch Library was established in 1974 in the Meadowood shopping center in what was then the “far” southwest side of Madison. By the mid ‘90’s, it was already recognized that the 6,100 square foot branch was not large enough to meet the needs of a burgeoning west side, and the suggestion to move the branch to the Elver Park area, and build a much larger branch, was nixed. Today, Meadowridge is even more space deprived. There is no space for larger community meetings; no conference/study/tutoring space; no teen space, and the space carved out for younger children is inadequate. There is no “quiet reading” space and access to the Internet is vastly inadequate. Clearly, this branch needs to be the focus of any planning efforts the Library undertakes, both in terms of the facility and the program that the facility supports.

The intended library service area of the Meadowridge Branch includes the areas around the Meadowood Shopping Center as well as the newer developments on the south and west side of the city; it is considerably larger than the area defined as the Southwest Neighborhood in the Plan. As population centers have shifted south and west as the city has grown, library users have discovered more convenient access to other libraries with better facilities, resources and amenities, including Alicia Ashman and the new Verona Public Library. Most of the usage at Meadowridge occurs from people living in the census tracts immediately around the Meadowridge shopping center. People living in the growing south and west areas of the city are increasingly using Verona, which is closer for many people, more convenient, and boasts a newer, larger “destination” facility. Over the past two years, use at the Verona Library from people in Madison has more than doubled, and use at Verona from people living in Fitchburg, who previously had been users of the Meadowridge and Sequoya branches, has increased by 50%. In 2007, Meadowridge continues a gradual decline in usage as evidenced in both visits and circulation counts.

This is a challenge for short and long term facilities planning. Do we plan for and eventually build a new much larger branch library further west to better serve people who live in already existing new and planned developments on the southwest side? If so, do we maintain the library in the Meadowood neighborhood and re-define the library program there to meet the needs of the more immediate population? Do we do so in the current space? As part of longer term planning, do we create a new branch model, re-defining what a neighborhood branch is, perhaps including establishing a smaller “satellite” library, with a very targeted programmatic focus?

As currently configured, the Meadowridge Library is not capable in terms of space, staff or resources to take the lead in establishing the targeted community programs and initiatives listed in the Southwest Neighborhood Plan, while at the same time continuing to provide basic public library services. Library staff will participate, as possible, in supporting the program recommendations and improvements in the Plan, but implementation will depend on a Library Board planning process that defines the Branch’s program and seeks increased funding and resources for a facility to support such a program.