

## Interdepartmental Correspondence

Date: October 25, 2007

To: CDBG Commission

From: Jule Stroick, Planning Division

Subject: Overview of *Southwest Neighborhood Plan*

### **Background**

On November 7, 2006, the Madison Common Council confirmed the appointment of a neighborhood-based steering committee to guide the Southwest Neighborhood planning process. The Southwest Neighborhood Steering Committee (SWNSC), comprised of thirteen members and five alternates, started the planning process by:

- Identifying the assets and opportunities of the neighborhood area
- Assessing existing conditions, trends, and potential future influences in the region
- Inventorying and assessing the social fabric of the neighborhoods
- Prioritizing the major issues facing the neighborhood and developing strategies to address them.

The Neighborhood Steering Committee conducted interviews, open houses, questionnaires, and meetings with area neighborhood associations, businesses, community organizations, residents, and schools to compile information that would be used to develop plan strategies and recommendations.

### **Neighborhood Issues**

Six issues were identified that were of utmost importance to Southwest Neighborhoods (See attachment). The major focus of the plan is to improve neighborhood safety in terms of enforcement and crime prevention through physical design, stability of families, and revitalization of four sub areas within the neighborhood: Bettys-Theresa-Hammersley, Balsam-Russett, Park Ridge, and Schroeder-Berkshire areas. A copy of the Southwest Neighborhood Plan will be distributed at the November 1 meeting. Agendas and minutes from the meetings are located at: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/neighborhoods/swnp/>.

### **Overall Priority Projects**

The six priority projects for the Southwest Neighborhood Plan include:

- 1) Assign additional police services/resources such as, but not limited to, neighborhood officers in the Bettys-Theresa-Hammersley, Balsam-Russett and Park Ridge areas.
- 2) Expand Meadowridge Library at or near its present location and provide additional programs/services for youth and adult residents, with an added emphasis on programs dealing with education and employment resources;

- 3) Promote a variety of home ownership and rehabilitation programs, loans and services focusing on Bettys-Theresa, Balsam-Russett, Park Ridge, and Schroeder-Berkshire areas;
- 4) Increase programming for youth, adults and seniors, such as ESL classes, GED, tutoring, and after-school and summer educational/recreational activities;
- 5) Develop communication mechanism between Madison Police, property owners and neighborhood associations to address neighborhood-related issues jointly, and
- 6) Explore purchasing a Rescue 2 Ambulance and to evaluate the placement of Rescue 2 Ambulance at Fire Station 7.

### **Community Development Block Grant Plan Recommendations**

The top recommendations for Community Development Block Grant funding include:

- \$20,000 for capital enhancement to Prairie Hills Garden (located in Lucy Lincoln Heistand Park) and establishment of up to three new gardens at Hammersley Park, Meadowood Park and Park Ridge Greenway. Specific use will be left to the neighborhoods that apply to the gardens panel and the decisions of the gardens panel and CAC.
- \$70,000 for down payments to eligible homebuyers in the Bettys Lane/Theresa Terrace/Hammersley area with the condition that buyers have homeowner education and that repaid loans are used for future down payments in the Bettys Lane/Theresa Terrace area. If funds are not being committed within the first 9 -months of operations then the target area should be expanded to the Russet/Balsam and Park Edge/Park Ridge areas. The CDA is exploring ways to sell some CDA property in the area to provide additional ownership opportunities in the area.
- \$20,000 for park improvements of Hammersley Park to improve safety including the creation of walking paths and additional lighting.
- \$10,000 low interest loan or grant program for income eligible properties for security improvements for properties that demonstrate a neighborhood benefit.

Any funds remaining after project completion of the gardens or park improvement project are targeted to the down payment program.

### **Planning Process Accomplishment**

During the planning process, the Southwest Neighborhood Steering Committee has initiated several activities:

- A joint meeting of the current neighborhood associations, Greentree, Meadowood, Orchard Ridge, Prairie Hills, was organized to begin discussing ways to work together. One project that is currently being discussed is *e-Neighbors*: an electronic bulletin board to share information across neighborhood boundaries.

- To explore improved communications within the neighborhood, the SWNSC initiated a joint meeting with the public and parochial school principals to explore opportunities to work together on activities and projects. Falk Elementary School is planning to host *community wide events* as the result of the meetings.
- The SWNSC worked with area residents to prepare a grant application for the establishment of the first community garden in the southwest area. A grant was awarded for garden development at Lucy Lincoln Heistand Park. The Prairie Hills Community Garden was opened this spring with over 40 families participating at the site.
- Urban League of Greater Madison was contacted to discuss employment issues in the neighborhood. The SWNSC wanted a better connection with large employers (such as CUNA) with the potential labor force along the Raymond Road area. Urban League Greater Madison received \$7,500 from the Allied and Emerging Neighborhood Grant for job training in the neighborhood.
- As part of revitalization strategy for the area, the Community Development Authority has recently approved staff to explore the development of a new program to allow the conversion/sale of CDA rental housing to affordable homeownership in the Bettys-Theresa Terrace-Hammersley-Loreen sub area.

#### **Next Steps**

The Southwest Neighborhood Plan and adopting resolution will be introduced to the Common Council on November 6, 2007. The Southwest Neighborhood Plan will be referred to: Plan Commission (lead), Board of Estimates, Board of Public Works, Board of Park Commissioners, CDA, CDBG Commission, Community Services Commission, Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission, Public Safety Review Board, and Transit and Parking Commission.



## Chapter 2 What We Have Identified As Issues

The most successful neighborhood plans, in terms of carrying out the strategies within the plan, are contingent upon what is most important to the people that live in the area. The majority of the neighborhood issues in the Southwest Neighborhood Plan relate to improving the health of the neighborhood through crime prevention strategies.

### 1. Safe Homes, Streets, and Places

Safety is the utmost concern of neighborhood residents. People of all ages, races, incomes, must feel safe in their neighborhood. Police enforcement and crime prevention strategies need to work in tandem to strengthen the conviction of current and future residents that this neighborhood is a place to stay. Visibility of the police force, decrease in illegal activities, and sense of personal safety in ones' home, streets and public and private places must be achieved.

Workshops on personal and home security, improved lighting of single-family and multifamily dwellings, streets, and parking lots, and reporting of criminal activity by all residents will help in achieving a safe neighborhood.

### 2. Retaining A Strong Housing Market

Retaining the strong market for buying into and reinvesting in the housing stock is important for the long-term health of the area. Preserving the single-family housing areas, updating the existing housing stock (i.e. conservation, mechanicals), and stabilizing deteriorating sub areas (Balsam-Russett, Bettys-Theresa-Hammersley, Park Ridge and Schroeder-Berkshire areas) with crime prevention, property management, and homeownership strategies will help build confidence in the overall housing market.

Maintaining the factors that are attractive to new homebuyers, such as public schools, is essential.

Appearance of a neighborhood is a reflection of the level neighbors care about where they live. Unkempt buildings, tall grasses and weeds, and junk and debris are evidence of a deteriorating area. The longer the disrepair of a neighborhood, the less likely residents will take action to intervene to make changes in the physical and social environment. Improved tenant screening, building maintenance and property cleanup in the Balsam-Russett, Bettys-Theresa-Hammersley, Park Ridge and Schroeder-Berkshire areas is a start to building pride amongst neighbors. Converting duplexes to owner-occupied condominiums, constructing garages and other features to make housing more marketable, and targeting homeownership and rehabilitation loans to make homeownership a reality for low-moderate income persons. Public infrastructure investments, such as upgraded street lighting on Balsam, Russett and other higher crime areas, shrub and tree trimming to improve visibility into Hammersley Park and other open spaces, will complement other safety efforts.

### 3. Strengthening Neighborhoods and Families: Community and Neighborhood Services and Programs

Community centers, centers of worship, the library branch, public and parochial schools, and other service providers have seen a rise in demand for their services from the growing low-income populations. It is a greater challenge to provide accessible and cost effective services to scattered small areas of poverty that are only 2-4 blocks in size. Providing family and youth programs for lower income families that help them with basic needs, job training and placement and quality housing will help reduce the high mobility occurring within the neighborhood. Productive, supervised, and accessible

activities and programs for youth will help keep them in positive activities.

Residents, businesses, and organizations within the planning area are striving to improve the health of the area. Working independently will make some improvements but bigger strides can be made by working in a coordinated fashion. Strengthening the interactions between the groups with a clear strategy on the roles that the various organizations can play will help concentrate time, effort, and monies on the priority issues. Establishing joint meetings amongst neighborhood associations (i.e. planning council), setting up an online network to communicate with neighbors (i.e. e-Neighbors), and working diligently with District Alderpersons and Dane County Supervisors to advocate for resources to the southwest side will help build the foundation for policy changes and/or funding resources to be allocated to the neighborhood.

#### 4. Getting to Jobs, Shopping, and Services

An important function of any neighborhood is the movement of people to places where they want to go. A safe walking and bicycling route to the community centers, schools, and parks is important to help ensure area youth can participate in programs. Ease and frequency of bus service to employment areas, shopping centers, and community programs will make basic services more accessible to populations without access to a vehicle.

#### 5. Bringing People Out: Walking, Gathering, and Enjoying All Places within the Neighborhood

A deterrent to crime is for people to engage in positive activity with a watchful eye on unacceptable behavior. Community gardens in parks areas, farmers market in the shopping center, youth sports leagues at the local parks, and neighborhood events, programs and workshops at the schools bring watchful eyes that can deter criminal

activities and/or be in position to report criminal activities taking place. Opportunities for individuals to interact across different ages, race, income and cultural heritage also break down barriers.

#### 6. Accessing Career Opportunities

High turnover in the neighborhood is disruptive to the fabric of the neighborhood. Individuals, families and their children need stability. Securing living-wage jobs allows individuals to stay and invest their time and energy to make their lives, neighborhoods, and schools a better place. It is essential to work with unemployed and underemployed adults with barriers to employment such as inconsistent work histories, limited formal education, low-value or obsolete job skill sets, criminal backgrounds and insufficient transportation to stabilize the turnover in the neighborhood.

