



South Park Street Rejuvenation Initiative

## THE EVOLUTION OF A NAME

Preliminary findings from research conducted by Wood Communications Group regarding the renaming of The Villager - September 2010



# THE VILLAGER

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## ✘ Overview:

- + In 2010, the current phase of redevelopment of the property known as Villager Mall will be complete, marking a significant milestone for the south side of Madison as well as the entire Greater Madison area.
- + Upon completion of this project organizations and nonprofits and the constituents they serve, as well as local residents will have a rare jewel of a community resource/destination available to them.
- + In celebration of this occasion and to properly mark the project completion, the Community Development Authority (CDA) is seeking to rename the property to appropriately align it with the new, broadened mission of the collaborative development.
- + The renaming effort, along with all of the innovative approaches that are being used to create this dynamic community destination, is intended to elevate the image of the city's south side while reminding residents of the cultural and geographic significance of the Park Street corridor.

# OBJECTIVE

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- + To position the new Villager Mall as a hub of critical resources that serve not only members of the adjacent south side neighborhoods, but of neighborhoods throughout the city and in surrounding areas.
- + To elevate the image of the south side of Madison while lessening the negative perceptions of the area which have gained public attention in recent years.
- + To create a coordinated, collaborative process for gathering input and information about how the property is viewed, what it should be, what it can be and how to ensure that it is what the city needs/wants.

# OBJECTIVES - REVISED

- + To position the new Villager Mall as a ~~hub of critical resources~~ destination that features a variety of establishments including retail, food service, health & social services, recreation and community gathering spaces that ~~serve~~ attract not only members of the adjacent south side neighborhoods, but of neighborhoods throughout the city and in surrounding areas.
- + To elevate the image of the south side of Madison while lessening the negative perceptions of the area which have gained public attention in recent years.
- + To create a coordinated, collaborative process for gathering input and information about how the property is viewed, what it should be, what it can be and how to ensure that it is what the city needs/wants, and sparking a productive community dialogue among stakeholders.

# SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

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- ✘ 2 focus groups (15 people) and 6 one-on-one interviews with individuals who have some association with the property.
  - + Neighborhood Association representatives
    - ✘ Burr Oaks
    - ✘ Bram's Addition
  - + Landlords
    - ✘ Fountain Creek Apartments
    - ✘ Hofer & Steadman Properties
  - + Tenants
    - ✘ Library
    - ✘ Urban League
    - ✘ Harambe
  - + Outside organizations with affiliations to Villager Mall
    - ✘ United Way
  - + Park Street Businesses
    - ✘ Park Street Garage
    - ✘ Park Bank
  - + Others
    - ✘ Local pastors

# REMAINING RESEARCH

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- × Conduct remaining one-on-one interviews (in lieu of 3<sup>rd</sup> focus group)
- × Consider value and timing of a tenant survey (opportunity for creating buy-in)
- × Additional direction from CDA

# SUMMARY OF IMPRESSIONS (THEMES)

- + Phenomenal changes thus far
- + Renovations at the Villager are a great step in rejuvenating the south Park Street area
- + Parking is a problem – and will be a problem going forward if/when more tenants are added
- + This feels like a “beacon of hope” in a “blighted neighborhood”
- + The area is visually appealing and “warmer” feeling
- + A small, dedicated group of individuals in the neighborhoods have made a world of difference in improving the area (neighbors have taken a stake, city should take a stake)
- + The changes won’t have much value if there isn’t a more positive impression that is created for the area
- + The name “Villager Mall” (still the name most people interviewed identified it with) does not effectively convey either the spirit of what is actually taking place nor the reality of what the destination does – or will – offer.

# PERCEIVED VALUE

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- ✘ What participants are “most excited about”
  - + More friendly/welcoming appearance
  - + More places for people to gather
  - + The library expansion
  - + The availability of space for more retail
  - + The increased level of activity/traffic
  - + More potential for collaboration
  - + More local residents are starting to take a stake in the this area



# SUMMARY OF ATTRIBUTES

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- + Diversity of people (cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, education, etc.)
- + Strong history/traditions (many long-time residents)
- + Variety of resources (workforce, health-related, social services, etc.)
- + Walk-ability
- + Central location/access – on the way to downtown; easy access to bus station; easy access to other Park Street resources, businesses, etc.

# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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- ✘ Comments you'd like to hear from people or headlines that you'd like to read about the Villager 5 years down the road
  - + “Next phase of upgrades completed at [NAME].”
  - + “Phase 3 of the senior housing project has been completed, including adult day care facilities.”
  - + A children's day care center is opening at [NAME].
  - + “I just bought a condo near [NAME], and it's perfect because I work in an office there and regularly walk to get my morning coffee and groceries in the area.”
  - + “Tonight I'm taking my family to [Name] for dinner and a movie.”

# NAME CONSIDERATIONS

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## + Gateway South

### × Pros

- ★ It recognizes the geographic location
- ★ It references the proximity/access to something significant (in this case, downtown Madison and the health care corridor of North Park St.)

### × Cons

- ★ A “gateway” is something you pass through, not a place you stop (i.e. not a destination)
- ★ In many communities, the “south side” has negative connotations (South Chicago, South L.A., South Madison)
- ★ Focus group participants thought the word “Gateway” sounded flamboyant and not representative of the area
- ★ Participants also thought “Gateway” was over-used and not unique to this area.

# NAME CONSIDERATIONS

## + The Village on Park

### × Pros

- ★ The word “Village” keeps ties to the historic connections of a name that has been in place for a long time – but is not the same.
- ★ The word “Village” gives a sense of community and has references to cultural richness.
- ★ Participants identified the cultural diversity and the tight community feeling of long-time residents in the area – which were also impressions from the word “Village” – as unique features of the area.
- ★ The reference to “Park” gives the geographic reference, without saying “south”.
- ★ The name has an “upscale” feel without feeling arrogant or “flamboyant”

### × Cons

- ★ In common reference, it will likely be shortened to “The Village” which may prove difficult to not be morphed back into “the Villager.”

# NEXT STEPS

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## ✘ Unveiling Strategy

- + A tiered approach to unveiling and evolving the new name should be considered:
  - ✘ Announce the name change prior to the opening of the Library
  - ✘ Utilize the opening of the library to further raise awareness of the new name
  - ✘ Embark on a logo development process that gives visual representation to the logo and creates future opportunities for public awareness/recognition.
  - ✘ Mark the name change with a dedication ceremony – invite area residents and opinion leaders to commemorate the event with the mounting of a plaque on the building – or other gesture - include a short program that demonstrates the city’s support/endorsement and the community’s buy-in and support (neighbors, businesses, tenants).

# NEXT STEPS

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- + Development and execution of a long-term communications strategy
  - × Develop a strategy that includes an ongoing calendar for creating communication opportunities where the new name and the “happenings” in the area would be highlighted (events, new tenant announcements, commission of a new piece of artwork...)
  - × Assign the task of managing, maintaining and updating the strategy to ensure it has longevity and is effective in evolving to current situations.

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ✘ A name is not enough
  - + Changing the name will not be enough if it is not part of a larger initiative to re-invigorate the area
  - + A long-term strategy for working with tenants, the city and neighborhood associations is critical
  - + A proactive, somewhat aggressive media strategy should be included in any long-term plans that are identified (participants had an overwhelming feel that the media – in general- had a direct impact on perpetuating negative impressions of the area and were not helpful in helping to raise public awareness of positive strides that are and have been taken.)
  - + Events are an effective way of creating positive buzz about something that brings people together – farmers market, community garden-related events, cultural celebrations, children’s event, fundraising events, etc. and should be built in to a long-term communications/public awareness campaign

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- + An effective tagline should be identified for consistency when referring to (i.e. reporting on, marketing for or referencing) The Villager. The tagline would help create the context for the name, the tenants and the mission of the area.
- + Small enhancements to the area surrounding The Villager would also help elevate the visual appeal of the area, such as:
  - × streetlight flags;
  - × a prominent piece of art situated near the entrance to Park Street (similar to the one on Monona Drive and perhaps created by an area resident/residents);
  - × other strategically placed signage (like the Burr Oaks neighborhood sign) in addition to other development and/or improvements to surrounding businesses, neighborhoods, parks, etc.





**THANK YOU!**

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