

Concentrated Neighborhood Planning

We are recommending that the next Concentrated Neighborhood planning process center around Leopold School (Arbor-McKee). Several possible neighborhoods were evaluated including: Badger, Fair Oaks, and Madison Square. In order to make a decision we looked at a variety of data ranging from: Neighborhood Indicators data, school district data, currently planned city developments in those areas, past history, current status of the neighborhoods and assets and strengths of a planning process.

Here are some of the facts concerning this area that are important. The area is very diverse with almost 44% of the residents representing communities of color (15% African American, 5% Asian, 19% Latino, 5% other races or multiracial) as opposed to 23% city wide. The number of owner occupied homes is 32% vs. the city average of 47%, indicating a higher number of residents renting. The median household income is less than the city wide average (\$47,427 vs. \$52,794) and the unemployment rate is slightly elevated. Over the past few years police and building inspection calls have increased as well as abandoned property. This neighborhood could be described as in transition.

Leopold School is the largest elementary school in Madison. Unfortunately, kindergarten preparedness rates are only half as positive as the city average, the student mobility rate and poverty (as measured by free/reduced lunch statistics) are twice the city average. In addition, the number of parents without a high school diploma/GED is also twice the city wide average.

The area is bounded by the Beltline on the north and the jurisdiction of Fitchburg on the south. In some ways the Beltline isolates this neighborhood off from services and the Madison/Fitchburg border can be an impediment to neighborhood wide efforts to build community.

One of our initial concerns was how interested would the City of Madison, Fitchburg and for that matter, MMSD, be in coordinating around this planning effort. After consulting with both Mayors and the School District we found a level of excitement we had not expected. We also discovered that Fitchburg is poised to redevelop much of the commercial area south of Post Road and believe this effort would dovetail perfectly with their efforts around community development. Our Division will be actively involved throughout the process and will give the CDBG committee regular updates.