

Greentree Neighborhood Association

Annual Meeting, Wednesday April 14, 2010, 7 p.m.

Meadowood Community Center

Madison Police Department Report – Officer Justine Harris – Daily reports from sectors 115 and 116 (includes Greentree) shows burglaries have decreased dramatically since suspect in last fall's burglaries has been detained. This spring's complaints have included speeding, loud vehicles, juvenile issues and property damage. To deal with youth issues in the area, this summer the police department will focus on youth activities in concert with the public health nurse and an intern. The team will work on positive activities to engage troubled area youth with the surrounding neighborhood including work in community gardens. The police will also be working with area landlords to encourage them to stay involved in maintaining their properties. Officer Harris says many landlords do a fine job, some seem well-intentioned but less able to stay in touch with their tenants and other landlords simply do not choose to engage issues that bad tenants raise.

The West District includes a Youth Crime Prevention and Gang Prevention Officer (Shane Olson, who will give a presentation at the April 27th safety meeting for area residents to talk about increases in youth violence. The police's aim is to gather information quickly and provide early intervention as incidents are discovered.

Officer Harris has been spending time at a few houses along Hammersley Road where on-going late night parties of 100 people or more have caused noise, alcohol abuse and other disturbances. She has also been involved in a city-wide effort to file vehicle report cards. These are notes where police have found cars that are unlocked with valuables in plain view making them easy targets for theft and break-in. The aim is to reduce the chance and opportunity for criminal activity. She reminded the audience of the importance of the community making itself less of an attractive target for thieves.

Officer Harris reported that the family alleged to be involved in neighborhood break-ins has been evicted from the Park Ridge neighborhood though she does not know where they had moved.

A question asked if neighborhood watch weekly walks would continue. Officer Harris said the walks had not been well attended and regular walks in the summer months might only continue on an irregular basis if at all.

A neighbor asked how to approach kids on the street if one feels threatened when kids they do not know are roaming or walking down the streets. Officer Harris said you have to make an effort to know kids individually. Also if you see kids congregating in an area or house don't hesitate to contact the landlord if the situation just does not look right to you. Having cell phones around to report crimes of opportunity is also a good idea.

A neighbor observed a lot of trash on Hammersley Road especially in the Park Edge and Park Ridge areas. She said that prompt clean-up projects send a message that people care about their neighborhoods. Officer Harris said that neighbors noting such trashy neighborhood issues should contact John Young in the City of Madison Property Inspection Unit, which is part of Building Inspection. He can help more promptly deal with such issues. Officer Harris also mentioned that pick up for large trash items happens on the Wednesday when recycling trash is NOT collected. Try to only place items on the sidewalk terrace for pickup on the day before scheduled trash collection so that neighborhoods do not look trashy and run down. Excess litter in an area affects how residents and visitors alike feel about a place and the safety of neighborhoods.

Dane County Supervisor Ronn Ferrell – Two issues were discussed: Emergency weather radios are available at cost from the Public Safety Building adjoining the City County Building on Doty Street. Second, the county and area local government are having discussions on updating all “inter-operable radios.” They aim to establish a system so all responders to emergencies of a place at the local, city, county and state level have at least one common communications system for sharing messages, staying in touch and requesting assistance. Now the county and local government are disagreeing about who should pay for such a system. Smaller units of government are so cash strapped that they want to opt out of such a system despite its advantages. The maintenance costs for such radio systems are over \$1 million to establish such a digital radio system. The issue will have to be resolved before the end of calendar 2012.

Neighborhood Watch, Chuck Kime – Mr. Kime encouraged neighbors who want to stay in touch with what criminal and safety activities are reported in the neighborhood to sign up for the neighborhood watch through contacting him. If you do not have Internet access then Valarie Kime is establishing a contact list to provide updates to those who indicate they do not have computer access to information. Kime praised police officer Justine Harris’ work to keep the neighborhood informed through the Greentree Watch system and community meetings. He also mentioned a new city program, Park Watch, to have park neighbors keep an eye on conditions and incidents in city parks and report problems through an online and telephone reporting system. The Parks’s Watch group was getting together for the first time on Monday, April 19th and Officer Harris has a neighborhood safety meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 27th at the West District Police Station at 7 p.m. Mr. Kime will provide a summary of that meeting. Kime is also overseeing an event to pick up litter in the Greentree neighborhood’s public spaces for Saturday, April 2th called the Earth Day Challenge. [Event was subsequently cancelled as inspections showed the parks were pretty clean.]

Area Public Health Nurse Kim Neuschel made an extensive presentation on steps to revitalize neighborhoods. Her complete presentation is available on the City of Madison’s Public Health web site. Neuschel said that where we live and how we feel about that neighborhood can have a substantial effect on one’s health. Her office takes several steps with area social workers to promote neighborhood wellness as well as individual health. Among the events they sponsor are community suppers, the southwest side farmer’s market, community gardens and median gardens. Vegetable gardens will be

planted on the street medians along Russett Road on seven of 22 properties near low-income housing. She will also be working with a Youth Outreach Officer to develop out of school programs for children. Her office will also conduct a home safety survey with area police and fire officers of rental properties.

More of the health work on the southwest side has shifted to deterring violence because statistics show that is what is needed. In surveys in Madison in the last ten years violence issues have increased 4.5% citywide but have increased 65% on the west side of Madison! Calls for police services on the southwest side increased 97% on the southwest side when they only increased an average of 65% citywide. On a more positive note, calls about juvenile crime complaints have recently decreased in the Park Edge and Meadowood areas. Still, statistically someone is much more likely to be a victim of crime if you live in a low-income area than in a higher-income area.

Social workers and public health officials conducted interviews with crime victims and others in surrounding neighborhoods where violent crimes occur. They found that neighborhoods where residents move in and out more frequently (high mobility) have more problems. People who get attached to an area, a home and a neighborhood get more protective of the neighborhood and of each other. People need to have guiding principles of behavior at their homes and in public spaces. To be a part of positive neighborhood experiences, youth have to feel they are part of the solution and they do best when there are violence prevention options available to them. To garner positive attitudes about an area, it helps to create a sense of place through plantings, public artwork and other neighborhood beautification projects. Communities that keep the trash picked up, that have public plantings and are well lit become safer, more desirable places to live

Combinations of steps can keep decent neighborhoods from turning sour. Small steps like better night lighting on houses and along streets can help keep land values up and a sense of safety. Home ownership opportunities like land banking, low-interest loans and tax incentives to recover distressed properties can put neighborhoods on the road to recovery. Steps to get neighbors to interact and create "social capital" will reach other keep neighborhoods strong as well. Activities like community work days, community festivals, opening up schools for community courses and exercise and job centers help keep the community working. Programs like timebanking and bartering can allow people to exchange services without necessarily having to exchange money. You can do what you do well and get help from those with abilities in other areas.

One key to economic development in an area is providing transportation to places of employment, and the southwest side of Madison is relatively poorly served compared to other areas of the city. Buses don't often run here and there are relatively few job centers. Prospective employees need help compiling resumes, learning how to answer job ads and learning how to respond to job interviews. Our area has had some modest successes as 30 people from southwest side job centers were offered

employment in the last eight months. Some of the most successful small businesses to make headway have been small garden to market entrepreneurs who are selling their produce at farmers markets. We are also making slow headway in getting more local educational courses incorporated in educational institutions like community colleges; less success at larger education institutions like the University of Wisconsin.

Youth have additional needs to find employment and get ready for the workplace. Youth outreach workers, mentoring programs, centers offering drop-in training, summer job fairs, youth job offers, a Youth Court program for conflict resolution can help as can summer youth programs for younger kids. Developing community culture that does not condone acts of violence and has known community expectations can help too.

Specific recommendations for the southwest side of Madison are detailed at the website with the report.

Jed Sanborn, District One Alderman, introduced Mark Olinger from the City Planning and Community Economic Development Department. Olinger talked about his department's duties in planning, neighborhood housing regulation and neighborhood advocacy. He views neighborhoods as building blocks of strong cities and said he felt the best neighborhood planning starts by finding out what is important to the neighbors and builds plans from that rather than top down planning in which the planners do the investigating and surveys then figure out "what the neighborhood needs." He left office contact information: molinger@cityofmadison.com, telephone 266-4635

Olinger also talked about searching for better mechanisms to provide neighborhood block grants.

Alder Sanborn said his issues will continue to be public safety and using the chronic nuisance ordinances already on the books to enforce issues with bad, irresponsible landlords regarding their tenants. Regarding the Edgewater Hotel downtown development Sanborn said he supports the idea of the building and is not especially concerned about the physical size of the proposed development. However, he is dead set against providing tax incremental financing (TIF) for the project as he sees this as private development that does not warrant public financing to make it viable even if it does create a certain number of construction jobs. Regarding the downtown library project, Sanborn says it is too expensive and not affordable. He is very concerned that the city is borrowing way too much for far too many projects and creating a mountain of future debt load that will not be affordable and will constitute too much of future operating budgets that will hamper the city's ability to consider necessary future projects.

Notes taken by Larry Sperling, Secretary