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# A Vision for the Allied Community

*"Preserve one of Madison's affordable and diverse neighborhoods  
and grow its leadership."*

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City of Madison  
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# A Promise Made

*Develop a shared vision for the Allied community*

## FALL 2003

In the summer and fall of 2003, I held a series of community listening sessions with residents of the Allied Drive neighborhood. I committed to using that feedback to develop a shared vision for the Allied community.

In response to the needs expressed in those meetings, and information provided by City staff and community partners, I developed the outline below that lists key ideas as to how the City of Madison, in close cooperation with residents, Dane County, Fitchburg, the schools and private partners, should invest resources to improve and strengthen the Allied community.

From this commitment a vision for the Allied community was developed.

### ***A VISION FOR ALLIED***

*My goal is to preserve one of Madison's affordable, diverse neighborhoods while strengthening its safety and quality of life and growing its local community leadership.*



## CITY PRIORITIES

A community is best served when the people who live there organize and participate in activities that maintain neighborhood quality, ensure safety and create a sense of community.

Residents in the Allied community lead lives that are necessarily focused primarily on individual or household basic needs such as employment, food, housing, childcare and healthcare. If the City, in partnership with others, helps address some of these basic needs, residents will have a greater opportunity to focus more of their efforts outward as stewards of their neighborhood and community.

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## **PRIORITIES FOR ALLIED**

**Cooperation** – keep public and private stakeholders informed and working together

**Resident participation** – include residents, neighbors, youth and property owners in redevelopment

**Visible, immediate action** – provide proof of current and ongoing commitment to Allied

**Tough choices** – make decisions today that will get positive, long-term results

**Stabilization** – preserve affordable housing and community diversity and encourage residents to get involved and stay active

## **BACKGROUND**

Madison enjoys a high quality of life. Our assets include a strong economy, active residents, a clean environment and many recreational opportunities. But residents in some of our neighborhoods do not share in all the opportunities and assets other Madisonians enjoy. So it is imperative that the resources of our entire community are brought together to ensure that all Madison residents share the high quality of life.

The Allied Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood is a community of approximately 2,400 residents, many of whom are children. This neighborhood is one of Madison's most diverse, with a significant population of African-American, Southeast Asian and Latino residents. And the neighborhood is among the most affordable in Madison. These are positive traits we want to see in neighborhoods throughout the City.

But there are also challenges. The Allied community experiences a high transience rate of about 50% and is considered a point of entry for many types of residents, including people with low and moderate incomes, immigrants, ex-offenders and people with alcohol or drug abuse issues.

Allied is a community where many struggle to meet their basic needs. It is often the case that an entire family – both children and adults – need a number of programs and services. This necessitates cooperation between resource providers to ensure a seamless delivery system and to avoid confusion, duplication and overkill. It is also common for residents in Allied to have limited access to employment, health care, childcare and transportation. The neighborhood also struggles with social problems of alcoholism, mental health, abuse and crime.

But by working together, residents, government, business and non-profit partners with a wide variety of assets can prevent a downward spiral toward increased crime and poverty. The purpose of this plan is to outline where resources are needed and identify stakeholders willing to assume the coordination and shared responsibility of making it happen.

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Allied has recently seen an influx of redevelopment and expanded business presence such as Cub Foods, Home Depot, an expansion of Head Start and Project Home's Prairie Crossing redevelopment. In the non-profit sector, the Boys and Girls Club is exploring the expansion of the neighborhood center. Such opportunities, combined with broad participation and coordination, can continue to grow this community's positive attributes.

Another challenge facing the neighborhood is that it is governed by several local jurisdictions: Madison, Dane County, Fitchburg and two school districts. These five governments can turn this challenge into an asset by coordinating services and leveraging resources to jointly serve a community with a high level of social and economic needs. Not only can we pool our resources, but we can also provide strategic direction to revitalize the neighborhood and promote its positive attributes.

The City of Madison is poised to bring significant resources to the table. The City can provide tax incremental financing (TIF), regulatory resources such as zoning and inspection, public health services, police and fire protection, transportation-related resources and such basic services as street maintenance and garbage collection. The City can also help with housing and planning and development services. But the City cannot do it alone, which is why it is so significant that all five governmental entities have pledged to work together.

If we can jointly address basic and critical needs for community residents, it is our belief that these residents can then become increasingly involved as stewards of their community.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Several years ago, the City asked the Mayo Corporation and Real Estate Dynamics to conduct a study of the housing market in the Allied-Dunn's Marsh area to assess housing market conditions and a review of alternative strategies that the City should consider in its neighborhood improvement efforts in the area. The study offered demographic information for the broader Census Tract 6 (includes Madison and Fitchburg). Other information more specific to the Allied Drive neighborhood has been extrapolated from 2000 Census data.

- ✓ The population in the Allied neighborhood, including Fitchburg, is approximately 4,300.
- ✓ The population in the study area of Census Tract 6 grew by 14% from 1990 to 2000, or 644 people.
- ✓ The population is 48% white, 28% African American, 10% Latino, 10% Asian and 1% Native American.

- ✓ The average age in the Allied area is 29, compared to 36 for the national average.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 10% of the residents are ages four or under and 18.5% are between the age of 5 and 14.
- ✓ The average household income for the neighborhood including Allied and Fitchburg, is \$51,225, but the City portion alone is \$29,931. For residents ages 16 and over, it is estimated that 75% are employed, 2.3% are unemployed and 22.5% are not in the labor force. For residents over 25, 31% hold an advanced degree, such as a Bachelor's degree.
- ✓ According to the study, the area has 1,526 dwelling units; 1,101 are rental. The Madison share of rental units includes 725 rental units within 105 buildings. Of the 105 rental buildings in the market area, 73 are located on Allied Drive.
- ✓ The neighborhood is perceived to be dense, but neighborhood density even on Allied Drive is generally medium to low. The issue is more one of household density because household size is greater than the Madison average. Average household size rose from 2.20 in 1990 to 2.57 in 2002, the opposite of the trend citywide.

## VISION FOR ALLIED

### SAFETY

**GOAL:** Engage residents who are interested in developing a safety plan to address crime, drugs, traffic and other related concerns.

**Police focus groups:** In the third week of March, the Madison police began a series of neighborhood focus groups with residents representing various ethnic communities to identify strategies that will address safety concerns.

**Study Circles:** The City will use the same model developed in the 1990s for the Study Circles on Race to dialogue with Allied residents about safety concerns. The Study Circles will be led by Benavides Enterprises, the non-profit organization now running the Study Circles program.

**Nuisance abatement:** Action to crack down on problem tenants and landlords is already in progress on the properties identified by police as the most problematic. Recently four buildings, which were subject to nuisance abatement, were sold to new owners.

**Building inspection:** The City will conduct thorough, unannounced inspections throughout all properties. The City's building inspectors will check for clean walls, windows, doors and floors; smoke detector maintenance; and general maintenance of common areas and basements. Exteriors will be checked for property maintenance issues including junk, trash

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and debris, tall grass and weeds, lack of grass, unshoveled sidewalks and inoperable cars. In addition, building inspectors will respond to complaints.

**Lighting issues:** The issue of public lighting will again be considered, with a new emphasis on lighting that might be installed on private property to benefit the public and neighborhood, with the possible utilization of TIF dollars.

## **| HOUSING**

**GOAL:** Protect the area's housing affordability, increase mixed-use housing in order to encourage homeownership and help stabilize resident turnover.

The Allied community has a high density of rental properties. More than 25 property owners manage these properties and their condition is varied. The housing stock is more than 25 years old. As such, there is a need to collaborate with landlords and residents to ensure that properties and the neighborhood are maintained.

**Home ownership:** Funds have been set aside to create owner-occupied housing, which in turn will promote stabilization and investment. A committee has already begun meeting to look at what current and future opportunities exist to encourage and grow homeownership.

**Keeping it affordable:** The City wants to keep the neighborhood affordable for current residents, not move them out. What needs to change is the variety of affordable housing, with the hope of moving some of the current tenants toward homeownership.

**Property owners:** Use some of the available TIF funds to improve the buildings with grants for external improvements and loans for internal improvement projects. In exchange for this financial contribution, the City will require a commitment from the property owners. The property owners' contribution could take the form of hiring local residents for improvement jobs, a commitment to proactive maintenance, collaboration with other landlords on screening procedures for potential tenants and/or a financial match. The goal is to strengthen landlords' ties and commitment to the neighborhood.

**Workshops:** Under the leadership of the Tenant Resource Center, the City will offer training for residents to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities. Also being considered is a similar program for property owners that would help them screen tenants, communicate better among themselves and with their tenants and be involved as active participants in the community.

## **| ACCESSIBILITY**

**GOAL:** Create opportunities to make the Allied neighborhood less isolated and more integrated with the community at large.

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**Madison Metro Transit:** At present, Allied has very few entry and exit points, contributing to unemployment and lack of access to needed services. The City's bus company will survey community residents about transit access into and out of the neighborhood and evaluate residents' ability to commute to employers in other areas of the City. We will also work with Fitchburg to see if there is interest in expanded metro service into their community.

**Bike Path:** The Southwest Bike Trail that runs through the neighborhood is an important link that allows Allied residents to safely access area businesses on the other side of Verona Road. As a result, the upkeep and maintenance of the trail is important for those who ride and walk on that path. The City will identify local youth and other residents to maintain the bike path to ensure the safety and well-being of those who use it.

**Verona Road:** Eight to 10 years from now, the State of Wisconsin will begin a major reconstruction of the Verona Road interchange. The City will work with the State to minimize the reconstruction's negative impacts on the Allied neighborhood and to use the project as an opportunity to enhance local roads in and out of the Allied community. Some potential routes that could provide additional access to the community include Red Arrow Trail, Thurston Lane and Summit Avenue.

## **COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

**GOAL:** Engage Allied residents in community organizing and stewardship of the neighborhood once the basic needs of residents are addressed.

**Boys and Girls Club:** Improving and stabilizing the management and services of the Allied Neighborhood Center are the biggest challenges and greatest successes of the past year. The Boys and Girls Club has successfully overcome many of the struggles of the previous neighborhood center and has expressed interest in a permanent role. Discussions about building a permanent Boys and Girls Club in the neighborhood, rather than leasing space in the current location, are underway.

**Neighborhood Center:** In the meetings last fall, many residents expressed their desire to build a new or improved neighborhood center that serves not only the youth in the community, but provides a variety of programs for the full range of ages and interests of the neighborhood residents. There are a variety of social service programs already active in the Allied community. Madison School and Community Recreation runs the Learning Center. Head Start provides early childhood care. And Joining Forces for Families addresses basic needs of children and families in the community setting.

The City stands ready to collaborate with these partners, the Boys and Girls Club, as well as the City of Fitchburg and Dane County, to make a new, permanent neighborhood center a reality.

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**Community Gardens:** Community gardens not only foster pride and resident involvement, they are an important source of healthy food for moderate-income families. The City would like to expand the popular gardens located in Marlborough Park at the existing location or add a new plot on a second site, perhaps closer to the core of the Allied neighborhood.

The City will encourage the Community Gardens Committee to work with Allied residents to expand gardens in the area.

**Wellness Center:** Allied Partners (a local faith-based organization) and local health-care providers see a critical need to improve the health and nutrition and address the medical needs of Allied residents. So they are working together to open a wellness clinic in the neighborhood. The City is recruiting other partners and will offer the support of its dedicated public health nurses.

**Encouraging involvement:** There are many ways to encourage residents to take a stake in the safety and stability of their neighborhood. The City will work with residents to develop a Neighborhood Watch program and a neighborhood association. The City, with its other partners, can also help by providing mentoring and grass roots leadership training.

## ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

**GOAL:** Provide greater access to reliable jobs that pay a living wage. The City will work with other public and private partners to help Allied residents overcome the major barriers to stable employment: lack of education or a strong employment history, unreliable transportation or a personal history that includes criminal activity, mental health issues or drug addiction.

**Cooperation with Business:** The City will work with the private sector to help identify employment opportunities for Allied residents.

**Dane County:** County Executive Kathleen Falk has also committed to fund programs to provide employment opportunities and to improve early childhood education. (Reference documents provided by the County Executive's Office for more information on this initiative.)

**Madison Schools:** Superintendent Art Rainwater has offered a school district employee to provide childcare training, in conjunction with the Madison Office of Community Services, for providers and parents based in the Allied neighborhood.

**Job Mentoring/Coaching:** A faith-based organization has expressed interest in providing volunteer job coaches and mentors to pair with Allied residents. This could also be done in partnership with Dane County, MATC, unions or trade associations.



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## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

But this is a work in progress and it will continue to evolve based on feedback from community members and partners. In the end, this must be a plan that belongs to the neighborhood.

Working together we can improve the quality of life in the Allied Drive neighborhood.

