

Grow Better – DRAFT

Madison Community Needs Assessment
November 10, 2021
Park Avenue Club

Narrative Summary

With every challenge there is an opportunity to grow. With that in mind, Madison Rotary sponsored a two-hour Community Needs Assessment with Leaders from a wide spectrum of organizations to hear their perspectives about what is required to better serve Madison. The meeting focused on reviewing the needs and resources in our community, post-pandemic. Participants, who have regular contact with Madison households, were asked to offer thoughts from the perspective of the organization they were representing. This report summarizes the themes and initiatives that surfaced during the meeting.

Participants were asked for their feedback on 6 questions, with their organizational hat on:

1. Rate Madison on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being the highest.
2. What is working well in our Community?
3. What is not working well in our Community?
4. What is missing in our Community?
5. What would a 10 look like?
6. What is important to you, our community's citizens and neighbors?

Four main themes and multiple sub-themes surfaced from participant responses to the questions and the group discussion. Those obtained prior to and during the meeting are shown thematically starting on page 10. Anne Hargrave may talk with a few additional community members who were not able to attend to include their perspectives.

- A. **Madison is a great place to live** because of its downtown area, schools, community organizations and town services which draw people to the community and create a rich vibrancy, **with areas for enhancement.**
- B. **Embrace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)** to enhance the lives of all residents and the effectiveness of our community initiatives and organizations.
- C. **Meet the high demand for indoor and outdoor space** for recreation, socialization and meetings while continuing to pay attention to environmental concerns and funding.
- D. **Enhance the aging downtown** area structurally and esthetically.

A. Madison - A Great Place to Live, With Room for Improvement

1. *Vibrant Community with Good Proximity*

The safe, vibrant and historic downtown area draws children and adults to a central location - which is good for community members and the businesses. There is appreciation for the downtown area being decorated throughout the year by community organizations and the town, which fosters a sense of belonging, or place, for community members. Multiple options for dining out, groceries, gas, auto service, and other supplies/services add a layer of convenience. Madison is also attractive due to the direct train link to NYC, other local areas, and its proximity to Newark Airport.

To maintain the community vibrancy, participants expressed concern about aging residents leaving because they didn't create strong enough roots and high real estate taxes. Others expressed concern that vibrancy depends on attracting young people to live in and visit Madison, noting that Madison needs to be affordable and there need to be ways for young people to easily get involved.

Some community members struggle when after-school care programs end in middle school and adults need that support in order to continue to work.

2. Community Organizations and Volunteerism

In general, Madison residents are civil and respectful towards each other and seek to improve the community. There are a wide variety of programs offered through MACTA (arts), the Library, METC, the Madison YMCA, the DDC (May Day, Christmas Parade, Halloween, Bottle Hill Day), faith-based groups, the Recreation Department, etc.

Community members step up and volunteer to lead the town's government and board of education, support the recreation program, supply the food pantry, join the fire and ambulance corps, engage in faith-based groups, beautify the town, and support community organizations and the arts.

The needs of individuals are often less apparent because they would rather not step forward and ask for help, as there is a stigma in doing so. Creating mechanisms for proactive outreach will help break down barriers.

There is a need for more volunteers and there could be a central source to promote opportunities (e.g. fire and ambulance corps; supporting the needs of seniors; assisting those who are new to English, etc.).

Many people are looking for more purpose in their lives and creating service opportunities helps individuals learn to be part of something bigger than themselves; the giver and receiver benefit through service.

3. Town Government, Services & Management

Madison's transparent and proactive government is well-regarded and appreciated. Madison employees respond to natural and man-made disasters thoughtfully and promptly (e.g. electric work; fire, ambulance and police; COVID response, etc.); and they proactively look for ways to improve their services. The collaboration between business development, the DDC and Chamber of Commerce enhances the town on many levels. The Recreation Department is very well regarded and supported by an expansive volunteer base that coaches and manages programs for about 2k children a year.

Areas for improvement that surfaced include: an ordinance banning or limiting noisy, polluting lawn equipment; creating more awareness of occupational health and safety standards for local businesses; considering zoning flexibility for housing; establishing a limit on vertical housing and accessorizing dwellings; clarity around existing parking rules and creating a means for establishing respect for the rules; and looking at ways to improve both walking and biking safety (sidewalk maintenance, etc.).

4. School System

The quality school system attracts a high level of teaching talent and the schools are well regarded. The town would benefit from having the highest rated schools in the area and continuing to invest in the facilities.

Affordable pre-school and EPOCH (special needs care) is offered by the Thursday Morning Club for 60% of the number of students than in the past. Reduced availability for affordable childcare is a challenge for community members.

5. Diverse Population and Housing

Madison offers many housing options in its four square miles to a fairly diverse population (see www.rosenet.org - 2017 revitalization study). While there is a range of affordable housing, there is not enough affordable housing for our lower income community members, who often work 2-3 jobs to be able to live in Madison.

6. Mental Health

While there are two organizations dedicated to substance abuse and mental health, there is a need for more education and access through the school system and community organizations (see below)

B. Embrace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Increasingly organizations and communities are evaluating:

- their ability to embrace the diverse races, cultures and other influences in their members;

- whether or not they are being fair and impartial in processes, procedures, communication and decision making; and
- how they can and want to support the diverse population.

General recommendations from the participants include:

1. Embrace Diversity; Build New Traditions

Madison is a more diverse community than a number of the neighboring towns, and that diversity encourages people from diverse backgrounds to come to the community. The growing diversity affords community members an opportunity to understand and respect differences, to bring people together who have different perspectives, to talk more, and to build relationships that go beyond special interests. By welcoming diversity, Madison can create more opportunities for welcoming to happen.

The strongest possible sense of community means that no group is missed. Madison can be inclusive, even for those who do not speak English as their first language. If Madison community members approach others with an open heart to all colors and races, and treat everyone with respect, dignity and equality, everyone will feel welcome. Madison will become a better place to live. By understanding what is for the greater good, the Madison community might foster more willingness to change. By defining how we want to treat the other person, we can improve attitudes to others and make a difference in many lives.

A way to acknowledge and welcome diversity would be to make new traditions, such as a day for Madison's Latino residents where they have an opportunity to demonstrate dancing, food, music and culture. Or, that effort could be expanded to encourage residents from all cultures to share their heritage with the broader community.

Welcome Wagon was once an integral part of bringing new residents into the community. Maybe we bring that back with an open mind and heart to a more diverse community.

2. Centralized, Curated Community Information

It was recommended by a number of participants that Madison have a centralized, curated means for effectively connecting and communicating with community members about available programs, activities and resources (not links to other websites).

While this information can be created in an on-line platform, it was noted that limiting the availability of information to an online platform would continue to create separateness. Information would need to be available also to those who do not have a computer, know how to use one or speak English as a first language. Madison needs mechanisms to distribute the information through multiple avenues to include the broader community (e.g. welcome packet, newspaper, small group meetings, etc.)

The curation aspect of building a communication platform is important and requires hiring someone to manage the site. A task force would be needed to identify what to include, how to structure the site, and coordinate implementation with the wide variety of Madison Community organizations.

It would be valuable to know where to go to get help with specific issues, get information or participate in an activity, and it would be useful for information to be presented in English and Spanish.

There would also be benefit in creating ways to share resources and highlight volunteers willing to shovel walks, run errands, teach someone how to use technology, explain how the government works, and explain how to get involved as a volunteer, etc. This information could be on a dedicated website, or a subset of the platform noted above.

The information on these sites could also be offered in a small classroom setting, possibly with translators, every 6 months or so; as a part of a Welcome to Madison program.

Maybe Key Club members or other student volunteers could help individuals learn how to use computers; we could identify ways for individuals to gain internet access.

A Morristown site is about to launch, which might be a model for Madison; it was started by an individual who created a Morristown Instagram account.

Other connection and communication recommendations included: neighborhood block parties; neighborhood text/email lists; resurrecting neighborhood captains; holding programs called "Conversations on Race/Diversity"; and seeking ways to engage sub-groups who speak another language.

3. Accessible School System for All

Aspects of Madison's school system are a challenge to navigate for Hispanic and other families who are new to the country and learning English as a second language, or do not have a computer. They find it very challenging to figure out how to enroll students and navigate many aspects of engagement with the school district. If they do not own a computer, they are unable to follow what has become common procedure to communicate with teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, parents, enrichment programs, and the administration.

Suggestions surfaced during the meeting included:

- Education, awareness and implementation of common DEI practices in schools

- Training or mentoring for ESL parents to understand how to support children in working with guidance counselors, selecting courses, navigating the child services department, etc.
- Determining a way for parents to access computers or providing the information/ contacts in a different way
- Teach parents how to use their child's Chromebooks so they can help their children, who are given Chromebooks. Could this be a Key Club activity? Or, a community volunteer initiative?
- Hire staff/parttime resources to interact with the Hispanic population who know how to speak Spanish or Portuguese (based on school demographics)
- Create a welcoming approach for new residents
- Evaluate paperwork and on-boarding process with Hispanic community representatives to determine ways to make it more welcoming.
- Train school guidance counselors on mental health awareness and how to handle bullying, as they are often the front line workers who see the challenges being experienced by those who are disenfranchised.

4. Affordable Housing and Transportation Services

The need for additional, quality affordable housing came up in the context of discussing the needs of senior citizens, artists, Drew professors and staff, and lower income residents of all ages. An emphasis was placed on the importance of the housing which shows respect for the individual and reduces the stigma of living in lower income or supported housing. An example of quality housing was described as the housing near Rosedale, because it looks substantive.

Under the NJ Rebate Program, a Madison community organization could help Senior citizens who own their homes and have an income less than \$150k, or are blind or disabled, lower their real estate taxes. The program could also help community members who owned a home in 2018 and are under 65, and make less than \$75K, and are not blind or disabled, apply for tax relief.

Both senior citizens and people without cars, often young people with working parents, would benefit from a local shuttle service.

5. Elevate Those Who Need a Lift

People from every walk of life are challenged with mental health, career transitions, family issues, or finding a way to get a better job so they do not have to work 2-3 jobs to feed their families and continue to live in their home. Madison could work to elevate those who need a lift by increasing access to mental health, create mentorships and ways to connect people

with jobs and internships. Helping people find jobs with local companies will improve their mental health – those who are disabled and able-bodied.

Those who need help generally don't have computers and don't come forward. They are struggling and it is humiliating for them to ask for help. To successfully elevate others, it will be important to establish a way to identify them and approach with compassion.

Many children are not happy; depression became very evident during lockdown. They really need a sense of direction. Parents and school employees would benefit from greater awareness of resources to help them reduce stress, improve mental health and manage other concerns, virtually or in-person. Children are very reluctant to come forward and those who have regular contact with them need to be trained to recognize when someone needs assistance.

Artists are a marginalized group, too. There is an increasing need to provide them with work opportunities – not asking them to do things for free, as often happens with local businesses and community groups. They need to make a living while also promoting their work.

6. Access to Enrichment Programs for Students

Create a way for lower income kids to access enrichment activities and sports. It's a very humiliating process as it is today. The way the Christmas Fund is being managed by the YMCA is much better. It is dignified and respectful.

There needs to be open access to enrichment. Proactive outreach is better than making people ask for the help and having to prove they need the financial support, or a scholarship.

Transportation to activities is needed for lower income students whose parents may be working multiple jobs.

7. Coordination of Services

Coordinating access to affordable housing, food distribution to those who are food insecure, distribution of food and clothing for the holidays, access to affordable food, and possibly publicly funded pre-school (as in Morristown) would truly benefit those in need.

8. Police / Community Connection

The Police Department wants to be sure that community members understand they are here to help people, and it is working to clarify what they do and do not do. The department would like to identify their questions and concerns, be transparent, and reduce fear and misconceptions.

While the Police say they are not involved with ICE, there is skepticism. It would help those who are undocumented to have something in writing from the police/town so they can come forward with concerns or issues without fear of being deported. Madison has stated it is welcoming to the Hispanic population. In order for those residents to be more visible, they need to know that their participation will not lead to a paper trail which puts them at risk. At this point in time, police and town practices are making many in the Hispanic population feel separate.

9. Barriers for the Disabled

Those who are disabled would benefit from Madison reducing barriers to access for outdoor dining and in the school buildings (need more info).

C. Meet High Demand for Indoor and Outdoor Gathering Space

Madison has limitations in indoor and outdoor space for youth programs. There is such high demand for field space and limited fields available that there is no way for the fields to rest, which helps grass grow. While a few fields are lit, there is a need for more lit fields to support the demand for evening activities. The town would benefit from further enhancing existing facilities and building out new facilities, such as a lit field between MHS and MRC, or a multi-purpose field house. (A presentation was recently made to the Town Council suggesting possible options.) Thanks to incredible volunteer support there has been remarkable cooperation and collaboration amongst team leaders to use Madison's resources effectively, but the program has more demand than space.

It would be valuable to our community to offer as many recreational options as possible given space and facility limitations. Turning the high school tennis courts into pickleball courts, too, for the community is a great example of creative thinking about the use of space.

Participants commented on the importance of not overbuilding Madison and taking away open space, and ideally protecting the Drew Campus and Giralda Farms from over building as well, as the use of those spaces is under discussion.

The events that were started during the pandemic were great – let's add more to bring the community together, not scale back. More art, music and other activities gives community members an opportunity to connect and participate.

There is recent resistance to provide school facilities for non-school activities; some in the administration seem to not understand that the buildings are paid for by the taxpayers, not the BOE, and there needs to be more flexibility in using the spaces if they are not being used for school functions.

To create opportunities for gathering, it was suggested that Madison prioritize people over profits and focus on “place making”, such as creating a Community Center, replacing Waverly Place with a Piazza for foot traffic only, expanding the traction line, or turning Dodge Field into Madison’s Central Park. To enhance public areas, it was suggested that Madison integrate art into those areas. Finding and keeping 3rd party funding may help turn some of these options into reality.

To improve Madison environmentally, the town would benefit from embracing a “pocket park” effect and/or holding up an environmental lens on all of our activities. We could promote the value of shade trees and native plants and helping residents understand the hazards to humans of spraying and using pesticides. We could create incentives for investing in renewable energy options for our cars and homes, and identify another way to recycle Styrofoam. We are fortunate to have a Silver certification with Sustainable NJ, hybrid police vehicles, 10 EV charging stations and a town council working hard at holding onto the Drew Forest.

D. Enhance Aging Downtown Structurally and Aesthetically

Madison can enhance the downtown area by improving the aging infrastructure (e.g. more/better sidewalks, enhanced store fronts by owners/landlords), establishing rules for outdoor dining, integrating art into public spaces, and creating more access for the disabled.

While the need for additional parking was addressed in the 2017 Downtown Revitalization Report, there were questions about whether or not Madison has enough available parking for residents and visitors.

It was also suggested that Madison build a place to host events.

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Question Responses - Grouped by Commonality

1. How is our Community doing on scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest?

Rating	Participants
No idea	Claire Whitcomb
5	Diana Mejia (“it depends on where you live”)
6	Sarah Jacobs (said she would make it higher after doing the go-around)
7	Lou DeRosa Craig Dunn Janet Allocco John Morris Guillermo Gil Eric Range Stuart Sydenstricker Father George
7-8	Tanya Van Order
8	Kim Boyer Janet Foster Rebecca Bertrand Susan Ironside Tom Binting Karen Giambra Jacqui Van Vliet Tom Honahan Bob Conley Pam Yousey
8-8.5	Joseph Longo Lisa Ellis

9	Rabbi Shalom Lubin John Miscia John Hoover Mark Schwarz Diane Mann Deb Starker
10	Zach Ellis (10 during Covid (volunteerism); 8 pre-Covid) Waseem Chaudhary

2. What is working well in our Community?

GENERAL THOUGHTS

- High degree of cooperation between recreation program and volunteers, especially during pandemic
- We rally when there is a need; (City services do as well)
- All town government volunteers – it takes a tremendous amount of time
- Support for faith based groups by citizens and civic organizations; faith based groups support citizens; faith leadership is strong and engaged
- Fire department (paid and volunteer), volunteer ambulance corps, police
- Range of affordable housing – but not enough
- Two organizations that address substance abuse and mental health
- Food Pantry, supported by Rotary Interact Club
- Strong level of diversity compared to other towns around us
- General civility and respect towards each other
- Commitment to Community Development, National Night Out, Covid Boosters
- Support for the Latino community – 4/5 families volunteer to support them
- Affordable pre-school through Thursday Morning Club
- EPOCH – special needs of after school by Thursday Morning Club
- Commitment to the arts
- Community programs offered – some through Thursday Morning Club
- Library; hands on projects for youth at Library
- Civic organizations – Thursday Morning Club, Rotary, Wind of the Spirit
- Utilizing outside resources
- Dress for Success
- Before and After School care in all schools run by Thursday Morning Club
- Local hometown community – May Day, Christmas Parade, Halloween, Bottle Hill Day – opportunities for neighbors to connect with each other
- Community support of local businesses
- Electric work – especially during emergencies
- Transparent governing; opportunities for your voice to be heard (Council meetings); Municipal meetings are on-line; Transparent focus on process in government – this should not be taken for granted
- Strong, safe school district
- Improved Police and community relationship
- Master planner
- COVID response

TOWN ATTRACTIONS

- Parks & Recreation
- Cultural offerings – museum, library
- Safe, vibrant and historic downtown; good for businesses
- University town

- Good building block for senior programs
- Great train service to NY and other local areas
- Sidewalks are kid and walking friendly
- Range of options for groceries, including Farmer's Market
- Close proximity to Newark Airport
- Annual menorah lighting
- Great place for kids to grow up; opportunities for kids to have jobs
- Historic Society – valuable assistance
- Municipal identity
- Beautiful downtown – decorations in the summer, holidays
- Community and Faith based groups
- 24 hour gas station
- Good reputation among other communities
- Attract high level of talent for schools
- Business development, DDC and Chamber of Commerce all work together

SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

- Working to hold on to Drew Forest
- EV charging stations - 10 so far
- Open Space
- Environmental leadership
- Silver certification with Sustainable NJ
- Hybrid Police Vehicles

3. What is not working in our Community?

CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION

- When the need is less apparent do we still step up?
- We have to get people connected
- Loss of Senior Center, especially during Covid. No plans for replacement.
- No centralized (“Go to”) communication system, calendar about what’s happening in Madison
- No real community center (such as in Montclair, Chatham, FP)

ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

- Church and state separate Madison; Sunday worship vs. sports?
- Town/university separation
- An understanding of the greater good might foster more willingness to change
- Universities were not invited; examine this relationship. Is it becoming adversarial?

RESOURCE LIMITATIONS

- Limitations in outdoor and indoor recreation space; no way to let fields rest and maintain grass; limited lighted fields.
- Availability of school facilities for non-school activities and purposes (need more specifics); “buildings are owned by the taxpayers, not the BOE”
- Coordination of services, a clearing house for resources (e.g. seniors), volunteers especially with other non-borough organizations. Lost Tri-Town because of funding.
- Volunteerism (e.g. MVAC & Fire Department) - getting involved and showing up
- Find and keep 3rd party non-government funding.
- Drew sustainability & more shared services/facilities; plan for the future (ala Giralda Farms)

INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE

- Downtown infrastructure – sidewalks (not sure if this means more or repairs)
- Do we need underground parking or a parking garage?
- Rules for outdoor dining.
- Aging facilities
- Business owners/landlords need to beautify their establishments
- Place within Madison to host events

DIVERSITY AWARENESS (OR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION)

- Inconsistent awareness and implementing DNI and DEI practices for housing and schools (need specifics)
- Affordable starter homes - senior accessible, drew professors & staff (esp. housing including property taxes)
- Schools are unwelcoming to immigrants and lower social economic status. Paperwork / onboarding is a problem.
- Broaden diversity dimensions

- Understanding barriers for disabled with outdoor dining and school buildings
- Age diversity in government

4. What is missing in our Community?

CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION

- Opportunities to bring people together who have different perspectives
- Binary thinking - we need to move from right/wrong thinking to understanding and respecting differences
- Integration of art into public spaces
- A better understanding of what the “new” working world means to Madison (other headings, too)
- Personally welcoming people to Madison; Make newcomers feel like a “member”
- Integrated community engagement; a platform or hub
- Lack of engagement with other language “communities” to understand what will make them engage (time). What are the barriers?
- Opportunities to “talk more.” Build relationships. How do we get beyond our special interests?
- Volunteer Hub on Rosenet with search capability; idea hub; resource/skill hub.

DEI (*DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION*) - Understanding differences; promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within procedures and processes; be inviting to all

- Columbian (or Hispanic, since many subsets) community representation in planning
- Welcoming diversity and creating opportunities for welcoming to happen
- Welcoming new residents Madison through “Welcome Wagon” and an “orientation to Madison”
- Visibility of different communities within Madison
- Addressing language barriers
- YIMBYism needs to exist (Yes, in my back yard = pro housing moving; supports increasing supply of houses within cities where housing costs have escalated to unaffordable levels)
- Welcoming marginalized, challenged, difficult people. How can we help them be successful?

RESOURCE LIMITATIONS; INCREASING VOLUNTEERISM

- Enough square footage for recreational programs
- Recreation opportunities for all age levels
- Adequate summer programs for children
- Publicly funded pre-school, possibly using existing pre-schools (Morristown has this)
- Access to affordable food
- Transportation to engage in programs, especially for lower income families
- Affordable housing opportunities
- Coordination of services – food distribution to the insecure; toys for the holidays
- Town campaign to raise need for volunteers

TOWN IMPROVEMENTS

- Ordinance banning or limiting noisy, polluting lawn equipment
- Awareness of occupational health and safety standards
- Zoning flexibility for housing; limit on vertical housing and accessorizing dwellings
- A Community Center
- Parking availability – clarity around existing rules and respect for them
- Walking and Biking safety – sidewalk maintenance
- Expansion of Waverly Place, traction line, Dodge Field

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS

- Understanding of native plants and their benefit to the town; the hazards to the environment and humans of spraying.
- Appreciation of shade trees
- Incentives / Investment for energy efficiency (renewable energy)
- Styrofoam collection

5. What would a perfect 10 look like to you, as the representative of your organization?

IMPROVE FACILITIES, ACCESS, PARKS

- Create “pocket park” effect
- Focused effort to further enhance facilities; build our facilities – create a multi-purpose field house
- Include an environmental lens in our community
- Placemaking, land use that prioritizes people over profits
- Replace Waverly Place with a Piazza (foot traffic only).
- Turn Dodge Field into Madison’s Central Park.
- Integrate Public/interactive art in the community

EMBRACE INCLUSIVITY

- Be more inclusive, less binary, diversity, more transparency
- Include all cultures in our community activities
- Opportunities to deepen relationship with the Latino Community
- More complete integration of public schools, including the Latino Community.
- Understand the police department
- More welcoming Hartley Dodge Memorial
- One in which we constantly strive to know one another
- Allow for diversity but do not let those differences divide us
- Greater awareness of those who are on the margins
- Human environment constantly nourishing
- Less uniforms; really intentional understanding (Carol?)

ENHANCE CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION

- Neighborhood email/text list, block parties
- “Intentional” neighborhood associations
- Program called “Conversations on Race/Diversity” – Intentional/borough sponsored
- Create opportunities to educate without polarizing
- More opportunities for people to volunteer
- Always room for improvement
- Facilitated conversation between St. Vincent Martyr and Latino Community

6. What's important to you, to our community citizens and neighbors?

LIVE OUR VALUES

- Be attentive to spiritual dimension within our lives
- Strongest possible sense of community; no group missed; being inclusive, even for those who do not speak English as their first language
- Bring people into the schools and town administration who speak Spanish to reduce the feeling of being separate; create a more welcoming approach for new residents
- Proactively work to help lower income and disadvantaged citizens find opportunities; help them help themselves move up in society.
- Have an open heart to all colors and races; be welcoming to everyone. Treat everyone with respect, dignity and equality.
- Encourage people to live a values driven life; help people find purpose; create service opportunities so they can learn to be a part of something bigger than themselves.
- Define how we want to treat the other person to improve attitudes towards others.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Offer as many recreational options as possible given space and facility limitations
- Don't over build Madison and take away open space. Protect the Drew Campus and Giralda Farms.
- Continue the events that were started during pandemic, and add more, to bring the community together.
- More art, music and other opportunities for community members to connect and participate.

SCHOOL SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

- Have best schools in the area with a quality education and facility investment
- Invest in well-prepared mental health counselors

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION ABOUT RESOURCES, INFORMATION, ETC.

- Create a way for everyone to know where to go to get ABC information, how to do XYZ
- Provide information in English and Spanish
- Educate parents so they can support kids who are given chrome books. Teach parents how to use them too. Teach parents about how to navigate picking classes, books and other aspects of the school system that are hard without technological knowledge and facility with English and the school system.
- Create ways to share resources; consider establishing a community page to include tools for how to do XYZ, resources, classes, how government works, how to get involved. Hold classes on these topics every 6 months for those who are not apt to look at an online resource. (Ex. Create a list of people who need to have their walks/driveways shoveled and a list of people willing to do this work for them.)
- There needs to be more communication to get more involvement.

- Look for ways to provide services to the elderly; get information to others on who needs help with what.
- One hub for communication for all organizations & activities; it needs to be aggregated and curated, not just links to other sites. The curation is important. It needs to be someone's job to manage this. It could be an extension of IloveMadison.com. A task force would be needed to ID what, how, etc. and coordinate implementation. www.MorristownNJ.com is about to go live from the Instagram account that was created by (?)
- Hold on-line webinars for working families to get them up to speed when they cannot go to meetings.
- Set up classes for seniors, parents and students who need support, possibly by Key Club members.

MAINTAIN VIBRANT COMMUNITY

- Look for ways to encourage Madison residents to create deeper roots in the town so they don't leave after 10-20 years. Some move to warmer climates; others move away when their children have completed school because they cannot afford to stay in the town.
- Madison is expensive. How can we create opportunities for people to stay as they get older? Can we extend after school opportunities after elementary school so that parents can easily keep working full time without financial burden
- Ask residents "what is important to you?" and "why do you live here?" in order to help identify priorities.
- Create reasonable housing and services for the elderly and transportation within the area. Have housing show respect for the individual and reduce the stigma of living in lower income or supported housing. (Housing near Rosedale is well done; it looks substantive.)
- Need to attract young people to town in order for Madison to be a vibrant community. It needs to be affordable and there need to be ways for them to become involved.
- Reduce real estate taxes for people over 80 yrs. Get information out about the NJ rebate law for those over 65 with a certain income.
- Build new traditions that embrace all community members – music, dancing, art – and incorporate different racial backgrounds. Have a day for Latino residents – dancing, food, music, culture.

ELEVATE THOSE WHO NEED A LIFT

- Create mentorships and ways to connect people with jobs, internships, and ways to elevate themselves
- Identify ways to know who needs help. Those who need help don't have computers and don't come forward. They are struggling and it's humiliating to ask for help.
- Artists are a marginalized group, too. There is an increasing need to provide them with opportunities. Businesses and community groups frequently ask them to do things for free. There needs to be an understanding that they need to make a living too.

ENHANCE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- Kids are not happy. So many of them are really down – they need a sense of direction.
- Improve mental health; help people find jobs with local companies, especially for those with disabilities.
- Make people aware of resources to help them reduce stress, mental health and other concerns.
- Mental health – how to access support either in person, virtually, with or without insurance. Is there a role for Project Community Pride?
- Schools are a point of entry. The counselors need training and more time to connect with children. Students are reluctant to come forward.

REDUCE FEAR

- Police department is here to help people. Many in the community don't know what the department does. We need to identify their questions and concerns, be transparent and reduce fear and misconceptions.
- Police say they are not involved with ICE but there is skepticism. It would help if they would put that in writing. Community members are more apt to come forward. If the town is going to be welcoming to the Hispanic population, people need to know that their participation will not lead to a paper trail that will cause them to be deported. At this point our practices are making this group feel separate.

AFFORDABLE SERVICES

- Breakdown barriers between the school system and the Thursday Morning Club, which is offering affordable child care to at least 125 children now. It used to be 200. There is a short-term contract now; discussions have been difficult. Childcare needs to be accessible for all.
- Expand way for lower income kids to access enrichment activities and sports. It's a very humiliating process. The way the Christmas Fund is being managed by the YMCA is much better. It is more dignified and respectful. There needs to be open access to enrichment. Proactive outreach is better than making people ask for the help and having to prove they need the financial support, or a scholarship.

Grow Better – DRAFT

Madison Community Needs Assessment
November 10, 2021
Park Avenue Club

Community Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organization
DEB	Starker	METC & MACA
LISA	Ellis	Borough of Madison
CLAIRE	Whitcomb	Environmental Commission
REV. ALTON CRAIG DUNN		First Baptist Church
MSGR. GEORGE HUNDT		Saint Vincent Martyr Church
PASTOR KATE HILLIS		United Methodist Church
REV. SUSAN IRONSIDE		Grace Episcopal Church
PASTOR JACQUI VAN VLIET		Presbyterian Church
RABBI LUBIN		Chabad of SE Morris County
WASEEM	Chaudhary	Waseem Petroleum Group
JOHN	Morris	Chamber of Commerce
JANET	Allocco	Thursday Morning Club
DIANE	Mann	Madison Area YMCA
MARK	Schwarz	Madison Public Schools
LOUIS	DeRosa	Madison Fire Department
BOB	Conley	Mayor
ERIC	Range	Board of Health
TANYA	Van Order	Madison Housing Authority
JOHN	Miscia	Madison Police Department
JOSEPH	Longo	Madison Police Department
REBECCA	Bertrand	Parks Advisory Committee
KIM	Boyer	Cheshire Home
TOM	Honohan	Madison Senior Advisory Committee
JOHN	Hoover	Tri-Town Committee
KATHY	Caccavale	Sustainable Madison
STUART	Sydenstricker	Wind of the Spirit
GUILLERMO	Gil	Columbian Community
JANET	Foster	Historic Preservation Committee
TOM	Bintinger	Madison Public Library
PAM	Yousey	Board of Education
KAREN	Giambra	Chamber of Commerce
ZACH	Ellis	Recreation Advisory Committee
Meeting Support:		
ANNE	Hargrave	Meeting Facilitator
CAROL	Martorana	Madison Rotary
DOUG	Willis	Madison Rotary
LOIS	Bhatt	Madison Rotary
ART	Powell	Madison Rotary
SHELBY	Rhodes	New Jersey Rotary
MARK	Hartmann	New Jersey Rotary