

VNA Good Neighbor Digest



03-25-2024

Vilas Neighborhood News

VNA News

Vilas Park

Thanks to everyone who attended the meeting about Vilas Woods! It was a cold two hours, but Parks shared a lot of information, including some general park updates beyond tree maintenance/restoration topics. I do want to note that everything depends on Parks having the budget for these efforts, and Parks staff noted that budgets can change. Highlights from the meeting are:

- The tennis courts are no longer safe to use. Parks plans to close the courts this spring and remove the existing courts and fence in the fall time frame. New courts will be built in the 2026 timeframe, assuming current funding remains available. The meeting attendees had a number of good questions about this decision, such as couldn't the courts

just remain as they are until 2026 and people could assume the risk of being injured, but Parks staff said that was not possible because the courts are so unsafe. Parks is coordinating with appropriate Ho-Chunk authorities and a firm that conducts Phase 1 Archeological surveys on the tennis court issue; their current understanding is a survey is not required for the planned tennis court work, but, after questions from neighbors, they are confirming that with the Ho-Chunk authorities. I asked after the meeting, and the basketball court will remain in place until 2026, when the current court will be removed and a new court will be put in by the tennis courts (as envisioned in the Vilas Park master plan).

- The dinosaur play structure at the Dinosaur playground is going to be removed because it is no longer safe as a play structure. Given its proximity to mounds, it will be cut off at ground level to ensure the ground is not disturbed. Parks is willing to let a private entity have the dinosaur structure if there are any takers, but they have to make clear it is not safe as a play structure.
- The Shoe and Cheese (West) playgrounds will be renovated in the 2026 timeframe. There will be a planning process with public input for these playgrounds. The master plan for the park has the Shoe playground becoming larger (and the Shoe staying!) and the Cheese playground becoming a nature based playground (a new nature based playground is going in at Olbrich for anyone wanting to see one).
- An accessible beach mat is going to be added at Vilas Beach before Memorial Day. Bernie's Beach has one that is very popular and gets a lot of use.
- Parks has an ecology team that is starting to work on natural areas in community parks. They will be involved in maintenance and restoration of the natural areas in Vilas Park. The Park's challenge is it has beautiful, mature trees and very few new trees growing to replace them. We need more young trees now to ensure there are beautiful mature trees in the future.

- Parks staff have been removing invasive species, deadfall, and small safety hazards. However, there are a number of large, mature trees that are safety hazards and will need to be removed (for example, you can see through one tree). It will affect the look of the tree canopy in the park, but it will also give younger trees a chance to thrive.
- The very popular path in the park means that Parks needs to be much more involved in tree maintenance; the safety risks of a branch or tree falling are higher.
- Parks staff hopes to both plant new trees and allow for natural regeneration of oak trees in Vilas.
- They are open to leaving snags (portions of a trunk and main branches) of a tree to preserve wildlife habitat, but it will depends on the location of the tree and safety risk to people/homes.
- Parks staff will communicate their plan for the natural areas of Vilas Park; the neighbors encouraged Parks staff to clearly explain what is happening, why it is happening, and what the natural areas will look like in the future when the plans have been implemented/trees, etc., have grown
- It is possible to have native shrubs in the natural areas to screen the park from homes/roads. Young trees as they grow also can contribute to such a screen.

There was more information covered in the meeting, but these items felt like the most pressing/time sensitive.

Monroe St. Library

In-person absentee voting (IPAV) started Tuesday, March 19 and continues through Sun., March 31. **You can vote at Monroe Street Library the two Saturdays of IPAV voting: Sat., March 23 and March 30 from 10 - 4.** Bring your photo ID. You can REGISTER to vote on Sat., March 23 but not March 30 as state law prohibits voter registration the three days before an election.

For a list of all IPAV locations and hours, see [here](#).

Spring break drop-in activities

Tues., March 26

10:30 Music Story time for kids 0 - 5. Sing, learn, play and dance with Growing Voices.

1:30 - 3:30 Decorate a canvas pouch with Posca markers to hold your treasures

Wed., March 27

1:30 - 3:30 Decorate a water bottle with Posca markers. Gotta stay hydrated!

Thursday - CLOSED

Fri., 1:30 - 3:30 Decorate a flower pot with Posca markers. Take home some seeds, and plant something beautiful.

All activities and materials are free. Funding is provided by our generous friends' group, the Monroe Street Library League.

The seed library has really taken root! Check it out.

Monroe Street Library is open weekdays 10 - 6 except Thursdays, and Saturdays 9 - 5. Call us at 608 266-6390.



Tag Evers blog (edited)

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/council/district13/blog/>

Annual Dog Park Cleanup Day

Do you love your dog park? Help clean up your favorite city of Madison off-leash dog park! Volunteers are needed to assist with picking up trash and scooping up dog poop. Madison Parks will supply trash bags, gloves, scoopers, and buckets. You may bring your own gloves, scoopers, and additional bags. Weather and park conditions determine which dog park locations are included in the volunteer project. Dogs welcome, though be sure to scoop your pup's poop!

- **Date:** Saturday, April 6, 2024
- **Time:** 9:00 - 11:00 am
- [Advanced Registration Required.](#)

Earth Day Challenge

Earth Day Challenge Projects are held throughout the city. Volunteers may assist with trash pickup, raking, weeding, and removing sticks. Parks staff will supply gloves, garbage bags and

rakes. Rakes at each park will be based on the number of volunteers participating. TO PICK UP SUPPLIES: Look for the Earth Day Challenge sign in each of the designated parks. No staff is onsite during the event.

- **Date:** Saturday, April 20, 2024
- **For More Information Email:** [Parks Volunteer Coordinator](#)
- [Advanced Registration Required](#) (Hint: District 13 Volunteers have already responded in great numbers! Yesss, way to go D13! Brittingham, Olin, Vilas, and Wingra Parks are all filled up. However, you can still sign up to for **Edward Klief Park, 1200 Milton St., Glenwood Children's Park, 602 Glenway St., and The Glen Golf Park, 3747 Speedway Road.**

Save The Date – Budget Engagement Event

Wednesday, May 29 is now set for a Southside/Near Westside Budget Engagement Event to be held from 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Goodman South Library, 2222 South Park Street. This event is meant to appeal to residents in Districts 13, 14, 5, and 10, the aldermanic districts on the near west and south sides of the city. Refreshments and food will be provided.

Finance Department staff will be at the event to offer specifics about our budget challenges, including how we got here in the first place and our possible next steps. Ample time will be given to answer questions. Stay tuned for more details.

Those interested are encouraged to dive into the comprehensive information prepared by Finance staff at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/finance/budget/2025-budget/2025-budget-outlook>.

There you will find an information series on the 2025 outlook. Quoting from the website:

“The Finance Department recorded a four-part series to explain the fundamentals of the City’s budget and options for closing the budget deficit. This informational series is a first step toward deciding on an approach to balancing next year’s budget.”

Alders are getting a lot of emails, many of which demonstrate fundamental misunderstandings about the source of the budget deficit and what steps could be taken to fix it. For example, there

is apparent confusion between capital and operating expenditures, as many emails suggest the budget could be balanced by cutting affordable housing, BRT, and other capital projects.

Boards, Commissions, and Committee Meetings

Note: This is not a complete list of meetings for this upcoming week. All meetings and their details can be found at the [Meeting Schedule page](#).

- **Transportation Commission:** The Transportation Commission meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 27, in virtual format at 5:00 p.m. Agenda items include the 2023 Transportation Annual Report, review and feedback of multiple Public Works transportation projects, and a 2025 budget outlook.
 - [Meeting Details](#)
 - [Meeting Agenda](#)
 - [Register for Public Comment](#)
 - [Watch Online](#)

Announcements & News Releases

- [Public Test of Election Equipment Saturday](#): The public is invited to observe the City of Madison public test of election equipment this Saturday. The City of Madison deliberately schedules the public test on the weekend to make it accessible for the community. Before each election, the Clerk's...
- [Help Our Community Stay Prepared for Emergencies: Public Health Accepting Applications for Funding Opportunity](#): Public Health Madison & Dane County is now accepting applications from local organizations interested in helping their community stay prepared for emergencies.
- [W Johnson St, at N Bassett St, Reduced to One Lane for Crane Removal](#): Starting at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 30, West Johnson Street will be reduced to only one travel lane for the dismantling of the tower crane located at W Johnson Street and N Bassett Street. Traffic will be reopened to two lanes over night from...

- [Tana Elias Selected as Madison Public Library Director](#) : MADISON, WI – Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway and the Madison Public Library Board are pleased to announce the selection of Tana Elias as the new Director of Madi
- [In-person absentee voting for the April 2 Spring Election has begun.](#): Absentee voters need to present an acceptable photo ID for voting in Wisconsin. Voters may register or update their registration at absentee voting sites with proof of address.
- [City-Wide Youth Voices Writing Contest Returns April 1](#): Families can join programs designed to inspire stories during the week of Spring Break March 25-29 at Madison Public Library.



City News

For further details check:

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/>

Boards, Commissions, and Committee Meetings of interest
[Complete Meeting Schedule page.](#)

The Clerk's Office strongly encourages absentee voters to mail back their absentee ballots today, if possible. **By mailing your absentee ballot today, March 25**, you give the U.S. Postal Service a week to deliver it.

Public Test of Election Equipment Saturday

The public is invited to observe the City of Madison public test of election equipment this Saturday. The City of Madison deliberately schedules the public test on the weekend to make it accessible for the community.



Madison Police Dept.

We will have our monthly 'Coffee with a Cop', at **the East District Station (809 S Thompson Dr.) in the community room.** Coffee will be provided! For this event and future Coffee with a Cop

events we will be continuing our efforts of adjusting when we hold our event to allow for more flexibility across the community. My hope is by adjusting the time for our Coffee with a Cop event we can fit more individuals' schedules. Our next coffee day is scheduled on **Tuesday, March 26th, 2024 from 12:00pm-1:00pm. Please feel free to stop in at any time to participate.** Parking is available in the front lot of EPD. Please do not pass the fence line or park near the squads. Should the lot run out of parking spaces street parking is available as well as along a side of the EPD driveway. Please do not block the driveway as officers will need to come and go to address calls for service in the community. As usual, we are excited about this opportunity and ask that you spread the word to anyone who might be interested in this community event. If you have any questions, concerns or topics you would like to discuss please feel free to email me at ldeloach@cityofmadison.com



In case you missed it and For Reference

Book Club

The votes are in! The next book is Tom Lake by Ann Patchet. We will discuss it on Thursday April 25th at 7pm. Please let me know if you are interested in hosting!

I'll send reminders out as we get closer to the date. Enjoy the read! Sarah Bahauddin sarahbahauddin@gmail.com

Tag Evers blog

Extra Round of Brush Collection Added

Presumably due to the early spring weather allowing for a head start on yard work, the Streets Division will begin an extra round of brush collection on **Monday, March 18.**

If you wish to take advantage of the extra collection opportunity, [place your brush out for pickup](#) today.

If you set brush out by 6:30am March 18, it is the Streets Division's goal to have it collected some time before Friday, March 29.

If you put your brush out after March 18 in the hopes of taking advantage of this extra collection round, you may miss your opportunity. If you cannot get your brush out on or before March 18, please hold it for one of your upcoming [regularly scheduled brush collection opportunities](#).

What is “Brush”?

Sticks, branches, and other woody material you have cut from your trees, shrubs, or bushes that measure at least 18 inches in length. This material is eventually fed into chippers to make [wood mulch](#).

Additional Information

For more information about brush collection, including the set out date schedule for your neighborhood, go to www.cityofmadison.com/BrushCollection.



Funding for Madison’s Second Bus Rapid Transit Line Included in Federal Spending Bill

On Monday, March 11, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced that \$118.1 million for the Madison area’s second bus rapid transit line, Metro Rapid Route B, has been included in President Biden’s 2025 Proposed Budget. About 78 percent of the project would be federally funded, with the remainder coming from local communities benefiting from the route.

Rapid Route B is currently in the development and planning stage and would run generally from Madison’s Northside neighborhood through the downtown area, to South Madison, ending in Fitchburg—generally following Metro’s existing Route B, one of the area’s most heavily traveled routes. Metro Rapid Route B is planned to launch in 2028.

Features will match Metro Rapid Route A including service every 15 minutes or less, high-quality stations with raised platforms, priority traffic signals, dedicated lanes with fewer stops, and faster fare payment. Metro Route A is currently under construction along

Mineral Point Road, Whitney Way, University Avenue, and East Washington Avenue, and will launch this fall.

The next round of public meetings for Metro Rapid Route B are planned for April, where residents can learn more and share feedback about the proposed route, station locations, and more. For additional details, visit www.madisonbrt.com.

Monroe St. Library

Our new March **scavenger hunt** is up and running! This month's hunt features the letter M.

MSCR summer program guides have arrived, as have Dane County bike maps. And we have Covid tests and some tax forms.

Watch the **Too Good To Miss** shelves for new titles in the next few weeks. Itching to get your hands in the dirt? Check out our display of gardening books (earliest we've EVER displayed that topic). Watch soon for a display of kids' books that the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) considers the best books of 2023.

Alders are receiving many emails containing a fundamental misunderstanding of the source of the budget deficit and what steps might be taken to fix it. Please take this opportunity to learn more about our structural deficit and options to address it

Save The Date – Budget Engagement Event

Wednesday, May 29 is the tentative date we've set for a Southside/Near Westside Budget Engagement, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Goodman South Library, 2222 South Park Street. Meant to appeal to residents in Districts 13, 14, 5, and 10 Refreshments and food will be provided.

Finance Department staff will be at the event to offer specifics on budget challenges. Stay tuned for more details.

For more info. <https://www.cityofmadison.com/finance/budget/2025-budget/2025-budget-outlook>.

This is a first step toward balancing next year's budget. It includes: A general understanding of the overall City budget. Fundamentals of the City budget and options for closing the deficit.

An explanation of the “structural deficit”. For example, there is apparent confusion between capital and operating expenditures, as many emails suggest the budget could be balanced by cutting affordable housing, BRT, and other capital projects.

I’m Working On Three Ordinance Changes

Dog Attacks

In response to a [vicious dog attack](#) last spring, Alder Myadze and I authored an ordinance change that would require dog owners who have been cited as a result of their dogs attacking, biting, and injuring another dog or person to muzzle their dogs off premises and keep their dogs physically restrained on premises. Electronic collars and electronic fences would not be acceptable means of physical restraint.

The ordinance change was [introduced](#) at last week’s Council meeting on March 5, & goes to the Board of Health in April for review. It’s likely the item will be returned to Council on April 16 for a vote.

Now a fine is up to \$500 for dog attacks, but there are no additional requirements. This ordinance addresses this gap.

ADU Changes

In 2021 I worked with staff and former alders Patrick Heck and Grant Foster to ease the approval process to build an [accessory dwelling unit \(ADU\)](#). Sometimes referred to as “granny flats,” as many of these additions are meant to accommodate an aging family member, ADUs had been allowed in the city since 2013 as a conditional use. Because the approval process was lengthy and arguably onerous, few were built. In December 2021, [Council approved changes](#) that made ADUs in single-family neighborhoods a permitted use subject to staff review.

Owner-occupancy of either the primary or accessory dwelling unit was required in 2013 and that requirement remained intact with the changes made in 2021. Moreover, ADUs were limited to single-family homes -- duplexes and other multi-family structures were not eligible.

Last year, Council approved the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay District, which allowed owners of single-family

homes within ¼ mile of high-frequency transit routes like South Park and Monroe St to convert to a duplex “by right,” no longer requiring a conditional use. I supported this change to “gentle density,” which allows for an incremental increase in housing units in our neighborhoods.

At the time, [I argued for duplex conversions to be limited to owner occupied homes](#). I did not prevail, and the TOD Overlay District as it stands allows landlords to convert single-family homes to duplexes. My thinking has since evolved and I now believe the owner-occupancy requirement to be unnecessary and overly burdensome. I am therefore co-sponsoring an [ordinance change](#) that would allow ADUs to be built by landlords on properties containing up to 8 units, subject to staff review.

The proposed ordinance change goes to Plan Commission tomorrow, March 11, but the recommended action is referral to the next meeting of the Housing Strategy Committee on March 28 before coming back to Plan Commission on April 8. In other words, it’s very likely that no action will be taken by Plan Commission tomorrow.

Drive-Through Windows

In view of Bay Creek neighborhood concerns about drive-through establishments reducing neighborhood walkability, zoning ordinances have been revisited. District 3 Alder Derek Field and I have worked to clarify rules around such structures. We are proposing a ban on new drive-through only businesses. [This item](#) will appear at the Plan Commission meeting.

City of Madison



Madison Selected for “Nature Everywhere” Communities Initiative

The City of Madison is proud to announce it is one of nineteen communities in the country selected to join the inaugural [Nature Everywhere](#) Communities initiative. The initiative is designed to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn, and play.

Nature Everywhere Communities will receive two years of strategic planning, technical support, and start-up funding to develop and implement community-driven plans for connecting children and families to nature-based experiences and learning.

As part of this initiative, the City of Madison will host a [Nature Everywhere Day](#) event on June 1, 2024. Local organizations are invited to get involved by sponsoring the event or taking part with a nature-based activity or service. For more information, [contact](#) the Madison planning team by May 1, 2024.



Applications Open Friday, March 15 To Be The 2024 Naturalist-in-Residence at Madison Public Library

[Madison Public Library](#) and [Madison Parks](#) are looking for a local naturalist to lead a series of workshops, guided walks, and programs in libraries and city green spaces for six weeks during the summer of 2024.

Educators, birding enthusiasts, scientists, artists, writers, waterkeepers, and more are invited to apply to a paid naturalist residency with the Madison Public Library. The Naturalist-in-Residence will facilitate outdoor programming in Madison's diverse natural areas—including outdoor library spaces—for community members of all ages.

The Naturalist-in-Residence will facilitate or organize a minimum of 10 programs during the residency, and collaborate with library staff to develop accompanying elements like book lists and library displays.

As part of this initiative, the City of Madison will host a [Nature Everywhere Day](#) event on June 1, 2024. Local organizations are invited to get involved by sponsoring the event or taking part with a nature-based activity or service. For more information, [contact](#) the Madison planning team by May 1, 2024. *The Naturalist-in-Residence program is made possible thanks to the [Friends of Madison Public Library](#).*



Clerk's Office Makes Changes to Better Serve Absentee Voters in Care Facilities

The Madison City Clerk's Office coordinated 54 visits to nursing homes and care facilities this week in an effort to better serve absentee voters.

State law requires poll workers to bring absentee voting to absentee requestors in certain nursing homes and care facilities. The City of Madison has 27 of these facilities. A pair of poll workers called Special Voting Deputies (SVDs) visits each facility twice before an election.

- [**Ride the Drive Returns to Promote Health, Sustainability and Community Engagement**](#): Sunday, August 11, from 10 am to 2 pm. Ride the Drive is a free, one-day rain-or-shine event promoting the use of alternative transportation with miles of open streets.
- [**Affordable Connectivity Program**](#): Now is the time to let Congress know how important the ACP is to households in your community. Use the sample social media posts and tag your members of Congress to let them know your organization supports renewed funding for the ACP.

AASPIRE Internship

The City of Madison's [**Affirmative Action Student Professionals in Residence \(AASPIRE\) Internships**](#) are now open for students to [**Apply!**](#)

These paid internships offer students a chance to work for the City of Madison this summer while sharpening skills and getting paid! Interns benefit from:

- Essential skill building
- Hands-on experience
- Bi-weekly pay
- Management level projects
- Networking, and more!

Students must [**Apply**](#) **before April 1, 2024** to be considered for the AASPIRE Internship program.



- **MPD providing up-close look at police work through Community Academy:** The Madison Police Department is now accepting applications for this year's Community Academy. The academy will run 6 consecutive Thursdays starting February 29. The evening will start at 6 pm and conclude no later than 9 pm. The first five weeks will be held at the Madison Police Department's Training Center, 5702 Femrite Rd. The last session will move to the Midtown Police District, 4020 Mineral Point Rd.

All sessions will start at 6:00 pm and end no later than 9:00 pm.

- Thursday, March 28, 2024
- Thursday, April 4, 2024

The academy will include:

- Police Ride Alongs with patrol officers for those who are interested.
- Organizational Structure and Staffing the Streets of Madison
- Community Partnerships
- Use of Force
- Mental Health
- Investigative Services
- Last date is to be determined based on input from attendees!

See the link below for more details, application, and waiver.

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/police/community/academy/>

- **MPD officer finds new 'beat' during job shadow program:** As a patrol officer, Sydney Hanick is used to working a beat. But during a recent shift on the north side, she found herself covering a different kind of beat. One involving a musical mashup and the kids who attend after-school programming through the Kennedy Heights Community Center. This is the first round of the Madison Proximity Project. The program pairs an MPD officer with a community member. The officer shadows the community member, and, in return, that person goes on a police ride-along.

Anyone interested in participating in future rounds of the project can email Madison Police Department's Community Engagement Specialist Alex Ricketts at aricketts@cityofmadison.com.



- **[Metro Transit Info Sessions](#)**: Learn how to get around the city with help from Metro Transit! Several sessions are planned in library locations between January and April 2024. Metro employees will be available for one-on-one conversations in English and Spanish. No registration required; all are welcome!
- **[April 23, 10am - 12pm | Lakeview Library](#)**



Madison Launches New Program to Improve Rental Housing

The City of Madison is excited to announce the launch of an aggressive new effort to help local owners of rental housing finance improvements to their properties. The Rental Rehab Program offers help to owners that need to make major repairs to their properties, implement energy-efficiency upgrades, and comply with building codes and regulations.

Property owners interested in participating in the rental rehab program should contact the City's Community Development Division for **more information at: homeloans@cityofmadison.com** or (608)-266-4719 and visit **www.cityofmadison.com/homeloans**.



2024 VNA meeting schedule

These are mostly on the fourth Wednesday at 6:30, with a few changes noted below. We'll use Zoom through April and consider in-person meetings over the summer and for the annual meeting in November. A few noteworthy items:

- The March and April meetings are combined to April 10 to avoid Spring Break. Usually a slow period anyway.
- The May to October meetings are all on the fourth Weds. and are scheduled in Zoom as "recurring" (one invite below for all). Any in-person locations TBD.

- The November and December meetings are the THIRD Wednesdays, 11/20 & 12/18 to avoid holidays.

Thanks to all of you for your contributions to our neighborhood.

Doug Carson (president)



City of Madison

- [Mayor, Common Council, Madison Police Department Joint Statement on Recent Acts of Vandalism](#): We believe that all residents and visitors of our community should have the right to feel safe on our streets, at their businesses, and in their homes. I urge everyone to help us with that by reporting potential crimes of hate or bias to MPD immediately.
- [Large Items Free with Work Orders for Resource Recovery Charge Ratepayers](#) : Through 2024, Madison residents who pay the Resource Recovery Special Charge will not be charged for items that require a fee when they make their required large item work orders.



Boards, Commissions, and Committee Meetings

All meetings and their details can be found [here](#).

Streets Division Updates

- **Drop-off Site Hours:** Drop-off sites are on winter hours. Check the hours before loading your car. Drop-off site information is available at www.cityofmadison.com/DropOffSites.
- **Winter Information:** Is available at www.cityofmadison.com/Winter



Trash and Recycling

www.cityofmadison.com/DropOffSites

Trash & recycling calendar is available at www.cityofmadison.com/CollectionSchedule.

- **Large Item Pickup:** Large item collection rules changed a few years ago and now you need a work order to get on the crew's pickup schedule. Learn more about the process at www.cityofmadison.com/LargeItem
- **Recycle Right:** Be sure you're putting the right things in your recycling cart. Get the rules at www.cityofmadison.com/recycling.



Electronics Recycling Now Free

The Streets Division no longer charges recycling fees for televisions, computers, laptops, and monitors. Click [here](#) for more information.



Recorded city meetings you have missed can be watched on the on [City Channel](#). If you have questions and/or concerns about the budget, please email Tag Evers at district13@cityofmadison.com

For fast-acting relief, try [slowing down](#).

Lily Tomlin