

Buckley Neighborhood Profile Summary

The residential areas that together make up the Buckley elementary school district represent every phase of Manchester's suburban residential development. As such, the Buckley neighborhood deals with everything from older housing and commercial areas to roaming deer and coyote. A stable neighborhood of mostly single family detached, owner-occupied homes, Buckley neighborhood still has room to grow and so strategies for preserving and enhancing existing neighborhoods and for ensuring compatible growth must be considered.

The residential areas include the houses around the Manchester Green. The stately Victorian homes along East Center Street and in the neighborhood bounded by Parker Street, Middle Turnpike East and East Center Street are among the early streetcar suburb developments, although they were also designed to accommodate automobiles. "Coburn Green" and "Marvin Green" were planned around 1927. This pattern of larger homes on small lots was set before the town adopted zoning regulations in 1938.

Since the adoption of zoning the single family detached pattern has continued from the Manchester Green area to the north. The Green Manor subdivision is typical of post World War II suburban patterns of small houses on small lots on curvilinear streets. Cape cods and ranches dominate these tract developments, and streets are relatively narrow with sidewalks on both sides. Most of the neighborhood between East Center Street and Middle Turnpike East and Lydall Street was developed during the 1950's.

The pattern of single family detached homes continued with homes and lots growing larger as development occurred during the '60's, '70's, and '80's. The Kennedy Road area represented the first wave of the more expansive suburban development trends, with colonials, ranches, and contemporaries mixed in a setting of large wooded lots. The Meadowbrook Fields subdivision off Vernon Street is entering the third phase of its development and continues the single family detached pattern. Homes for middle and upper-middle income households are being built on medium sized lots around a series of wetlands and watercourses. The architecture reflects the colonial and cape cod styles with some variations including the return of front porches, variegated roof lines and wood trim detailing which harken back to the pre-World War II architectural vocabulary.

The single family development pattern is only departed from significantly by the two condominium developments located on Lydall Street: the Ambassador Drive and Cliffside Drive neighborhoods. These condominiums were built at a time when they would have been located on the outer edge of the developed residential area of the Buckley neighborhood. They still represent today some of the finest examples of condominium living in Manchester.

The Buckley neighborhood is virtually fully developed from Vernon Street to the west. From Vernon Street to the east there are some residential streets under development, but there are also large areas of vacant or underdeveloped land or land in agricultural use, as well as town watershed holdings and land owned by the Manchester Land Trust.

As residential development continues in these areas the pattern of single family detached homes should continue to be the dominant residential pattern. However, the lands remaining in the neighborhood are environmentally sensitive. Streambelts, wetlands, and topography combine to create a valuable natural resource. Private land combined with public properties provide a valuable habitat range, water supply protection, and recreational opportunities. If the single family detached development pattern is to continue on undeveloped lands, that development should be at very low densities. The preservation of valuable open spaces coupled with public access which expands the network of habitat and recreational opportunities available in this quadrant of the neighborhood and the community could be secured either through new development regulations, amendments to existing regulations, or acquisition of land or easements.

During Manchester's early years the Manchester Green was the center of commerce. Located on a major transportation route, inns, factories, housing, a schoolhouse, and commercial establishments prevailed at the Green.

Now most of the Green has given way to pavement and many of the older mill buildings are aging and in some disrepair. Some of the earlier historical homes remain in the area, which is evolving into an office and convenience retail/highway oriented business area.

With the location of state government offices in the last several years, the commercial area near the Green and to the east is taking on a sub-regional location characteristic. These commercial properties were originally developed in the 1950's to serve the growing eastern section of Manchester. Located on Route 6/44, they share the same locational advantages which the Green has always shared. As the communities to the east of Manchester continue to grow, the area may take on added importance. The evaluation of the business uses here, and efforts to restore or re-create the aesthetics of the Green, could create a vibrant and attractive eastern gateway into Manchester. The type and extent of commercial activity should be such that it creates that gateway but does not harm the residential neighborhoods to the north and south.

Since most of the Buckley neighborhood area was developed after 1938, the development pattern conforms to the zoning regulations which require a rigid separation of uses. Residential land uses dominate throughout the neighborhood, with industrial uses occurring on the neighborhood's western edge in the Parker Street and Sheldon Road area. Aside from the commercial uses on East Center Street and Middle Turnpike East, the neighborhood is served by a small neighborhood convenience retail area located at Green Road and Parker and Woodbridge Street (which also serves the Bowers' neighborhood). Other than these relatively nearby commercial areas, shopping and services for the neighborhood are found on Tolland Turnpike, the Buckland Hills area, or downtown Manchester.

Open space and recreational opportunities in the neighborhood include the Buckley School grounds, Salters Pond, including the Land Trust property and the town's municipal swimming pool, and the Kennedy Road soccer fields which also serve a community purpose. Great potential exists for hiking and other outdoor recreation activities, represented by the Land Trust holdings at the Risley Reservoir and the town's watershed lands on the eastern portion of the neighborhood. Increasing the use of the Buckley School grounds and the Salters Pond area, and

making tot lot improvements at the Kennedy Road soccer fields, could expand recreational opportunities in the neighborhood.

The neighborhood is served by an irregular grid system of north/south and east/west streets. Major roads include Parker Street, Vernon Street, Lydall Street, and Middle Turnpike East. This arterial and collector street network gives neighborhood residents convenient access to interstate highways, shopping, and services. Traffic management on some of these streets, such as Vernon Street and Middle Turnpike East, should focus on controlling speeding and attempting to reduce conflicts between automobiles and residential properties.

Pedestrian circulation is well served in the neighborhood with sidewalks on both sides of the streets in the older subdivisions and sidewalks on at least one side of the street in the newer subdivisions. Installation of new sidewalks along such streets as Parker Street, Woodbridge Street and Lydall Street between Esquire Drive and Parker Street would create the major pedestrian system linking residents to recreational opportunities. Sidewalk and curb installation on these streets would also serve to more clearly separate residential from automobile activity enhancing the quality of life.

Because the Buckley neighborhood area covers over 1,800 acres and represents such a diversity of development periods, it includes a diverse population. Residents describe themselves as “middle of the road” people, mostly homeowners, and mostly young couples or young elderly. Households with children or married couples are the dominant type, and income ranges fall into the middle and upper middle income categories.

The residential areas are relatively stable, with a steady turnover of homeownership. The older areas such as Green Manor represent the starter home market while areas such as Meadowbrook Fields or the Kennedy Road area represent the move up or second home market for the neighborhood. There are limited rental opportunities in the neighborhood, with some multi-family projects on Middle Turnpike East or perhaps a rental market in some of the condominium units.

Neighborhood housing conditions are generally very good. In terms of physical improvements special attention should be paid to improving sidewalks and curbing in some older neighborhoods, and improving maintenance at the Buckley School grounds. There are some problem properties in the neighborhood and code enforcement should be pursued on an as needed basis.

Many residents are interested in finding ways to increase the sense of neighborhood and community. The Buckley School is the one institution which brings together the various residential neighborhoods. Having the PTA work with local scout troops or the Senior Center in joint projects, such as beautification projects at the school, might be a way to encourage socialization. As the school board pursues its school choice program, neighborhood residents might get more involved in developing the theme for Buckley Elementary School. Because the neighborhood is so large it may be necessary to approach this in two ways. One would be for interested residents to encourage smaller groups around sub-neighborhoods. One formal

mechanism would be for the police department's community relations officer to help form block watches. More informally, residents could organize block parties, neighborhood cleanup, or meetings on issues like speeding on local streets.

Buckley School is operating at capacity and also serves a large special education population. Future improvements to the school should take the special education population into account. Any improvement program at Buckley School should also involve an evaluation of parking needs and consideration for developing more park-like or recreational settings at the school.

The Buckley neighborhood is stable, safe and has a high quality of life. With improvements to streets and sidewalks, school buildings and grounds, development of new recreation opportunities, and sensitive and compatible residential and commercial growth, the neighborhood will continue to be a desirable place to live and raise a family.