

## **Keeney Neighborhood Description**

The Keeney Neighborhood covers 2,384 acres, and represents the more recent stages of Manchester's suburban residential development. The neighborhood effectively comprises the south central section of the town, bounded on the north by Woodside, Wetherell and Hackmatack Streets, and by the town line to the south and west. The Keeney neighborhood's eastern boundary extends to the Nike Site.

The neighborhood development pattern is predominately residential, and is consistent with the fact that most of the neighborhood was developed after 1938, when the town adopted zoning regulations which called for strict segregation of land uses and development types. During the 1800s development was in the form of homesteads and farms. Between 1900 and 1939 some single family residential development took place in the Horace Street and Bridge Street area on a grid street pattern.

After 1940 residential development continued southward from where I-384 is now in the form of single and multi-family developments. As large tracts were sold and subdivided, the prevailing development pattern transitioned to larger houses on somewhat larger lots located on curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs.

The residential areas in the Keeney neighborhood are generally in excellent condition. Most homes and yards are well-maintained. Slightly more than 67% of the homes are single family attached or detached and 86% are owner occupied.

One unique feature of the Keeney neighborhood is the amount and type of opens spaces remaining in the neighborhood, mostly utility rights-of-way; large former agricultural parcels; vacant town-owned and municipal watershed lands; and, Manchester Land Conservation Trust properties. There may be an opportunity to work with interested parties in a collaborative effort to provide additional connections to extend the bikeway and trail network both in the neighborhood and for the community as a whole.

In a parallel effort to preserve open space and recreational areas in this section of town the undeveloped parcels south of Bush Hill Road should be developed following conservation development principles. This would allow development to proceed at the permitted densities, but in a way which would result in contiguous undisturbed areas for passive and active recreational use, as well as habitat, conservation and farmland protection. This development option is consistent with the recommended goals in the open space and recreation portion of the town's proposed Plan of Development. Since this area also contains some of the least active agricultural land, acquisition could also be considered.

With the exception of the Keeney School grounds and the Nike Site, there are no active recreation areas in this section of town. During the neighborhood meetings residents expressed an interest in increasing the amount of playscape equipment at the Keeney School, investigating the possibilities for more recreational options at the Nike Site, and the development of neighborhood parklets.

The main roadway system serving the neighborhood includes Hillstown Road, Wetherell Street, Hackmatack Street, Bush Hill Road, Keeney Street and I-384. These streets are the main east-west and north-south connections for neighborhood residents to the interstate highway and the town center, and for Glastonbury residents as well.

There are few east-west connections between the sub-neighborhoods. During our planning workshops residents expressed support for increasing the number of inter and intra neighborhood east-west connections. This lack of continuity between many of these sub-neighborhoods and subdivisions was also expressed as an issue during the subcommittee work on the transportation component of the plan of development.

Providing connections between existing residential subdivisions would facilitate leaf and snow removal, emergency medical services, fire and police response, and school bus routing. Many cul-de-sacs were constructed to facilitate future connections at the direction of the town and Planning and Zoning Commission. Increased interconnections would also provide residents with alternative routes out of and into the neighborhood. Currently all large residential subdivisions have their sole access via Keeney Street.

Residents also observed that vehicle volumes and speed have been increasing on Hillstown Road and particularly Keeney Street. These streets are the most direct route for traffic generated from the south of Manchester to access the interstate highway system.

As Keeney Street continues to serve not only residential traffic but thru traffic, bypass lanes at key intersections should be considered in an effort to increase safety for motorists and pedestrians. Residents also suggested that the town work with the school bus company to evaluate bus stop locations and consider having children wait for buses on side streets as opposed to Keeney Street.

One option for improving pedestrian safety on Keeney Street would be the installation of a continuous sidewalk network to Keeney School on both sides of the street. This would serve to eliminate the need for children to cross the increasingly busy Keeney Street to catch a school bus as a result of the lack of sidewalks.

The sidewalks that exist in the Keeney neighborhood are generally in good condition, which is not surprising since they are relatively new. One exception to this are the sidewalks in the Horace Street and Bridge Street area which were installed in the 1960's and are now in need of minor maintenance.

In most of the residential subdivisions off of I-384 there are only sidewalks on one side of the street, if at all. In some subdivisions given the low residential density and lack of true destinations, sidewalks may not be needed at all.

Installing continuous pedestrian connections on the main routes through the neighborhood (Hillstown Road, Keeney Street, Wetherell Street, Garden Grove Road) should be a priority. The installation of sidewalks on Markwood Lane and Garden Grove Road should be a priority because presently the school must provide double van trips to transport a large number of students who aren't "walkers" only because they lack a continuous pedestrian way to school. It is important to note that on more rural streets, like Bush Hill Road, stone dust bike paths or walkways provide the same links as traditional concrete sidewalks but would be more in keeping with the rural character of the area.

Residents feel secure in their neighborhoods and appreciate the pride that the neighbors have in their homes and properties. In some instances residents lack the strong, informal social networks between neighbors as once was common. This is due in part to changing lifestyles, the increase in families with two working parents, and a surge of new subdivisions in recent years. Providing additional parklets and other recreation areas within the Keeney neighborhood may provide an opportunity for the development of social networks simply by increasing informal socialization opportunities.

The Keeney neighborhood is a developing yet stable and desirable place to live. The neighborhood has a higher percentage of school age children and adults between the ages of 40 and 59 than the town as a whole. Approximately 73% of the households in the neighborhood are married couples.

In the Keeney neighborhood approximately 50% of the total neighborhood population is between 25 and 59 years of age. Over time there will be a gradual turn-over of houses as older residents move out and up in the housing market providing an opportunity for younger families which will serve to revitalize the housing stock as well as add diversity to the age group distribution of the neighborhood population.

There is considerable vacant land in the Keeney neighborhood, much of it beyond public water and sewer facilities. The area along Keeney Street should continue to develop in the low density single family detached pattern. Land along Wetherell Street could provide medium density housing, but should remain single family detached with slightly smaller lot sizes. Along Bush Hill Road, very low density and conservation development is appropriate given wetlands and agricultural lands in the area.

The neighborhood has a higher median household income than the town with fewer households in the low income brackets and more households in the upper income brackets than the town as a whole.

In terms of the public infrastructure, neighborhood roads, sidewalks, and other public facilities are generally in good or very good condition. Missing or deteriorated sidewalks, especially in older subneighborhoods in the northern end of the neighborhood, are the only exception.

The Keeney School is a focal point in the neighborhood, providing a highly regarded elementary education. It is one of only two locations in the neighborhood with recreational facilities for children. The Keeney School property is well utilized after school hours, but there may be opportunities to offer additional programs or activities here in the future.

Presently the school is operating at capacity and four of its classrooms are used by town-wide programs: Head Start, preschool special education, and primary and intermediate treatments.

In recent years, due to the economy and redistricting, there has been an increase in the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunches at the Keeney School. These children may benefit from a breakfast program as well. Over time the changing demands for social and other support services in the neighborhood may have implications for staff training in these new needs.

The Board of Education is currently undertaking a study of school facilities, identifying work needed to eliminate code violations and improve conditions of the physical plants. As part of any physical improvement program at the Keeney School the recommendations of the study should be taken into consideration.