

Martin Neighborhood Description

The large dairy and produce farms that once dominated the land in this southeastern section of Manchester began giving way to large lot, large home suburban subdivisions in the mid to late 1960's, a development pattern that continues today. As a result the great majority of the housing is single family detached and in very good condition.

Reflecting the tastes of the times, most homes are modern ranches or colonials and there is a significant collection of contemporary architectural styles as well. Older Victorian era homes are found on Charter Oak Street or at the upper end of South Main Street, and in the remaining farmsteads sprinkled throughout the neighborhood.

Most of the land in the southeastern area is developed, and so we would expect that the housing types located here as part of new development would continue the large lot single family residential pattern. The only exception to this might be senior housing such as assisted living or more likely independent living in deed restricted developments.

The boundaries for the Martin neighborhood follow the Martin school district boundaries, but the boundary may not reflect how residents view the neighborhood or how the neighborhood actually functions. For example, I-384 is a substantial barrier separating the older single family and duplex homes and large apartment or condominium complexes on Charter Oak Street from the newer, single family neighborhoods south of I-384 and Spring Street. Similarly, the town's watershed lands, Globe Hollow swimming pool and reservoir, Mount Nebo recreation area and the water treatment plant create both a natural and land use separation between the developed residential area south of I-384 and the village area at the upper end of South Main Street including Lewis, Warren and Sunset Streets and the early suburban enclaves of Lakewood Circle and Comstock Street and Arvine Place.

The Martin neighborhood is home to many community recreational facilities. These include the Mount Nebo field; Globe Hollow swimming pool; Camp Kennedy (a recreational area specifically dedicated for use by those with physical disabilities); Case Mountain; and the Manchester Country Club and golf course. Town owned watershed lands are a major open space and recreational feature, mainly for hiking and increasingly for mountain biking. Because these recreational areas are located along major collector or arterial streets they do not create negative traffic impacts for residents in the Martin neighborhood.

Of the recreational facilities mentioned above, Case Mountain and the town watershed lands pose special problems for nearby residents. While these properties are valued assets they also attract teenagers for late evening gatherings and, increasingly, mountain bike enthusiasts who use the trails during daylight and nighttime hours and even create new trails (apparently without authorization). Policies which better manage and control these activities need to be developed and enforced.

Martin School, located on Dartmouth Road at the western edge of the largest residential section of the Martin neighborhood, provides opportunities for neighborhood based recreation.

Improved playscapes and programming at Martin School with an emphasis on neighborhood activities would fill a need identified by residents.

A related issue is safe pedestrian access to the school property especially for school children. Creating a sidewalk/bikeway system on major streets with the school and Mount Nebo/Globe Hollow areas as destinations should be part of any plan to increase neighborhood recreational opportunities. This will have the additional benefit of providing opportunities for increased socialization among neighborhood residents.

The neighborhood is very convenient to the interstate highway, downtown Manchester, Highland Park Market, and other shopping and services. This convenient location does not compromise the quiet rural setting enjoyed by neighborhood residents. Residents feel safe in their homes and on their streets, and feel they can trust and count on their neighbors if needed.

On more than one occasion during the planning process the term “country club” was used to describe how residents believed the area was perceived by non-neighborhood residents. While the Martin neighborhood does have higher median house values and more higher income households than Manchester as a whole, the residents felt the “country club” reference was an unflattering and unfair characterization of them and their neighborhood.

The neighborhood has a higher median household income than the town with a significantly greater percentage of households earning over \$75,000 a year compared to the town overall. (30.5% v. 12.6%).

Diversity and age of neighborhood residents tends to differ from subneighborhood to subneighborhood, but in the Martin neighborhood approximately 50% of the total resident population is between 25 and 59 years old. Of this age group, many of the younger households consist of families with two working parents. We expect the neighborhood to remain stable over the next ten to 15 years as these households raise their families. However, this family type also can increase demands for other services from the town and the school system, most particularly before and after school care and full day kindergartens.

The Martin neighborhood contains primarily residential streets which for the most part interconnect the individual subdivisions that developed over time. In some cases these subdivision streets create long and irregular residential blocks. Spring Street is the major east/west collector and Gardner Street a major north/south collector. Gardner Street’s width varies depending on whether recent (1970’s on) subdivisions were required to widen a portion of Gardner Street.

To the south between Fern Street and the Glastonbury town line Gardner Street is narrow with poor geometry. While this section of the road serves only 40 to 50 homes it is also the only road to Camp Merrie-Wood, the local Girl Scout campground, and is often used by motorists traveling north from Glastonbury. Poor road conditions, water pooling during storm events, a narrow street and speeding vehicles create potentially hazardous conditions.

Improving road width and geometry would improve road safety and address drainage issues during storm events. However, because many homes are close to the street the ability to widen the road might be limited, and speeding may always be perceived as a problem for residents located close to the street. Suggestions by residents to close off Gardner Street and abandon Line Street are extreme ways of dealing with the problem. (It was noted by residents that Line Street, while it is not heavily used for residential traffic, is a convenient illegal dumping site and abandonment and blocking off of the road may eliminate this type of activity.)

The other street in the neighborhood which deserves special mention is Fern Street, primarily because it remains a very scenic rural road, especially as it passes through town watershed lands and the golf course. Streets like Fern and the lower portion of Gardner could be considered scenic roads, and remain relatively narrow without granite curbing and with gravel paths or bikeways instead of sidewalks to maintain their scenic rural character while providing pedestrian connections.

Many of the residential areas in the Martin neighborhoods have sidewalks on only one side of the street. This is consistent with the fact that most subdivisions were developed either before sidewalks were required or after the regulations allowed sidewalks only on one side of the street. Many of the newer residential streets have large paved areas, between 30 and 32 feet, and most of the destinations in the Martin neighborhood are single family homes. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on a major system of sidewalks or other paths connecting residential neighborhoods to collector streets and local destinations, in particular the Martin School/Globe Hollow/ Mount Nebo areas. A bikeway along South Main Street and beautification of the Globe Hollow causeway are also recommended to extend the town's greenway system and take advantage of the scenic value of the Globe Hollow Reservoir as a gateway to Manchester's center.

The Martin School is one of the unifying features of the neighborhood. Located on Dartmouth Road, the Martin School grounds abut town watershed land and Camp Kennedy, creating an opportunity for neighborhood oriented recreation and hiking connections to Camp Kennedy and the Globe Hollow/Mount Nebo area.

The Martin School was built in 1968 and is one of the youngest physical plants in Manchester. All of the classrooms currently are used and, while the school is in generally good condition, routine maintenance and upgrading telecommunications are important aspects of modernization of the school. The May 1997 School Facilities Survey and Evaluation recommends enlarging the library and adding six classrooms for the early childhood special education program which is currently located at the Buckley School.

Martin School had excess capacity, and in 1997 a portion of the Highland Park School district was included in the Martin School district. Several years earlier a portion of the Nathan Hale district was also included in the Martin School district. The effect of this redistricting will be to more fully use available classroom space. It will also increase the numbers of children eligible for free and reduced lunches in the school population.

