

Bowers Neighborhood Profile Summary

The Bowers neighborhood is a highly desirable, stable residential area. Its narrow, tree lined residential streets and variety of residential architecture create an attractive, interesting and comfortable sense of place. Its sidewalk system and pedestrian accessible schools, playgrounds and neighborhood shopping create opportunities for informal socialization. The fact that so many residents and their children use the sidewalks creates a sense of familiarity among residents and therefore a sense of security for the neighborhood.

The residents recognize these features, and the convenient location of the neighborhood relative to major highways and shopping areas, as distinct advantages. They also have a sense of community. As one resident put it, the area is a close knit community with “down to earth people who live within their means.”

Homes, lawns, and landscaping are well maintained virtually throughout the Bowers neighborhood. Because the area is mostly single family detached homes there is a higher owner-occupancy rate here than townwide. The neighborhood serves as an ideal place for first time homebuyers to enter the housing market, and especially for young couples or families. The neighborhood also remains home to many longer term residents who would be considered “young elderly”. Given the size of the houses, it is possible for young families to live comfortably in these buildings, but they are not so large that the “empty nesters” find it difficult to own and maintain the properties. This combination of young families investing in their new homes and longer term families making home improvements is constantly rejuvenating the neighborhood.

The neighborhood’s physical development pattern is bracketed by two events related to local growth management regulations. Most of the housing was built after the town adopted zoning regulations (1938) which reserved large portions of the neighborhood for single family detached homes. The neighborhood streets and lots were for the most part laid out before the town adopted subdivision regulations (1947). The result is a traditional grid street system with small lots and narrow streets, but single family detached homes make up the majority of the development. Multi-family and commercial uses are limited to locations on or near the major arterial or collector streets which form the boundaries of the neighborhood.

The grid street system does have its drawbacks. Because the streets are generally straight and often level for long distances, and because pavements are in generally good condition throughout the neighborhood, there is a tendency for some motorists to use excessive speed here. While traffic

volumes are not excessive on the inner residential streets (such as Princeton, Henry, Tanner and Green Road) the major issue is speed control.

There are a variety of mechanisms which can be used to deal with speed control under the general heading of “traffic calming”. This could involve increased enforcement of traffic ordinances and laws combined with special design features at selected locations. Design features may include “chokers” which narrow the street at certain locations; appropriate use of one way streets; encouraging landscaping which would tend to visually “narrow” the street; or providing rumble strips or platforms which would cause motorists to reduce speed. Traffic calming should be investigated for its applicability in other neighborhoods as well. Another option would be an aggressive public information campaign among neighborhood residents, perhaps posting appropriate signage in the neighborhood encouraging motorists to slow down not only because it’s the law but because it’s the “right” thing to do.

Sidewalk conditions in the neighborhood are generally good, although there are certain locations where sidewalks are in need of replacement. More importantly, there are some streets where there are no sidewalks at all or streets where the sidewalk system is incomplete. Areas such as Green Road, Woodbridge Street, Parker Street and portions of Princeton Street near Bowers school in particular are places where extension of the sidewalk system to complete pedestrian linkages are more critical.

A unique neighborhood asset is the relationship of the neighborhood to the Bowers Elementary, Illing Middle, and Manchester High Schools. Many children can, (and did), walk to school for their entire educational careers. This proximity also provides convenient access to the major neighborhood open spaces which school sites provide. Playgrounds, tot lots, soccer and little league fields, basketball courts, sledding hills and areas for free play such as kite flying or frisbee throwing are all convenient and available.

Because the school properties are such a dominant neighborhood resource, their physical condition and appearance take on added importance. Conditions of lawns, location of dumpsters and trash cans, routine maintenance, pick up of litter and debris, and graffiti and vandalism control are important signals to residents of the health of the neighborhood.

Because the residents view each other as a source of strength and pride, and generally appear to hold high standards for neighborly behavior and property maintenance, behavior which fails to meet these standards is particularly aggravating. Loud car radios, barking and roaming dogs, loud late night

parties, dog litter, general litter and trash, and foul language are among the situations found to be particularly offensive and detrimental to the neighborhood by its residents. While in some cases town ordinances are in place to deal with these issues, it may be that neighborhood peer pressure is the most effective way to address them. A public information campaign or neighborhood notebook approach could help reinforce the standards of neighborhood behavior. It was also suggested that the schools, in particular Bowers and Illing (teenagers seem to be a particular concern here), could reinforce the proper messages about behavior and respect for people and property to school students. The PTA, school administration and teachers could work together to promote neighborhood beautiful and good behavior campaigns. The town administration, through the planning department, police department, and other divisions, could also work with the schools to include an appreciation and understanding of the neighborhood and community into the school curriculum.

The Bowers neighborhood has considerable strengths both in its physical form and appearance and in the character and value of its residents. With a concerted effort to cooperate on such areas as traffic management and improvements to sidewalks and pavement, some limited housing code enforcement activity, and encouraging more active cooperation and involvement between neighborhood residents, the school system and the town government, we should be able to maintain the Bowers neighborhood as a stable residential area with a high quality of life.

