

Alliant Energy Center Community Organizations Forum

Meeting Summary

October 12, 2023

To assist the Alliant Energy Center Redevelopment Committee in completing an updated market study and master plan for the Alliant Center, and to assist in its future planning efforts, the Committee organized a forum with leaders of community organizations located in South Madison and/or that serve historically underrecognized communities including racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The meeting was held at the Urban League of Greater Madison on South Park Street. A total of 53 individuals attended representing 43 different organizations not otherwise associated with the County or the project. A complete list of all attendees is included as Attachment A. A complimentary dinner was provided by Centerplate, the Alliant Center's contract caterer.

The meeting began with a welcome by Dr. Ruben Anthony, Urban League CEO and President, followed by an overview of the Redevelopment Committee membership and planning activities by its chair, Dane County Supervisor Chuck Erickson. The Alliant Energy Center Executive Director, Adam Heffron, then provided a brief history of the Center and an overview of the Center's staffing, recruitment, and contracting.

Following the opening presentations, participants broke into groups to address the following issues/questions:

1. How can the Alliant Energy Center create physical, economic, and social connections and relationships that leverage existing and future investments and programming on the Campus with those in the South Park Street corridor for the benefit of South Side residents, businesses, and institutions?
2. How can the Alliant Energy Center, its contractors, vendors, and possible future uses and development on the Campus better serve the needs of South Side residents and underrecognized communities?

Three groups addressed the first issue, and three addressed the second. Each group had about 8-12 participants who self-facilitated the discussion and took notes. Discussions lasted for about 50 minutes, after which each group made a brief presentation of their key ideas. In most cases, these were captured on flip charts, but some also were taken electronically and sent to the meeting organizers following the meeting.

The following is a summary of some of the key and overlapping ideas from the groups as taken from their notes and the presentations they made at the meeting. A full transcription of the notes (both those provided on the flip charts and electronically) is attached as Attachment B. This information is being provided to the consultant team conducting the market study and master plan update and will be used by the Redevelopment Committee as it reviews the outcome of the study and determines next steps. It also will be used by the Alliant Energy Center staff and County as the basis for further but more specific discussions with meeting participants and others over the next year and beyond related to both of these topics.



▲ Dane County Supervisor Chuck Erickson and Dr. Ruben Anthony of the Greater Madison Urban League welcome forum participants

▼ 53 individuals representing 43 different organizations participated in the event



Breakout Group #1: Enhancing Connections and Synergies with South Side Institutions and Investments

How can the Alliant Energy Center create physical, economic, and social connections and relationships that leverage existing and future investments and programming on the Campus with those in the South Park Street corridor for the benefit of South Side residents, businesses, and institutions? Questions to consider include:

- How to enhance *physical* connections between South Park Street, the Alliant Center, and the lakefront?
- How to enhance *economic* connections between South Park Street, the Alliant Center, and the lakefront?
- How to enhance *social* connections between South Park Street, the Alliant Center, and the lakefront?
- How can investment in the Alliant Center Campus be of the *greatest benefit* to South Side residents, businesses, and institutions?
- What strategies can be used to *minimize unintended displacement* of South Side residents and businesses?
- What *other organizations and individuals* should be part of these discussions going forward?



▲ *A group discusses how the Alliant Energy Center can better establish connections with South Side institutions and investments*

Brief Overview of Key Ideas and Overlapping Themes

Physical and Social Connectivity

The Alliant Center is an “island” that is physically, socially, and economically detached from the surrounding community. It’s hard to access from the surrounding area and local residents do not feel welcome on the property during most events or when the Center is not being used. Ideas to consider for improving connectivity include:

- Improve and open up additional pedestrian and bicycle connections, particularly to the neighborhoods to the west and across John Nolen Drive and Lake Monona to the east.
- Improve transit connections to the neighborhoods, South Park Street, and the downtown.
- Provide recreational facilities on the Campus grounds that locals could use, and minimize the use of Quann Park for Alliant Center events (both the amount of area and time).

Programming

The Alliant Center has several successful, long-term events that should continue, but the Center needs to look forward in terms of attracting events that will appeal to current and future community needs and interests. As Dane County continues to grow and diversify, ideas to consider for expanding programming to locals and diverse residents include:

- The Center needs to identify and encourage existing and new event promoters to expand the range of entertainment, education, and sports offerings, particularly those that would appeal more to diverse communities.
- Make empty space available to local non-profits to provide low/no cost events targeted more toward local and diverse audiences.
- Consider some type of multiplex, or use of buildings when otherwise not being used, that could host a variety of educational and entertainment events on an ongoing basis to address local needs and maintain continuous activity on the Campus when other events are not booked.

Economic Impact

The Alliant Center has a significant economic impact on Madison and the larger region, but those in South Madison are not sharing in the benefits. Further, the County is not able to directly capture many of the additional tax revenues to help fund improvements and maintenance of the facilities. Ideas to consider as the Center looks to increase partnerships and opportunities for residents and institutions in South Madison include:

- Identify more local vendors in food and other services that could participate in formal or informal events (like a food truck night), including when the Campus otherwise is not being used.
- Ensure that the Alliant Center and contractor/vender employees are paid a living wage and rely less on part-time workers.
- Work with South Madison businesses to develop strategies to better understand and align their business offerings with the needs of event attendees and to promote the businesses to attendees.
- Investigate other public and private investments that could be made in the South Park Street corridor that would be of interest to locals and out of towners (such as a museum or gallery, etc.) to draw them to the area.
- Work with the Madison Metropolitan School District and area non-profit, job training entities focused on underrecognized communities to create an employment pipeline for youth and area residents.
- Work with the City of Madison, other area local governments, and the state to explore opportunities for Dane County to capture more of the increased tax revenues (such as sales and lodging taxes) to help support improvements to Alliant Center facilities.

Community Engagement

The forum was a good start, but the Alliant Center needs to create and pursue a more clearly defined and sustained effort to engage with South Madison institutions and historically underrecognized communities. Meeting participants are willing to engage further on these issues if they can be assured that they will be seriously considered and put into action. Ideas to consider include:

- Make community engagement a priority – consider hiring or assigning this to a specific Alliant Center staff member to lead the effort who has roots/connections to the community.
- Be more clear about how the planning process will be conducted and how the community will be meaningfully engaged over the long term.
- Consider the creation of a committee representing South Side Madison organizations, residents, and underrecognized communities to advise the Redevelopment Committee and Alliant Center staff on future planning and operations at the Center.

Breakout Group #2: Enhancing Connections and Opportunities for Underrepresented Communities

How can the Alliant Energy Center, its contactors and vendors, and possible future uses and development on the Campus better serve the needs of South Side residents and underrecognized communities? Aspects to consider include:

1. Employment Opportunities
 - How can the Alliant Center increase dissemination of job openings to underrepresented communities?
 - Which organizations can the Alliant Center partner with to assist in recruiting employees from underrepresented communities?
 - What job training needs are there to increase the number of qualified applicants?
 - Which organizations can the Alliant Center partner with for job training?
2. Business Contracting Opportunities
 - How can the Alliant Center increase dissemination of vendor/contractor opportunities to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises?
 - How can the Alliant Center's contractor procurement process be improved to attract more DBE's?

3. Accessibility, Events, and Activities

- What types of events would be of interest to underrecognized communities?
- Which organizations are likely to organize and promote such events?
- Outside of formal events, are there certain types of activities that the Alliant Center could host or spaces the Center or others on the Campus could make available that would better serve the needs of underrepresented communities?
- What enhancements to the Campus or operations would make the Alliant Center feel more accessible and welcoming to all residents and visitors?

Brief Overview of Key Ideas and Overlapping Themes

Employment/Contracting Opportunities

Some participants felt Dane County does a nice job with recruiting from underrepresented communities, but most felt more could be done particularly in recruiting younger people and helping new and veteran employees advance in their skills and positions once employed by the Alliant Energy Center. Ideas to consider include:

- Developing formal training programs and templates for initial employment and advancement:
 - Being clearer on what disqualifies employment
 - Provide documents in multiple languages
- Create better connections between City of Madison, County, Madison College, and others for recruitment and training:
 - Work with disconnected youth – MMSD and other school districts
 - Involve 14+-year-old youth to help training and create pathways
 - Be socially innovative with schools and volunteers
 - Provide on-the-job experience, apprenticeships, internships
 - Provide scholarships for higher education for underprivileged
 - Recruit from Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Partner with knowledgeable people in organizations such as:
 - Urban League
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Madison College/UW special programs
 - Churches and other community-based organizations
 - LGBTQ+ organizations
 - Youth-based organizations (Urban Triage, Common Wealth, Boys and Girl Club, Latino Academy of Workforce Development, Operation Fresh Start)
- Expand communication channels and methods of job opportunities:
 - Increase community outreach about significance/community impacts of big events
 - Provide documents in multiple languages
 - Go to indigenous communities' events
- Prepare and disseminate annual employment reports:
 - How many BIPOC (minority and veteran) people are involved in events and set goals to increase
 - Address strategies to overcome structural racism in systems

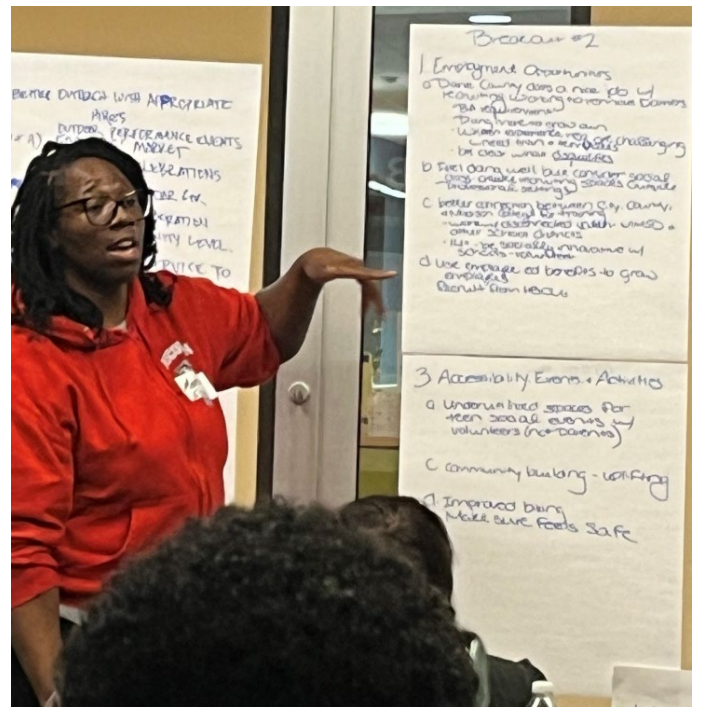


▲ *A group discusses how the Alliant Energy Center can better meet the needs of South Side residents and underrecognized communities*

Accessibility, Events, and Activities

Given that buildings and spaces at the Alliant Center are frequently vacant or underutilized, participants wondered if they could be made available to the South Madison community and community organizations at no or reduced cost to host educational, social, and recreational events. In addition, consideration should be given to Campus enhancements that would be accessible and welcoming and of interest/service to both Alliant Center event attendees and area residents. Ideas include:

- Install welcoming signage at entries (and in other locations) in multiple languages
- Break down physical and aesthetic barriers:
 - Improve biking and pedestrian connections – make sure they feel safe
 - Improve transit connections
- Provide amenities/make improvements that benefit the neighboring community:
 - Playground at Lyckberg Park
 - Meeting space
 - Use underutilized spaces for teen social events with volunteers
 - Land bridge over John Nolen Drive
- Attract community-relevant health focused and other needed education events:
 - Can the Alliant Center function as the much-needed South Side Community Center?
 - Make space affordable to the community for events
- Provide more diverse events and encourage attendance by more diverse audiences:
 - Provide vouchers to underrecognized communities to attend events
 - Quinceaneras
 - Outdoor performance events
 - Farmers' market
 - Cultural celebrations
 - Focus on “belonging” not just “welcoming”
- Give more than lip service to community input – let members of the community organize and lead discussions:
 - Create a calendar for coordination/collaboration with neighbors
 - Create an advisory committee including adjoining neighbors and underrepresented communities



▲ A participant shares her breakout group's ideas