



AMBER ARNOLD PHOTOS, STATE JOURNAL

Lailah Price-Pierce, 12, right, sells her homemade lotion to her mom, Nija Stanford, left, with her sister, Rae Price-Pierce, 13, during the last day of a business camp through CEOs of Tomorrow at Madison Area Technical College's Goodman South Campus. The campus is the first of a half-dozen major projects bringing education, economic, cultural and social opportunities that promise to transform the South Side.

No stopping a revival

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Madison has never seen anything like this.

Ambitious initiatives happening at once — Madison Area Technical College's Goodman South campus, nonprofit One City Schools, the Urban League of Greater Madison's Black Business Hub, the Center for Black Excellence and Culture, a new Centro Hispano, and Mount Zion Baptist's Family Life Center — promise to raise the South Side and the Black and brown experience in a city notorious for

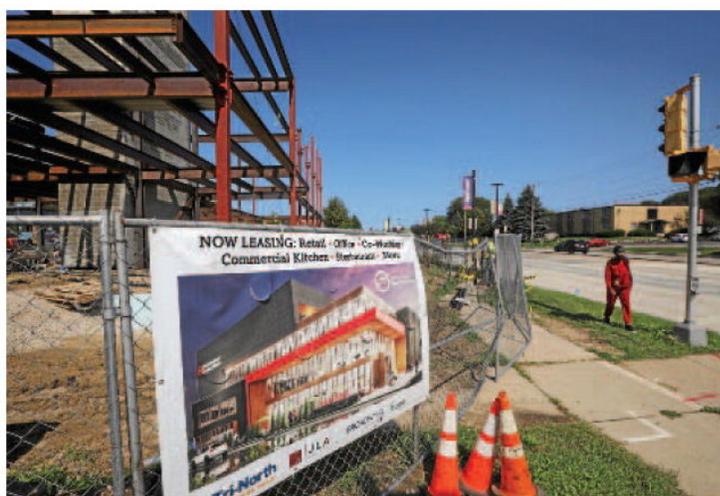
racial disparities and inequity.

Shaped by Black and Hispanic leaders and totaling more than \$150 million, the projects are unique but intertwined, bringing unprecedented educational, economic, cultural and social opportunities, and an essential sense of welcoming and place. In the long term, leaders who voice a love for the city despite historic inequities hope to change Madison itself.

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WATCH: Leaders talk about revitalization of South Madison. Point your smartphone at the QR code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**



Construction on the Urban League of Madison's \$25.5 million Black Business Hub at the Village on Park mall.

■ **Map:** Scan the South Side's progress. **A13**

South Side

From A1

Most of the work is unfolding in the lower South Park Street corridor, the cradle of the city's Black community and home to the highest concentration of Hispanic residents in Dane County.



Anthony

"People are listening, hearing, helping," Urban League president Ruben Anthony said. "This collection of projects is going to transform the city."

The efforts are attracting public investment and private giving on a scale unseen on the South Side.

The Goodman Foundation and Ascendium Education Group each gave \$10 million to help build MATC's new campus. In 2021, philanthropist Pleasant Rowland donated \$14 million to help buy and convert a Beltline office building into the centerpiece of One City Schools. In February, Gov. Tony Evers announced awards of \$5 million apiece for the Black Business Hub and Center for Black Excellence and Culture, and \$4.85 million for Centro Hispano.

There's much more investment involving the city and county and powerhouse businesses and foundations that's creating a synergy some say could make the South Side a destination and Madison a model for minority community renaissance.

"I don't know another city that's doing this with this kind of energy and leadership," Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway said. "It's certainly unprecedented in Madison's history."

The initiatives reflect a unified approach to confronting disparities and inequities experienced in the Black and Hispanic communities here for generations, a grim reality that many say pushes young adults away and makes it hard to attract and retain talent.

In 2013, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families landmark "Race to Equity" report examined 40 indicators of well-being for Dane County residents, mostly covering the years 2007 to 2011, and found that in nearly every category Black residents fared far worse than white residents — "rock bottom" nationally.

The report shook some in the white community, and actions followed, but many issues persist.

From 2015 to 2019, the poverty rate for Black children was nearly six times higher than for white children in Dane County. One of three Black children live in poverty in Madison, according to federal data.

In the Madison schools, just 22.3% of Black third- through 11th-graders tested proficient or better in English language arts in 2020-21 compared to 33.7% of Hispanic students, 83.7% of white students, and 66.9% of Asian students. Similar disparities exist in math.

Nationally, 2.2% of businesses with more than one employee are Black owned, but just 0.4% are Black owned in Dane County.

Due to income gaps and high rent, the Black community is the only predominant racial or ethnic group in the city where the typical household can't afford median rent, according to the city's Housing Snapshot report for 2022. Only about 15% of Black households own their own home, lowest among all demographic groups in the city.

Last year, Black residents accounted for 42% of adult arrests by Madison police, compared to 46% for white people and 8% for Hispanic people, the department's 2021 annual report says. The disparities are worse for juveniles, it says. In 2020, the city population of 269,840 was 69% white, 7.2% Black, 8.7% Hispanic and 9.5% Asian.

"There has always been a lack of regionalized resources in Madison for young people of color led by people of color and controlled by people of color," said Michael Johnson, president and CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Dane County, which has long served the South Side and raised nearly \$30 million toward a \$35 million regional workforce training center to be created at 5225 Verona Road in Fitchburg.

'A different life'

Attention to the South Side has come slowly.

In 2004, the city bought the worn, former Villager Mall, 2300 S. Park St., determined to remake it as an attractive, vibrant, multi-use space. The renamed Village on Park now hosts a mix of commercial destinations and services, including the Good-



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Rev. Alex Gee, pastor at Fountain of Life Covenant Church and president and founder of the Nehemiah Center for Urban Leadership Development, shows the area outside the church where the \$41 million Center for Black Excellence and Culture will be built on West Badger Road.



Parishioners make their way into the newer part of Mount Zion Baptist Church, left, that's attached to the original building on Fisher Street, right. The church intends to locate its Family Life Center on the site of the old structure.

Public funding

Madison, Dane County and the state of Wisconsin have made recent significant contributions toward a transformation of the South Side.

MADISON

- **Black Business Hub and the Village on Park:** \$19.8 million through land transfer and tax incremental financing (TIF) support
- **One City Schools:** \$300,000 toward purchase of 2021 Fisher St. for preschool
- **Center for Black Excellence and Culture:** \$250,000 in predevelopment funding
- **Centro Hispano:** Plan to transfer city property for new facility and purchase Centro's existing site to generate capital for its new project
- **Truman Olson redevelopment on South Park Street:** Facilitating grocery store at project; \$1.4 million toward low-cost housing; extended Cedar Street
- **Land purchases:** Invested \$3.9 million to buy land to slow displacement and gentrification
- **Movin' Out:** \$980,000 to support low-cost housing
- **Bridge-Lakepoint-Waunona Neighborhood Center:** \$2 million to support new facility
- **Penn Park:** \$2 million for improvements
- **South Madison Plan:** Adopted in January, anticipates hundreds of millions of dollars in redevelopment and improvements and a mini-neighborhood including detached, single-family, owner-occupied homes along Wingra Creek and a redeveloped gateway at Badger Road and South Park Street

DANE COUNTY

- **Center for Black Excellence and Culture:** \$810,000
- **Black Business Hub:** \$2 million
- **Centro Hispano:** \$2 million for new facility

STATE

- **Center for Black Excellence and Culture:** \$5 million
- **Black Business Hub:** \$5 million
- **Centro Hispano:** \$4.85 million for new facility

man South Madison Library, the Urban League, the UW South Madison Partnership and Urban Triage.

"Three major investments in South Madison created the launching pad for future projects," said Ald. Sheri Carter, 14th District, a South Side native. "The first was the city of Madison investment in the Villager Mall. The second was the Arbor Gate twin towers development at Arbor Hills. The third was the Madison College Goodman South Campus."



Daniels

In the mid-2010s, MATC president Jack E. Daniels III saw shifting demographics at the college's former Downtown satellite campus and with community

input, decided the South Side was the place to make an impact. The college chose private fund-

raising over a referendum, built its case and raised a needed \$23.5 million.

The full-service campus, opened in the fall of 2019, has been a hit. MATC expected 1,200 students but 2,200 enrolled. Currently, about 40% of its students are from the greater South Side and 60% are people of color. The campus already needs more space, and MATC is considering ways to address needs, including a child care center.

"We can be a catalyst for change in South Madison," Daniels said. "It was blighted. Limited businesses. Investment was not there. The time is now to have this happening. I'm glad we're a part of it."



Caire

Meanwhile, Madison native Kaleb Caire pursued an ambitious dream to create nonprofit One City Schools,

a charter school, he said, to nurture talent and leadership for the city's future and be a model for other schools.

Currently, One City runs a tuition-based preschool and 4K, the latter part of the charter school, at 2012 Fisher St., and is transforming a four-story, 157,000-square-foot former office building at 1707 W. Broadway, Monona, into a state-of-the-art, tuition-free elementary school, middle school and preparatory academy. The schools are open to all and already there is a waiting list of about 400 with students beyond capacity in each grade chosen via blind electronic lottery.

This year, the \$33.1 million main school offers 5K through fifth grade, and grades 9 and 10. Seventh and 11th grades will be added in 2023-24 and 8th and 12th grades in 2024-25. The school will feature a technology center, video and music recording studio, robotics and engineering and other specialty labs, barber shop and hair salon, student-run school store, cafe and more.

It will be the state's first early college and career middle-high school where, by ninth grade, students can begin completing one of 200 degree and certification programs at MATC, one of 250 programs at UW-Oshkosh and work toward a teaching degree at UW-Madison.

The school is also going through growing pains as a startup.

"We're getting the kids," Caire said. "But the building has to be completed. We're working 'till we're blue in the face to raise money. And it takes time to adjust to our rules and high expectations."

One City is still looking to complete fundraising for the main school, Caire said. Then, it intends to launch a capital campaign to raze a large parking garage next to its main building for an athletic center with full-size football, soccer and lacrosse field, two basketball courts, multipurpose room, dance studio, wellness, offices, concessions and seating that would be available to the larger community. "It's going to be powerful," he said.

"We've lived too many generations of depravation," Caire said. "We're setting up to be ground zero to eliminate the achievement gap. Where we are right now is

where we should have been a long time ago."

The \$25.5 million, four-story Black Business Hub rising at the Village on Park will feature retail and other businesses owned by Black and other entrepreneurs of color, ranging from startups to established businesses seeking to grow or get storefronts for the first time. Its offerings will include food, personal care and wellness, financial services, entertainment, co-working space, a rentable commercial kitchen, a credit union, pop-up space, and more.

The Hub will provide business training, coaching, grants, loans, networking and business development agencies, such as the potent Wisconsin Economic Development Corp., Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp., gener8tor, and others.

"The Urban League is betting on these businesses," Anthony said. "We can't continue to leave people back. We can't continue to leave neighborhoods and communities behind. It's just the time to transform."

A vital key to transformation will be the \$41 million Center for Black Excellence and Culture, a first-of-its-kind Black-inspired, Black-designed and Black-led project to be built next to Fountain of Life Covenant Church, 633 W. Badger Road. The Center promises a range of opportunities to celebrate and learn about the Black community, produce and hold performances, socialize and promote wellness at all stages of life.

The 65,000-square-foot, three-level building, unique nationally in its offerings for a Black community, will include dedicated spaces for youths, college students and seniors, lounges, multiple studios, co-working space, offices, two performance spaces and "Club Afrique," a professional lounge for members of the Black community to use for weddings, conferences and gatherings.



Gee

"This will be a space for incubating Black culture and intellectual property," said the Rev. Alex Gee, a lifelong Madisonian, the center's CEO and founder and pastor at Fountain of Life. "This project is life changing because it merely isn't being built for Black people but by Black influencers. This is about preserving future generations of Black youth."

Meanwhile, Centro Hispano is amid a fundraising campaign to move from its inadequate building of 22 years at 810 W. Badger Road, once a printing company, to a \$15 million, 25,000-square-foot building with a large indoor/outdoor plaza and underground parking on a nearby acre of city-owned land at the corner of Hughes Place and Cypress Way.



Menéndez Collier

The colorful, two-story building, intended to be a focus of Latino culture, education, training and celebration, will provide the right space for the kinds of programs Centro is doing now, executive director Karen Menendez Collier said.

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South Side

From A14

"The community is growing in numbers and saying we need programs and strategies that are authentic for our community, meaningful and rational," Me-nendez Collier said. "For the Latinx community, many services do not even provide the right linguistic capacity, let alone understand our history, our journey. Through these spaces we hope to advance our dreams, educational goals, career and life trajectories."

"Ultimately, I believe all of these projects are focusing on how to lift people," said the Rev. Marcus Allen, pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church, which is just beginning a broad fundraising effort to build a \$10 million, two-story, 36,000-square-foot Family Life Center next to its church at 2019 Fisher St.

The building will have a high school-size basketball and volleyball court with indoor track, health and wellness center, office space that can be rented by community businesses, food pantry and a commercial kitchen and spaces for weddings, banquets, concerts, birthdays and parties.

"Penn Park is the ultimate meeting hub for people who live on the South Side," Allen said of the nearby 73-acre amenity with shelter, playground and basketball courts. "We want to be part of that. We want this center to be available for use to the entire community."

There is synergy rather than competition among the leaders, who know and respect each other, and communicate, Gee said.

"The city is seeing Black-led projects," Allen said. "The kids see what we are doing. They can see a different life."

'Eyes became open'

Why, after generations of disparity and nearly a decade after the Race to Equity report, is so much happening now?

Many say it's a combination of dynamic leadership with visionary projects coupled with the continuing inequities laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic and the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which ignited passionate protests that rattled Madison.

"As we worked to ensure our economy could recover from the wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic, we knew we couldn't go back to the way things were," Evers said.

"I think many woke up to the needs of a community that has been crying out for so long," Me-nendez Collier said. "COVID put so many gaps and disparities front and center — housing, workforce, health. These are all disparities the immigrant community has been facing/navigating for a long time."

The pandemic, combined with Floyd's death and other police violence, caused Madison to ask fundamental questions, Gee said. "How can this still be going on? And how could we not know what was going on?"

"George Floyd was killed when vast swaths of the country and our economy were either shut down or severely limited," said Angela Russell, chief diversity officer for CUNA Mutual Group, which is investing millions of dollars in South Madison. "There was nothing to distract people. They were forced to pay attention. This got people to start questioning everything."

"Eyes became open," Anthony said.

In January, the city adopted a South Madison Plan and it has been buying property on the South Side to control land uses and curb displacement and gentrification, Rhodes-Conway said.

"We see Madison's South Side as an area where equity gaps are present and where investment can lead to incredibly positive outcomes in the future," said Jim Buchheim, community and social impact officer for American Family Insurance, which is also making significant investments. "We believe in the partners we're supporting and the leaders of these nonprofit organizations."

In addition to the first \$2 million corporate gift to the Center for Black Excellence and Culture and other giving, Summit Credit Union is placing a student-run branch at One City Schools and will build a branch at the Black Business Hub.

"All of this is coming together at the right time at the right place," Summit president and CEO Kim Sponek said. "We believe the vision of these dedicated black leaders will be transforma-



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Students play during recess at One City Schools off the Beltline in Monona. One City also operates a preschool on Fisher Street on the South Side.



The sun-drenched Goodman South Campus of Madison Area Technical College.



Joshua Estrada makes raspados, or snow cones, at a Mercadito outside Centro Hispano, background, on West Badger Road. Centro is planning a new \$15 million facility nearby.



Juan Gonzalez, right, sells produce from Los Abuelos Farley Farm in Verona to Ines Martinez and her father, Angel, left, as part of a "Mercadito" outside Centro Hispano on West Badger Road. The event happens each Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. through Dec. 15. In the background is MATC's Goodman South Campus.

tional and their collaboration has the potential to make Madison a national model for building a healthier, more equitable and thriving community for all."

J.H. Findorff & Son is both a building partner and general

contractor on several South Side projects, but the company is also investing time, talent and funding into organizations, president and CEO Jim Yehle said.

"The current support for these South Madison projects is deep,

'Stay with us'

The initiatives can forge a landscape that slows or ends the "brain drain" of young adults of color leaving Madison and promotes recruitment and retention, improving the experience for many from better health out-

comes to less contact with the criminal justice system while unleashing immense untapped potential, leaders said.

"Black people can exhale, be invigorated, live longer," Gee said.

"The projects can unlock transformational change," said Rick Phelps, a former Dane County executive who has led many major civic efforts over the decades and is the strategy director for the Center for Black Excellence and Culture.

The city, he said, recently saw the power of cultural change when it completely missed the technology "startup" revolution but then reshaped the Capitol East neighborhood into a place abuzz with music, art, dining and science that gave millennials and risk-taking entrepreneurs a place they wanted to be. Venture capital, incubators and collaborative success followed, he said.

"In a flash, we became one of the hottest entrepreneurial cultures in America," Phelps said. Next, "we can move from one of the worst places for Black residents to live to one of the best and it can happen faster than you might think."

Zach Brandon, president of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, said the projects can build a foundation for sustained economic inclusion and send a signal to current residents and in-bound talent about the type of community we aspire to be.

"When you think about the things that make a place feel like home, it is the ability to gather, to see yourself in others, to have access to world-class education, child care, job ladders, entrepreneurial support, cultural amenities, food and retail," he said. "The greater Madison that we can be is coming into view."

But the fundraising and work isn't over. "To the business and philanthropic communities, I ask, stay with us," Anthony said. "We need their continued support. We're not just transforming this area for Blacks, browns and women, we're transforming it for everyone."

Investing in South Madison

An unprecedented series of major projects led by the Black and Latino communities and happening at roughly the same time in greater South Madison promise to transform the South Side.



University of Wisconsin Arboretum

Truman Olson redevelopment

Black Business Hub, 2222 S. Park St.

Cost: \$25.5 million
 Size: Four stories, 80,000 square feet
 Features: Office, retail and business incubator space, co-working space, commercial kitchen, outdoor restaurant seating, event and meeting spaces, rooftop patio
 Money raised to date: \$20 million
 Top gifts: State of Wisconsin, \$5.9 million; New Market Tax Equity, \$5 million; Dane County, \$2 million; Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation, CUNA Mutual Foundation, federal government, \$1 million each; Exact Sciences, Oscar Rennebohm Foundation, \$500,000 each; city of Madison, donated land and site improvements



One City Schools, 1707 West Broadway

Cost: \$33.1 million
 Size: Four stories, 157,000 square feet
 Features: Project-based learning, emphasis on literacy skills, early college and career middle/high school, state-of-the-art technology center, video and music recording studio, STEM labs, robotics and engineering lab, creative design lab, computer lab, maker spaces, barber shop and hair salon, student-run store, coffee shop/cafe, Summit credit union branch
 Top gifts: \$14 million from Pleasant Rowland



Centro Hispano (new facility), corner of Hughes Place and Cypress Way

Cost: \$15 million
 Size: Two stories, 25,000 square feet
 Features: Indoor and outdoor plazas, large community kitchen, multiple large flex spaces, play area, secure underground parking for employees
 Money raised to date: \$12.5 million
 Top gifts: State of Wisconsin, \$4.8 million; Dane County, \$2 million; CUNA Mutual Foundation, \$1 million
 Status: Design and fundraising



Boys and Girls Club of Dane County

Mount Zion Baptist Church Family Life Center, 2019 Fisher St.

Cost: \$10 million
 Size: Two stories, 36,000 square feet
 Features: High school size basketball and volleyball court with indoor track; commercial kitchen and spaces to host weddings, banquets, concerts, birthday, retirement and parties; health and wellness center; office spaces; food pantry
 Money raised to date: \$1.1 million
 Status: Planned



The Village on Park

Urban League of Greater Madison

Fountain of Life Covenant Church

Centro Hispano (current facility)

Madison Area Technical College, Goodman South Campus, 2429 Perry St.

Cost: \$27 million
 Size: Three stories, 83,385 square feet
 Features: State-of-the-art facilities; health care, EMS, human services and early childhood education, and ESL and high school completion programs; community rooms, café, library, legal clinic.

Money raised to date: \$24 million
 Top gifts: Ascendium, \$10.3 million; Goodman Foundation, \$10 million; American Family, \$1.3 million; CUNA Mutual Foundation, Exact Sciences, \$500,000 each; Rennebohm Foundation, \$250,000; Evjue Foundation, J.H. Findorff & Son, \$100,000 each.
 Status: Opened fall 2019



Center for Black Excellence and Culture, 655 W. Badger Road

Cost: \$41 million
 Size: Three stories, 65,000 square feet
 Features: 250-seat theater and 100-seat black box theater, recording studio, art gallery, youth commons area, classrooms, fitness room, co-working space, "Club Afrique," senior space demonstration kitchen
 Money raised to date: Nearly \$30 million
 Top gifts: State of Wisconsin, \$5 million; Ascendium, American Family Insurance, \$2.5 million each; Summit Credit Union, \$2 million; CUNA Mutual Foundation, federal funding \$1 million each; Dane County, \$810,000 (\$1.2 million proposed)
 Status: Groundbreaking in 2023

