



Villard Square Grandfamily Apartments

A Review of 2013

For the



**Northwest Side
Community Development
Corporation**

By
IMPACT Planning Council



June, 2014

Villard Square Grandfamily Apartments: A Review of 2013

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Introduction and Acknowledgements:

In November of 2012, IMPACT Planning Council released a report on the Villard Square Grandfamily Apartments. This report focused on early observations and recommendations of the initial years of operation of the affordable housing apartments built above the Villard Square Public Library in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This housing was intended to serve the special needs of grandfamilies. The early process evaluation was presented to the leadership of the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation (NWSCDC), the Milwaukee Public Library, Gorman and Company, Jewish Family Services, the Department of Aging, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the Faye McBeath Foundation.

The current report, made possible with the support of the Faye McBeath Foundation, and produced just 18 months later, updates the early observations and recommendations. It revisits the demographics, relationships and suggestions of partners working to meet the needs of these families.

A listing of participants is included in the report. Particular thanks go to those who provided data, participated in interviews or provided their insights. They candidly shared information and addressed what is working and what might work better for grandfamilies in the Villard Square Apartments. Special thanks are extended to: Michele Colon, Vice President Older Adult Services at Jewish Family Services; Ted Matkom, Development Manager and General Counsel at Gorman and Company; Howard Snyder, Executive Director of Northwest Side Community Development Corporation; Freddi Viel, Grandfamily Service Coordinator at Jewish Family Services, Kathy Czarnecki, Interfaith Older Adult Program; Pat Bruce, Interfaith Older Adult Program and Diana Johnson, from Gorman; Rachel Collins, the Villard Square Library Branch Manager; and Officer Lisa Saffold, Milwaukee Police Department.

A resident focus group was conducted on Saturday, March 8, 2014 by Valerie Nash, of VMN Services. Twelve residents were scheduled to participate including: Henrietta Simpson, Louise Julien, Luwana Porter, Johnni Rodgers, Clara Worthy, Lena Sprewer, Juanita Williams, Elva Ross, JW Knight, Slyvia Cowan, Aretha Johnson and Maurice Washington. Eight residents of the Villard Square Apartments shared their insights and suggestions in discussing the project from their point of view. Five of the residents are in grandfamilies, two residents from one-parent families, and one participant who lives alone. Two of the participants were disabled. The households of the participants had seven children, ranging in age from ten to sixteen years old. The focus group recruitment letter and questions can be found in Appendices C and D.

The evaluation team from IMPACT Planning Council included: Carrie Koss Vallejo, Julie Whelan Capell, and Katie Pritchard. Valerie Nash, from VNS Services conducted the resident interviews.

Grandfamilies: A growing phenomenon:

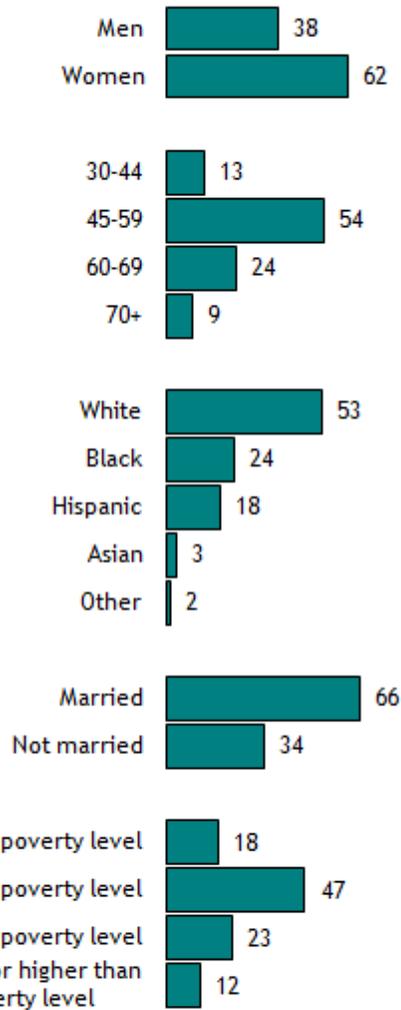
As the number of grandchildren living with their grandparents spiked during the most recent recession, the topic has received more widespread attention. The following section, based on US Census data, highlights a few observations in national trends.

- The number of grandchildren living with their grandparents increased by six percent between 2007 and 2008.
- In 2011, one in ten children were living with their grandparents.
- Parents in households that include a grandparent caregiver are twice as likely to be unemployed as parents of minors in other types of households. While 21 percent of parents living with a grandparent caregiver are unemployed, the share is 10 percent among parents in other households.
- About 55 percent of grandparents who are primary caregivers to their grandkids have served in this role for three years or more.
- Grandparent who are co-residers and primary caregivers tend to be relatively young. The majority -- 54 percent -- are under 60 and 9 percent are under 45.
- The grandparents who are most often in this situation are women -- 64 percent
- Among co-residing grandparents, 17 percent live below the poverty line.
- Some grandparents must use their fixed retirement income to help provide for their grandchildren, while only about one third qualify for government assistance to help them.

The following profile comes from the PEW Research Center.

Profile of Grandparent Caregivers, 2008

% of grandparents primarily responsible for most basic needs of a grandchild



Note: Whites, blacks, Asians, and others are non-Hispanic. Asian includes Pacific Islanders. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data

PewResearchCenter

Retrieved from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/09/09/since-the-start-of-the-great-recession-more-children-raised-by-grandparents/> and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/04/grandparents-raising-grandchildren_n_3866302.html based on PEW Study

More about Milwaukee's Grandfamilies

Locally, the 2012 US Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimates that there are 7,752 grandparents in **Milwaukee County** who are living with and responsible for their grandchildren. Of these, 35% are white, 52% are Black and 20% are Hispanic. Nearly three fourths (73%) are female and a third have a disability. More than half (57%) live in owner-occupied housing and a quarter live below the poverty level. An estimated 5,877 or 76% are under age 60.

Of the 7,752 grandparents in Milwaukee County who are living with and responsible for their grandchildren, 6,127 or 80% live in the **City of Milwaukee**. Of these, 22% are white, 63% are Black and 20% are Hispanic. Three fourths (75%) are female and more than a third (35%) have a disability. Nearly half (49%) live in owner-occupied housing and more than a quarter (28%) live below the poverty level. An estimated 4,748 or 77% are under age 60.

From the 2012 American Community Survey 1 year estimates Census data

	Milwaukee County		City of Milwaukee	
	Living with Grandchildren under 18	Responsible for grandchildren	Living with Grandchildren under 18	Responsible for grandchildren
Total	17,835	7,752	13,664	6,127
White	43%	35%	23%	22%
Black	39%	52%	63%	63%
Hispanic	24%	20%	19%	20%
Female	69%	73%	70%	75%
In labor force	53%	57%	50%	55%
With disability	35%	33%	39%	35%
Owner oc hsg	60%	57%	47%	49%
Below poverty	25%	25%	31%	28%
Over 60		24%		23%

An interactive map published by Patch New Service and using data from the [United States Census Bureau's](#) 2011 American Community Survey provide an estimate for 2011 taking into account 60 months of collected data. The map allows the user to hover over any census tract and see in the box in the upper right hand corner of the map the number of grandparents living with their grandchildren under 18 years old. The figures are estimates at absolute numbers. This information could be used in recruiting grandfamilies for services, including housing and programing. The map can be accessed at data@patch.com or [here](#).

Villard Square by the Numbers---2013

- 841** Total attendance at grandfamily events at Villard Square in 2013
- 99** Number of residents living in the building
- 66** Percent of Villard Square residents who have a library card
- 61** Percent of children in the building who are males
- \$55** Value per person of food received from six mobile food pantries from Feeding America
- 54** Number of residents attending Grandparent month event
- 49** Total number of children in the building
- 47** Number of housing units in the building
- 45** Percent of children in grandfamilies
- 36** Number of events held for grandfamilies in 2013
- 34** Percent of residents in grandfamilies
- 29** Number of residents participating in the library laptop checkout program
- 26** Average attendance at sponsored events
- 23** Residents who are elderly (age 62+)
- 22** Number of children in grandfamilies
- 15** Number of residents with a disability
- 8** Number of residents providing feedback in the focus group
- 7** Number of years it took to establish Villard Square
- 7** Number of awards for development
- 5** Number of times residents requested one-on- one support
- 3** Number of meetings held with residents and MPD
- 3** Number of vacant units

Background

The Villard Square building opened on October 15, 2011 as part of a plan to save the Villard Avenue Library and revitalize this neighborhood in Milwaukee's central city. The all-new, award-winning building was constructed with a library space on the ground floor, and forty-seven apartments above. Of these, nine units (19%) are one bedroom, 24 units (51%) are two bedroom, and fourteen units (30%) are three bedroom. Each unit has a washer and dryer, and the building also has larger machines for common use. In addition to the Milwaukee Public Library branch located on the first floor, amenities within the building include a movie theatre, community room, roof-top deck/play area, and a fitness center.

The Villard Square Apartments and amenities were designed with grandfamilies in mind. Grandfamilies are a specific subset of kinship care families in which children are being raised by their grandparents or family members other than their parents. Growing up in a grandfamily is part of a national trend: "Extended family members and close family friends care for more than 2.7 million children in this country, an increase of almost 18% over the past decade."¹

According to the US Department of Health & Human Services, approximately one-fourth of the children living apart from their parents are living with relatives, sometimes called kinship care. These types of arrangements are often preferable to foster care because they create fewer disruptions for the children, allowing them to remain in their neighborhood, live with siblings and see their parents. Keeping some stability during this transition leads to better outcomes for youth who are living apart from their parents.²

For many grandfamilies, finding affordable housing is often a significant challenge because of unique barriers:

- They frequently take on caregiving responsibilities with little to no time to plan;
- Many of these caregivers live on fixed incomes and/or in small apartments and houses that are not suitable for children;
- They may no longer be able to afford their apartments or houses after assuming the extra expenses of raising children;
- Many caregivers are physically unable to walk stairs with children and strollers;
- If they live in senior housing, they may be subject to eviction if the children are discovered;
- The presence of additional children may violate their private lease agreements; and
- If they do not have legal custody of the children and live in subsidized housing, they are frequently unable to convince the housing authorities to recognize their need for larger apartments.³

¹ Annie E Casey Foundation, "Stepping Up for Kids", KIDS COUNT Policy Report. July 2012. p.1 Retrieved from: www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/S/SteppingUpforKids2012PolicyReport/SteppingUpForKidsPolicyReport2012.pdf

² "Impact of Kinship Care on Child Well-Being," Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine 162(6), 2008 Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/kinship/impact/child.cfm>

³ <http://www2.grandfamilies.org/Housing/HousingSummaryAnalysis.aspx>

A report completed in 2012 by IMPACT Planning Council showed that while the Villard Square project was seen as being a worthwhile investment in the neighborhood, it had proven difficult to recruit the desired number of grandfamilies. This report documents Villard Square's continuing evolution and stakeholder opinions in the time since then, providing current and future investors with the rationale for adapting or expanding housing and programming in similar efforts.

RESIDENTS OF VILLARD SQUARE APARTMENTS

Demographics

In the period studied,⁴ as was the case in the building's first year, grandfamilies were outnumbered by non-grandfamilies in Villard Square. In January 2014, just one in three families residing in Villard Square (34%) were grandfamilies. Of the 49 children living in Villard Square, 22 (45%) were living in grandfamilies. The median age of the children living in grandfamilies was eleven and-a-half, versus eleven in non-grandfamilies. Thirteen (59.1%) of the children living in grandfamilies were of high school age; eight (36.4%) were of elementary school age; and one (4.5%) was under four years old. All of the grandfamilies were led by single, African-American women.

In January 2014, Villard Square Apartments had a high occupancy rate of 93.6%; 44 of the 47 apartments were filled and there were a total of 99 residents in the building. Household size ranged from single occupancy to households of five. The most frequent household size was two people (36% of the units). Three apartments were vacant. Average household size in the occupied apartments was 2.3 people.

Race, Ethnicity and Gender

All of the residents were non-Hispanic and African American. The grandfamilies at Villard Square Apartments were all headed by single, African American women. Four of the apartments had an adult male in residence; of these four apartments, three were childless households. The apartment in which a youth and an adult male shared a home was a grandmother living with both her (adult) son and also her grandson, although this boy was not the son of her son.

Grandfamily Occupants

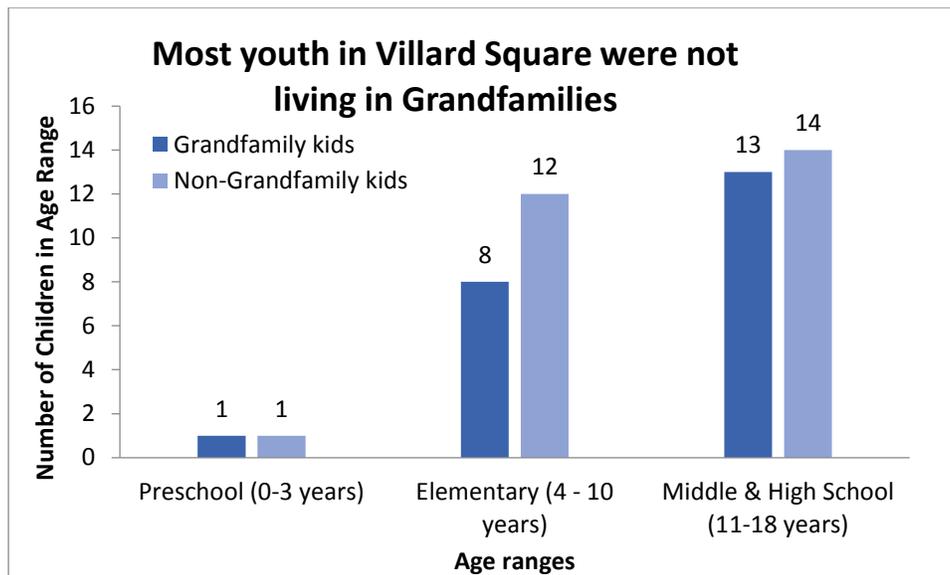
As of January 2014, fifteen (34%) of the occupied Villard Square apartments were inhabited by grandfamilies. Thirty-eight (34%) out of the total 99 Villard Square residents lived in a grandfamily. The average number of residents in a grandfamily home was 2.5, slightly higher than the 2.3 people who lived in Villard Square non-grandfamily apartments. In a focus group held in March 2014, residents expressed disappointment that more grandfamilies were not living in Villard Square. They used words like “frustrated” and “betrayed” to express their feelings upon realizing that the building would not be limited to older adults and grandchildren.

There were youth in 29 of the occupied apartments and a total of 49 children in residence. The ages of youth living in Villard Square ranged from two to 17 years of age. Thirty (61.2%) of the children were male, and 19 (38.8%) were female. The average age of all youth in the building was just over 11 years. The average number of children in each family apartment was 1.9.

⁴ All occupancy and demographic data on Villard Square residents was collected in January 2014.

Youth in grandfamilies: There were 22 children in apartments occupied by grandfamilies. The average number of children in grandfamily apartments was lower than in other family units: 1.4 children in grandfamilies versus 1.9 children in non-grandfamilies. The average age of children living with their grandparents was slightly higher than in non-grandfamilies: eleven-and-a-half versus eleven years old. The ages of children living with their grandparents ranged from three to 17 years.

The chart below shows that most youth (27, or 55.1%) in Villard Square were not living in grandfamilies. The chart also shows that middle and high-schoolers comprised the largest group of children in Villard Square (27, or 55.1%). Twenty (40.1%) of the youth were of an age to be in elementary school and two children (4.1%) were under the age of three. Further information on the age of youth living in Villard Square can be found in Appendix A.



Elderly Occupants

Nearly one-quarter (23 or 22.5%) of the 99 Villard Square residents were elderly and nineteen (40.4%) of the apartments had an elderly person (over age 55) in residence. Four of the nineteen units (21.1%) had two elderly residents; the other fifteen units had a single elder in residence.

Elderly in Grandfamilies: One in five (8 or 21.0%) Villard Square residents living in grandfamilies were elderly (age 62 and above) versus the nearly one in four of the general residents (23 or 22.5%), making non-grandfamily households slightly more likely to have an elderly resident than grandfamily households. Of the fifteen apartments occupied by grandfamilies, one was comprised of two elderly residents, six included a single elderly person, and eight had no elderly person living there.

Residents with Disabilities: There were 15 residents considered as having disabilities living in Villard Square, or 15.1% of all residents. Of the total 44 households, 34.0% included a person with a disability.

Disabilities in Grandfamilies: Nearly half of the grandfamilies (7 or 46.7%) included a person with a disability, so grandfamilies were more likely to include a disabled person than non-grandfamilies. Nine of the residents with disabilities were in grandfamilies (two grandfamilies included two people with disabilities).

Of the 44 occupied apartments, 39 (88.6%) apartments were headed by unmarried female heads of household. Of the 39 apartments headed by unmarried females, 24 (54.5%) identified as single, ten (22.7%) were divorced, three (6.8%) were separated and two (4.5%) were widows. The five other apartments were occupied by: two (4.5%) unmarried male and female co-heads of household, two (4.5) single males, and one (2.3%) married couple. All of the apartments that included a male head of household were childless.

Marital status in grandfamilies: Of the 15 grandfamilies, eight (53.3%) heads of households identified as single, five (33.3%) as divorced, one (6.7%) as separated and one (6.7%) as a widow. Of the 15 grandfamilies in residence, all (100%) were led by single female heads of household.

In sum, there are fewer grandfamilies in residence than expected. In those families, grandmothers are younger and grandchildren are older than expected.

Services for Residents at Villard Square Apartments

The Villard Square Library

Among buildings serving grandfamilies nationwide, Villard Square is unique in that the apartments are located above a public library. The Villard Square branch of the Milwaukee Public Library system was intended to be a benefit for the families residing in the apartments above and a resource for the neighborhood.

The model has been moderately successful in increasing use of the library by building residents, who are somewhat more likely to have a library card than the average City of Milwaukee resident. According to Milwaukee Public Library data, 60.7% of city residents have library cards,⁵ versus 65.7% of Villard Square residents. Of the current 65 residents in Villard Square with library cards, ten (15.3%) registered after moving into Villard Square between July 2012 and December of 2013.

Milwaukee library card holders each checked out an average of 7.3 items in 2011.⁶ The ten residents who became Milwaukee Public Library cardholders after moving to Villard Square checked out 249 items in 2013. Of the new card holders, the three children checked out 74 items (24.7 books/child), the two young adults checked out 153 items (76.5 books/young adult), the four adults checked out ten items (2.5 books/adult) and the one new senior library member checked out twelve items from July 2012 to December 2013.⁷ Library records did not allow tracking of items checked out by Villard Square residents who already had their library cards prior to moving into the building.

Laptop and wi-fi usage. The Villard Square Library location had the highest number of laptop check-outs of any Milwaukee public library in 2013. Thirty-eight laptops were available at Villard Square library, and they were checked out 15,496 times in 2013. Twenty-nine residents of Villard Square participated in the library laptop checkout program. The library branch manager reported that access to the laptops and the wi-fi were important assets for the residents.

Relationship with residents. Aside from library check-outs, use of the library by residents was difficult to quantify. In an interview, the library branch manager reported some library staff formed relationships with regular users from the apartments, and that library events were advertised on the apartment bulletin board. Library staff report that residents have taken advantage of story-time for the children and one-on-one homework help from the librarians. The library's branch manager meets monthly with the building's Grandfamily Service Coordinator to explore additional opportunities to grow the relationship between the library and the residents.

⁵ Milwaukee Public Library 2011 Annual Report Retrieved from: <http://www.mpl.org/file/AnnualReport.pdf>

⁶ [Ibid.](#)

⁷ Data tracking the Villard Square resident's use of the Milwaukee Public Library's resources was shared by Milwaukee Public Library staff for this report. Full data can be found in Appendix A.

Social Services

During the period studied, Jewish Family Services maintained a half-time staff person at Villard Square Apartments, the Villard Square Grandfamily Service Coordinator. This staff person is a licensed social worker and supports all residents of the building, not just grandfamilies. In an interview, the coordinator said she did not see significant differences in the needs of the grandfamilies compared to the non-grandfamilies, but in her opinion, grandfamilies represented the majority of the people who took advantage of the building's programs and activities.

According to residents who participated in a focus group in March 2014, having access to a social worker in the building was one of the most important amenities available to them.

The main responsibilities of the Service Coordinator are:

- Advocating for the residents;
- Responding to resident requests and concerns;
- Organizing and leading educational and social events residents; and
- Pursuing partnerships in the neighborhood for the benefit of residents.

Between July 2012 and December 2013, the Service Coordinator reported monthly data on event attendance and occasions when residents requested assistance. From July to December, 2012 there were five reported occasions when residents approached the Service Coordinator for one-on-one support:

- Three incidents involved residents who needed rent assistance (the Service Coordinator was able to resolve this issue for two cases);
- The Service Coordinator assisted a tenant in accessing therapy for a health issue; and
- One tenant was assisted with a job search until obtaining employment.

In 2013 there were eight occasions when the Service Coordinator provided one-on-one support to residents:

- Four residents were connected to rent assistance by the Service Coordinator;
- Two tenants were referred to Jewish Family Services for therapy (separate occasions);
- The Service Coordinator resolved a dispute between a funeral home and a tenant; and
- One tenant was referred to the SDC for energy assistance.

The social services Coordinator also sponsors events and social activities for residents. Appendix B contains for a full list of programming provided during the study period. From July 2012 to December 2013, forty-eight events and support groups targeting grandfamilies citywide were held at Villard Square. Average attendance was twenty-six people and total attendance for all events was 1,260. The grandfamily service coordinator estimated that events were attended by an even mix of adults and youth. Event topics were determined by the grandfamily service coordinator with some resident input. Full information on these events can be found in Appendix B; below is a summary by year:

- July - December of 2012: twelve events were held with a total attendance of 419. On average, 35 residents attended each event. The number of events per month ranged from 1 to 3, and the number of attendees range from 11 to 56. The most highly attended events were the Holiday Celebration (56) and the gift reception from Jewish Family Services (54) in December, and the Grandparent month celebration in September (54). The events with lowest attendance were also the events that occurred with most regularity, such as craft activities, which were held in four of the six months with an average attendance of 18.7 people.
- January - December 2013: 36 events were held with a total attendance of 841. On average, 32 residents attended each event, which is a slightly lower average event attendance than for events held in 2012. The number of events per month ranged from 1 to 4, and the number of attendees range from 4 to 58. The most highly attended events were the December Holiday Celebration (58), Grandparent Month dinner (54) and the reception of gifts from Jewish Family Services (54). As in 2012, the events with the fewest (4) attendees were craft events in October and November.

Based on feedback from the resident focus group,

- Afterschool homework help was seen as a great idea, but several people felt the timing didn't work well for the children or the families. Participants said when children get home from school, it's often late, and they are tired and hungry;
- Residents would like to have more ability to give ongoing feedback about the events and activities of interest.

Like grandfamilies everywhere, the additional and unexpected cost of raising grandchildren is experienced by those living in Villard Square. In the focus group, residents talked about some of their economic burdens and expressed concerns about fees and rent increases. Not surprisingly, the event that was most well received was one that served to reduce their spending. *Feeding America* held a mobile food pantry in early 2013 where residents who signed up received \$55 worth of food per person in their residence. This event was so successful that Feeding America and Villard Square partnered to host mobile food pantries six times in 2013, and will partner again in 2014.

Support Group Services

In addition to the part-time, on-site social services and the convenience of the library, Villard Square Apartments are also the venue for monthly support group meetings hosted by Interfaith Older Adult Services. Interfaith Older Adult Support Programs has been a partner with Villard Square since the beginning because their mission of supporting elders is so closely aligned with that of the grandfamilies project. According to the interview, it is through Interfaith's initial involvement with Villard Square that Jewish Family Services was linked to the project and that the building has access to the Service Coordinator.

Interfaith Older Adult Program is supported by the National Family Caregiver Funds from the Older American Act. It supports four target groups giving priority to those who have Alzheimer's and those seniors who have children with special needs. The focus is on spousal caregivers who are trying to keep someone at home. Until connected with the [Brookdale Foundation](#) only about 10% of funds went to grandfamilies.

In 2002, staff from Interfaith began searching for agencies/organizations that were providing services to this group of grandfamilies (grandparents over age 60 caring for their grandchildren). They checked with Catholic Social Services, Parenting Network, Kids Matter and Community Advocates for assistance in providing supportive services and kept searching for a potential partner until 2007. Jewish Family Services was found to be best able to provide support to adults and children as part of their mission.

At the same time Gorman and Company was coming in contact with multiple multi-generational families and they too began to meet with aging and other programs to see what could be done to assist with the added costs of childcare and food for these families. Interfaith stated working with the Parenting Network presenting a series of support groups 9-10 years ago. Childcare during support groups is no longer provided by Parenting Network and while the social worker and intern from Jewish Family Service attempted to provide this service for a period of time, it did not work out. Reportedly attendance at support groups has declined because of this. While support groups were part of the original design, providers acknowledge they are not for everyone. Some grandparents believe they are "managing well enough so there is no need to bother with the support group." Residents participating in the focus groups suggested that there were not held at times convenient for them. Interfaith has since modified their approach to delivering support groups by alternating the support groups with an informative speaker. Topics have included legal information, financial information, nutrition and managing stress.

Gorman continues to be a supportive partner, paying for food for support groups and providing some funding for events. According to Interfaith, these events generally attract about six families with four to five coming from the building and others coming from as far away as New Berlin. It is unclear how much the service coordinator promotes the support groups or activities sponsored by Interfaith.

Interfaith and Jewish Family Services have had plans to co-sponsor events such as a field trip to Betty Brynn Children's Museum, which included a pass, transportation and an orientation open to the support group members and as well as other residents of Villard Square. A quarterly field

trip that would include support group and grandfamily housing residents was an identified goal. A Brewers Game was thought to be an ideal example of the type of field trip that would draw more participants.

Interfaith's work in this area further suggests that children living with grandparents are most often discovered in the schools. Often, they stay hidden, especially in the suburbs where kids living with grandparents go to schools in the grandparent's districts although schools may turn a blind eye. As in other areas across the country, one of the biggest challenges is in finding appropriate housing and while Villard Square has made a substantial contribution in this area, the partners expressed concern that there is "no place to play" and "no access to open space."

It should be noted that a growing partnership with Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is being pursued to address resident's frustration with the lack of play space for youth within the apartment building. With the healthcare facility less than a mile from Villard Square apartments, Wheaton Franciscan staff have provided some activities for grandfamilies at Villard Square and additional projects, including the creation of a walking track at the Wheaton Franciscan site and a mentorship program with one of the physicians, have been discussed.

According to the partners from Interfaith, the proximity to the library is an asset and librarians were reportedly receptive to having grandfamily support group meetings held in the library. However, there was concern that the grandfamilies were not made to feel welcome in the setting.

While the mission of Interfaith is different than the mission of Villard Square, and only 10 hours per month of Interfaith effort are devoted to this project, suggestions for improvement include:

- Additional joint programming and referrals between JFS and Interfaith
- Exploring the use of funds for respite and supportive services
- Advocating and exploring the use of additional Section 8 Housing including assistance with coverage of essential social services
- Continuing to search for support for advocacy for this population.

Building Amenities

Physical amenities available in Villard Square were also cited by residents as making improvements in their lives, particularly:

- having washers and dryers inside apartments;
- having multiple bathrooms and bedrooms within the apartments;
- the availability of:
 - the fitness center
 - community room
 - media room
 - playground and
 - the presence of the library.

Specific suggestions for future buildings serving this population include: locating the fitness center and playground where they are not directly over an apartment, and providing access to a bathroom near the community room. Other observations include that the playground is on the roof, which makes it unusable in the winter, and the equipment on the playground is sized for small children, while the largest age group of youth is middle- and high school-aged.

These suggestions are similar to those that came from a focus group of grandfamilies in Pemberton Park Kansas in discussing the location, design, and services of grandfamily housing. The Pemberton Park focus groups were sponsored by the Family Friends program of Children's Mercy Hospital in partnership with Cougar Capital. Pemberton Park for Grandfamilies is the first development in Kansas City designed specifically to serve grandparents raising their grandchildren. There are 36 two, three and four-bedroom apartments, with units that are fully accessible or adaptable for those with disabilities. Apartments are fully equipped with all appliances, including a full-size washer and dryer. The site features a playground, large community room, grandparents lounge, computer learning center, craft room, and social work office. Staff includes a Service Coordinator who organizes programs and activities for grandparents and grandchildren throughout the year. Pemberton Park addresses these needs by providing supportive services on-site for grandfamilies. These focus groups emphasized the importance of being in a *location near transportation, shops and health care*. More information can be found [here](#).

The suggestions also reflect design elements from lessons learned in other communities, including Dorchester MA where key design elements include wide hallways, emergency buzzers in each unit, handrails in the bathrooms and hallways, laundry facilities on each floor, and *extensive community space with separate rooms for caregivers, youth, and young children*. In that space, comprehensive on-site services are available, including educational before- and after-school activities, support groups, and case management. The development also features *24 hour security, including multiple staff at the front desk verifying identities and cross referencing visitors with court orders*. More information can be found at <http://www2.grandfamilies.org/Housing/HousingSummaryAnalysis.aspx> or [here](#).

Safety and Security

As safety and security is a common concern with grandfamilies, it is also the case at Villard Square. Perceived lack of safety and security were among the principal concerns expressed both in interviews with key informants and during a resident focus group. Specific safety concerns reported by residents included:

- Unescorted non-residents in the building;
- The use of illegal substances within the building;
- Lack of underground parking availability (there are 27 spaces available for 47 units) with older tenants feeling unsafe using street parking;
- Concern that the underground parking could be easily accessed by non-residents
- Large numbers of young people congregating in the lobby; and
- Disturbances occurring after 5:00 pm and on weekends when there is no staff on the premises.
- The lack of a building evacuation plan and concerns about elevator upkeep, especially for disabled and elderly residents.

Milwaukee Police Department has several officers who respond to calls from Villard Square; in fact, the building is on the border between two police departments. In an interview, one officer with significant experience serving Villard Square said the department had held three meetings with Villard Square residents in 2013 to address safety concerns and answer questions from residents. The officer said about five or six residents attended each meeting. Also in 2013, there was a beat patrol on Villard Avenue from Teutonia to Sherman Avenue, so that street had increased walking police presence. In addition, the District 7 Police Office kept a set of keys to the main apartment entrance, allowing the officers to get into the building in case of emergency calls from apartment residents, and go directly to the door of the apartment in question.

Police and library staff also mentioned security concerns in the library. The Villard Square library has a security guard, and library staff patrols the stacks to manage patron behavior. However, interviews indicated typical safety problems encountered within the library included unsupervised teens “hanging out” (being loud, engaging in inappropriate behavior); patrons coming in drunk or high; and individuals drinking alcohol in the bathrooms. Additionally, Villard Square was the only branch of the Milwaukee Public Library to have had a laptop theft during the period studied.

Summary and Recommendations

When the library is taken into consideration, the Villard Square project is unique in the United States as an effort to address the needs of the growing number of grandparents living with and caring for their grandchildren. The award winning facility continues to increase the number of partners involved and is to be commended for actively assessing its progress. Residents identify and clearly appreciate several assets in both the facility and services provided. Still, as in any new endeavor, there are some concerns to be addressed and some lessons for future work in this area.

Several of the issues have arisen because the resident demographic is different than that anticipated in project planning. Though this building was envisioned to support grandfamilies, only a third of the units are occupied by grandfamilies. In general, the resident children are older than anticipated, and among resident grandfamilies, the grandmothers are younger. Some of the amenities, though installed with the best intentions, miss the mark because of these unanticipated demographics.

Resident input, interviews with key informants and the previous Villard Square report suggest the following opportunities:

Focus on grandfamilies. Increase outreach to grow the percentage of grandfamily residents in the building. When there are vacancies, prioritize grandfamilies as new residents. Continue to work with other providers to identify grandfamilies who are looking for housing.

Increase systems that support popular services. Provide childcare or supervised activities during resident meetings for grandparents. Hold the homework help on weekends. Offer food along with weekday homework help, similar to other afterschool programs. Help residents understand the role of the social worker using examples of services and supports that are available.

Mitigate effects of increased cost of living. Increase outreach to families to explain rent assistance options. Maintain or increase visits of the mobile food pantry.

Resident input. Create increased opportunities for resident input, especially in event planning and content. Consider paid resident leadership roles. Recruit a “floor monitor” on each floor who can check on the tenants on their floors and collect input on needs, concerns and wants of the residents. Increase the presence of people of color in leadership capacities.

Increase sense of safety and security. Install cameras in hallways to increase safety. Have a sign-in/check-in process for all non-tenants. Post evacuation instructions in public spaces. Meet with residents who are disabled to create more personalized evacuation plans that take into account their abilities and limitations. Increase staff time on weekends and evenings, when issues arise. Partner with others to develop safe green space accessible to youth. Establish regular contact with MPD to address ongoing concerns.

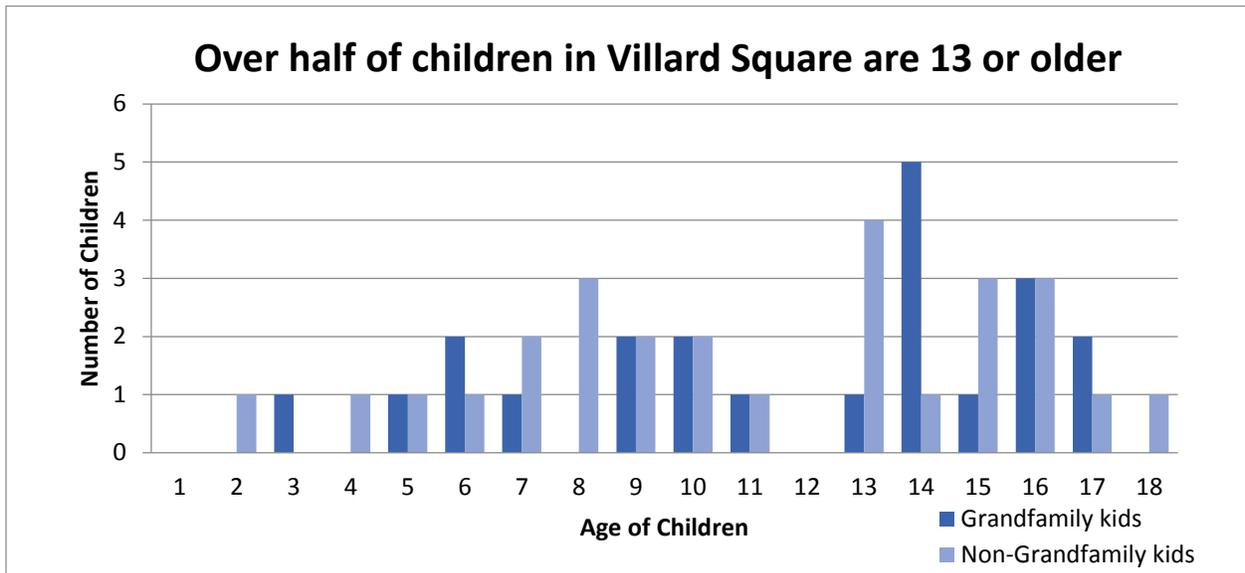
Promote expanded joint programming and referrals between JFS, the Library and Interfaith. The relationship with Wheaton holds promise for accessing open space and the potential use of funds for

respite and supportive services with Interfaith should be explored. While there is no local network providing advocacy for this population, there is growing national awareness and this group has pioneered and persevered and has the basis of a foundation.

Explore opportunities to expand the use of Section 8 Housing and potential relationships and waivers with the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee and WHEDA to expand housing and provide support services.

Continue to learn from routine assessment and annual review of the data with all partners taking an honest look at what works and what might work better in the future.

Appendix A: 2013 Data on Youth Residents in Villard Square



Appendix B: Villard Square Events

Name of Event 2012	Month of Event	Attendance
Ice Cream & Watermelon Social	Jul	21
Craft Activity	Aug	12
Create A Memory at Miller Park	Aug	37
Villard Square Picnic	Aug	52
Craft Activity	Sep	11
Grandparent Month Celebration	Sep	53
Pumpkin Carving	Oct	23
Trick or Treat in the Building with a Light Supper	Oct	48
Craft Activity	Nov	11
Craft Activity	Dec	41
Holiday Celebration and Play	Dec	56
JFS donations of Christmas gifts for all youth residents Villard Square	Dec	54
Events at Villard Square in 2013		
Name of Event 2013	Month of Event	Attendance
Birthday Celebration	Jan	29
Craft Activity	Jan	7
Holiday Celebration and Play	Jan	56
JFS donations of Christmas gifts for all youth residents Villard Square	Jan	54
Birthday Celebration	Feb	35
Gorman Meet & Greet	Feb	46
Tripoli Shrine Circus Tickets	Feb	10
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Mar	21
Shaving Cream Painting Craft Activity	Mar	9
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Apr	20
Milwaukee Bucks Game Outing	Apr	55
Birthday Celebration	May	28
Craft Activity	May	8
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	May	38
Going Away Party for Social Work Intern	May	46
Birthday Celebration	Jun	19
Birthday Celebration	Jul	10
Fun cupcakes, July 18	Jul	9
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Jul	17
Birthday Celebration	Aug	24
Fun with Rachel clown cupcakes	Aug	7
Fun with Rachel outdoor play	Aug	6
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Aug	17
Craft Activity	Sep	19
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Sep	15
Grandparent Month Dinner	Sep	54
Bright Side Stones/ Jessica	Oct	8
Craft Activity	Oct	4
Science Hour/Jessica	Oct	5
Birthday Celebration	Nov	15
Craft Activity	Nov	4
Game nights (usually 3 nights)	Nov	18
Art group/ Jessica	Dec	6
Craft Activity	Dec	18
Holiday Celebration	Dec	56
JFS donations of Christmas gifts for all youth residents Villard Square	Dec	46

Total number of events in 2012: 12

Total attendance at events in 2012: 419

Total number of events in 2013: 36

Total attendance at events in 2013: 841

Appendix C: Villard Focus Group Letter

We need your help!

People want to know about the Villard Square Apartments and Library. They're asking:

- what works well
- what makes it a good place to live
- what could be better

And no one knows the answers to these questions better than you!

In the next few weeks, you may get a call from Ms. Valerie Nash. She will ask you to join a focus group to talk about what you think. The meeting will take about one hour. You will receive a \$20 gift card for your time.

Please see me if you have any questions. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Valerie Nash

Appendix D: Villard Resident Focus Group Questions

1) On the note cards you have in front of you, please tell us briefly about yourself.

- How long you have been living in Villard Square
- A little about the family members who are living here with you.
- A little about yourself

2) Have you or your family members used the supportive services available to you as residents of Villard Square?

- How frequently have you used these services?
- Can you tell me about your experiences using these services?

3) Have you or your family members used the library on the first floor of Villard Square?

- How frequently have you used the library?
- Can you tell me about your experiences using the library?

- 4) How would you say living in Villard Square has affected you and the other adult members of your family?
- 5) How would you say living in Villard Square has affected the children living with you?
- 6) What would you say is the biggest positive thing about living here in Villard Square?
- 7) What would you say could be improved for residents of Villard Square?
- 8) If you have friends or family members who are caring for their grandchildren, would you recommend that they live here?
- 9) Is there anything else you would like to say about living here at Villard Square?