Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, was founded on the isthmus between Monona and Mendota Lakes. The city was named for President James Madison and was selected as the state’s capital before it was inhabited.

Madison is home to the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison Children’s Museum, Wisconsin Historical Museum, and Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin Geology Museum, and L.R. Ingersoll Physics Museum are located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Wisconsin Science Museum celebrates the incredible science, technology, and biotech discoveries in Wisconsin that helped change the world.

Madison has several performing arts venues. The Overture Center for the Arts is home to the Madison Opera, Madison Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Madison Ballet, Children’s Theater of Madison, Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society, Forward Theater Company, Little提ling Frogs and Kanopy Dance Company. In addition, the Overture Center hosts concerts and Broadway shows. The James Watrous Gallery is also located within the Overture Center.

Wisconsin Union Theater, Madison’s oldest theater, presents classical music and dance performances as well as travel films. Wisconsin Union Theater performances include the Madison World Music Festival, Black Arts Matter Festival, Jazz Festival, and other concerts, dance, and special events. Alliant Energy Center is a multibuilding complex that hosts sports and live stock events, performances, and concerts. Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and offers free and low-cost community programs, such as concerts, dance performances, artistic exhibitions, and an exhibit about Wright.

Neighborhoods

Downtown Madison’s Capitol Neighborhood features many high-rise condominiums and apartments that offer views of Lakes Mendota and Monona. This neighborhood also has experienced the development of condominiums in converted warehouses. Also located downtown, the Mansion Hill Historic District contains the greatest concentration of intact Victorian houses remaining in the city.

University Heights Historic District, one of the city’s first suburbs, is located west of downtown Madison near the city’s hospitals and features curvilinear streets and houses designed by leading architects of the Queen Anne, Prairie, and Period Revival styles. The Vilas neighborhood is situated along Lake Wingra and near the Henry Vilas Zoo. Vilas’ architectural styles include Victorian, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Georgian Revival, and Tudor. The Dudgeon-Monroe neighborhood is located in the same area as Vilas and offers smaller, two-story homes with front porches that line the quiet streets. The Spring Harbor neighborhood has various housing styles and sizes in a rural setting with winding, narrow streets and mature landscaping; approximately 50% of the houses were constructed during the 1950s. The Hawk’s Landing neighborhood consists of approximately 300 single-family homes built since 2000 on large lots, condominiums, and an apartment complex; it is located near Hawk’s Landing Golf Club. The Marquette Bungalows Historic District consists of 47 small, primarily one-and-one-half-story, Craftsman-style houses that were built between 1924 and 1936, although not identical, they display a cohesive design. Nearby along the lake, Schenck-Atwood is a diverse neighborhood that features mostly modest, older, single-family homes on small lots. The McClellan Park Neighborhood includes the Grandview Commons, Covered Bridge, Birchwood Ridge, Rustic Acres, and Jubilee subdivisions and offers single-family homes, condominiums, and apartments. The newer Grandview Commons neighborhood development features traditionally designed houses on small lots.

Parks and Recreation

Spread among Madison’s 270 parks are lakes, fields, courts, and other spaces to enjoy the following activities: baseball, football, lacrosse, soccer, softball, cricket, basketball, horseback riding, pickleball, volleyball, tennis, BCycle stations, golf and disc golf, fishing, hiking, ice skating, swimming, slacklining and hamocking, sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ultimate Frisbee. Madison also offers playgrounds; recreation centers; picnic shelters; pools; skate parks; beaches; boat, canoe, and kayak rentals and launches; botanical gardens; scenic overlooks; dog parks and dog-free parks; and splash parks.

At 90 acres, Olbrich Park is one of Madison’s largest lakefront parks and features summertime swimming, boating, and fishing; in wintertime, it offers an ice skating rink and sledding hill. The park has soccer, softball, and ultimate Frisbee fields; tennis and volleyball courts; slacklining and hamocking; and playgrounds. The adjacent Olbrich Botanical Gardens features landscapes, Midwest hardy plants, tropical plants, birds, and a waterfall within the conservatory.

With almost 46 acres, Vilas Park features swimming, canoeing, and fishing in the summer and skating, snowshoeing, and ice hockey in the winter. The park has tennis courts, soccer fields, a BCycle station, slacklining and hamocking, a beach, and a playground. The park is adjacent to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum and the Henry Vilas Zoo.

Education

The Madison Metropolitan School District serves more than 27,000 students from the cities of Madison and Fitchburg and surrounding towns and villages with 32 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 6 comprehensive high schools, and an alternative high school. The district also has early childhood programs and alternative programs at the secondary level.

Several options for higher education are available in Madison. The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a public land-grant research university with schools of Medicine and Public Health, Nursing, and Pharmacy. Edgewood College is a Catholic college that offers associate’s degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates in various fields. Herzing University in Madison focuses on health care, nursing, business, and technology programs and offers associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees.

Health Care

Madison is served by the following health care facilities: American Family Children’s Hospital: 114 licensed acute care beds Mendota Mental Health Institute: 394 licensed psychiatric beds Select Specialty Hospital-Madison: 58 licensed long-term beds SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital-Madison: 440 licensed acute care beds UnityPoint Health-Meriter: 426 licensed acute care beds UnityPoint Health-Meriter-Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: 30 licensed psychiatric beds University Hospital: 505 licensed acute care beds UW Health at The American Center: 56 licensed acute care beds UW Health Rehabilitation Hospital: 50 licensed rehabilitation beds

The William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital includes 85 acute care beds; 18 beds in the hospital’s residential rehabilitation treatment program; and 26 beds for subacute transitional care, rehabilitation, and hospice care.

City Stats 2019

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Photograph courtesy of Focal Flame Photography. Please note that some museums and performing arts venues are temporarily closed due to COVID-19.