



SPOTLIGHT ON WELD STREET

What just three blocks of this tiny street can tell us about city's challenges



Madison Scott
Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
USA TODAY NETWORK

Inside

After drug arrest on Weld Street, can community fill power vacuum with help? **4A**

The Rochester day was warm enough that the scent of leaves and wet grass carried through the air. It was autumn, and I was stepping onto this downtown core street for the first time, even though I'd driven by often.

Weld Street yards were full of barking dogs, enjoying the sunshine with their owners, who were either relaxing on their porches or working on their lawns. There were also signs of open drug activity at one vacant lot.

Tragedy had brought me to this street.

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A memorial for a slain young man sits along Weld Street on an autumn afternoon. The street is known for more than violence and drug sales, but it is part of the fabric of the neighborhood. GEORGIA PRESSLEY

Our goal for this project was to create something that could be representative of Weld Street as a whole. To show the light within a community that often gets overshadowed by the darkness.

Challenges

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But as I learned more about Weld Street, and spoke about it in our newsroom, we realized that many of the dynamics that play out across Rochester are represented in this tiny slice of the city. That realization would lead us to chose Weld for a deeper examination of what challenges any "single street in Rochester" — just one.

We could have chosen any street within a mile or two, but this one was both representative of local issues and had special resonance for us.

I parked my car on the side of the street and walked to the sidewalk to meet up with photographer Tina MacIntyre-Yee. We were there to speak with the grandmother of 16-year-old Jakarah Lopez-Moore, who had been missing since the end of August.

What happens on one small street in Rochester?

Like her neighbors, Tracy McDaniels was sitting on her porch on Weld Street on this day.

She was with her roommate, Claude Young, who was decked out head to toe in Buffalo Bills gear. It reminded me of the times my Nana used to sit on her porch, waiting for my little sister and me to run up the steps.

There's nothing particularly unique about Weld. It's like any other street within the city of Rochester: full of life, people and generations of stories. As I stood there on the sidewalk, amongst the little fallen yellow and orange leaves, I still didn't give it much thought. All I had on my mind is that it was the street where Jakarah had last been seen.

Eight days after this visit, the teen's body was found in a wooded area miles away near Vanguard Parkway.

We continued our difficult reporting — not only about her case but also about her life. I knew her story was more than just this awful thing that had happened to her.

In doing so, we learned about Chance Mosley. The 17-year-old who was shot and killed in 2022 on the porch of the same Weld Street house. Jakarah would go missing from almost a year later. Are their cases connected? The police don't believe so.

What if anything do these tragic incidents say about Weld Street? Is this an isolated place where bad things just happen? Or could this area, like other parts of Rochester, be a common product of the intentional urban dynamics that were set up by people in power to create inequalities that continue to exist today?

Data we later collected show that trends of violence are lower on Weld than in other parts of Rochester, so it's not rated a considerably dangerous area. During our reporting about Weld, we did encounter civilians on the street who showed fear of the local drug dealers.

One delivery driver told us not to come back



A Puerto Rican flag hangs outside a home near Weld Street and North Union Street in Rochester. ROBERT BELL/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT & CHRONICLE



Claude Young is a resident of Weld Street. Originally, he moved to Rochester to escape the heavy violence in Chicago. GEORGIA PRESSLEY

after dark for our own safety. Later, after we asked questions about citizen safety, police would make a key arrest to change some dynamics on Weld.

Complex dynamics build community and signs of hope

Though our interest in Weld Street was

sparked by the horrific deaths of these two teenagers, and some other killings on the street in recent years, we knew that these three blocks are more than the tragic public things that happen to it.

Our goal for this project was to create something that could be representative of Weld Street as a whole. To show the light within a community that often gets overshadowed by the darkness. And to tie it to what also happens on streets across Rochester.

The lives, passions, struggles, stories and commitment shown to their community matter.

Historically, Rochester neighborhoods have been misrepresented and misunderstood within the mainstream media, leaving generations of stories unheard. When we first started this project, the initial response I got a lot was, "It's about time." We quickly realized many people living on Weld felt as if their community was only reported on when something bad happened there.

More reporting on Weld Street

Our current enterprise journalism project is just the beginning. We hope it will open the door for further discussions about the ways we think and report on different neighborhoods within this city. We also want this work to expand the discourse around things like gentrification, housing issues and renter rights.

Most importantly, we want to hear from you to understand what questions and topics you are curious about in your community. We want to know what you think should be highlighted and known within the city. Email us at MDScott@gannett.com and wramseyiii@gannett.com.