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Three-year Mifflin Street Block Party review finds binge drinking costs city thousands in policing and public health

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A three-year review of the Mifflin Street Block Party found the annual block party and related binge drinking cost the city thousands of dollars in policing as well as public health consequences, according to a city of Madison press release.

Public Health Madison and Dane County analyzed data, including costs and incident reports, from the 2010, 2011 and 2012 block parties and found the 2012 block party cost the city \$195,619 in overtime payment for police officers, benefits, supplies and “out of pocket” expenses.

According to the release, police presence and regulations have increased because of incidents at the 2011 block party in which two individuals were stabbed and three officers were hospitalized.

The release said the Mifflin Street Block Party creates an unhealthy environment for University of Wisconsin-Madison students as well as other community members.

“In a way, this event is like an outbreak of a disease,” Public Health Nurse Jenny Lujan said in the release. “This report attempts to analyze the symptoms and engage the community in new and ongoing discussions and activities for an effective treatment.”

The report said activities that promote binge drinking, including the Mifflin Street Block Party put students at risk of assault, injury, academic problems and even death.

The city recommends the university and Madison community members form a coalition to minimize harm caused by the block party and address problems associated with binge drinking.

Community members have collaborated to submit an application for a Wisconsin Partnership Program grant, which would generate additional funds that could go toward making alcohol less accessible to college students and influencing student attitudes about high-risk drinking, according to the report.

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