

Approximate boundaries:  
N-I-94; S-W. Dickinson St;  
E-S. 70<sup>th</sup> St; W-Hwy 45

# WEST SIDE *Fair Park*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Fair Park occupies a sliver of land between the south side of Interstate-94 and the northern border of West Allis. A small number of residences are clustered at the east and west ends of the neighborhood.

Streets follow a grid pattern except for West Adler that shadows the curve south of the freeway. Along Adler Street are gently rolling hills. Adler becomes West Main Street east of 76th. The 12 residential blocks at the west end of Fair Park along Adler end in dead ends. Between the residential areas are mainly parking lots for industrial buildings and State Fair Park. The chief business corridor is south of West Main Street from 70th to 76th.

The main housing type for this neighborhood is the bungalow with a few interspersed 1950s to 1970s ranch homes. See photos below.

## HISTORY

Fair Park is named after the Wisconsin State Fair Park that is located just south of the neighborhood in West Allis. The Fair Park neighborhood serves many of the State Fair's needs, including parking lots.

### Early populations

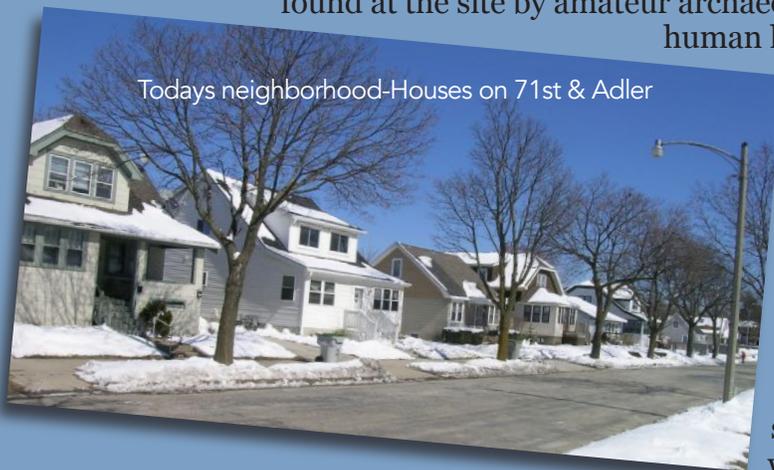
The first known population that settled just south of the Fair Park area were American Indians. Several hundred years ago, at the boundary of today's West Allis, a village grew up along Honey Creek, which now flows in an enclosed channel under the Wisconsin State Fair Park. At the edge of the village were burial mounds located in today's DNR Woodland Preserve on the park grounds. It is likely that these Indians hunted, fished, and domesticated some plants. Artifacts found at the site by amateur archaeologists point to thousands of years of human habitation at that location.

In the early 1800s another population settled in the very same area. A hamlet called Honey Creek developed along the creek by the same name. The small settlement, founded by pioneers from New York, housed a blacksmith shop, post office, schoolhouse, and homesteads, and was served by three stages each week. In 1855 a steam sawmill was built along the creek by Bigalow Case and Edwin Youmans. The sawmill closed a few decades later when the company had depleted the area of timber. Other early settlers in

the Honey Creek hamlet included the Cornwall, Douvalle, Smith, Sheldon, Strong, Marsh, and Marlott families. The settlers were mainly people of British ancestry who were practicing Episcopalians and Baptists.

### *The catalyst of the Wisconsin State Fair Park*

In 1891 the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society purchased a large dairy farm and its buildings that were owned by the Stevens family. With extensive modifications, this became the home of



the Wisconsin State Fair. However, two years later the entire estate burned to the ground and new buildings had to be erected.

In 1894, the Milwaukee Street Car Company extended its lines to the newly built fairgrounds so the people of Milwaukee could access the fair. Development of the area soon followed. As blocks in Milwaukee began to expand west from the Washington Park neighborhood, and others were attracted to jobs on the fairgrounds, the area to the north of the State Fair Park began to fill up with settlers—mainly Germans—who had made their homes in the city since the early 1800s.

During the late 1920s and into 1930, the City of Milwaukee began annexing the greater part of today's Fair Park neighborhood. By the early 1930s there were fewer than two dozen households on Adler, seven on South 76th, and only a scattering of residents living on other neighborhood blocks. Nearly all had German names. An exception was the Scottish Duffus family. See below.

### **Fair Park random residents (1930s)**

*Household selected randomly from the 1933 City Directory in the Fair Park area  
(photo and other information found in public records on Ancestry.com)*

#### **The Duffus family**

The Duffus family--father Percy/Percival (b. 1892), mother Gertrude (b. 1891), and daughter Evelyn (b. 1917)--lived at 7115 W. Adler since at least the early 1920s. (See later photo of mother and daughter to the left.) Both Gertrude and Percy had fathers with the surnames of Duffus. Given that both families had deep roots in Racine, Wisconsin, it appears that the two were cousins of some distance. However, while

Gertrude and Percy were grandchildren of related Scottish immigrants who settled in Racine, the two had very different early experiences. Gertrude had a fairly traditional upbringing. She grew up as the daughter of James and Gertrude (nee Phillips) Duffus in Milwaukee's 18th Ward, on the city's East Side. She had at least four siblings.

Percy's upbringing was more disruptive. He, and at least two brothers, were the sons of Edward Duffus and Ella (nee Bradway) Duffus. However, the couple divorced by the time Percy was seven and the children were separated. By 1900, his mother Ella had married George Graves. Percy was living with the couple in 1900, along with George's mother and a stepbrother. This apparently did not work out well. By 1905,

when Percy was only 13, he and 15-year-old brother Earl were living as boarders with a young Lorch family in Wauwatosa.

Percy's life appeared to have stabilized when he married Gertrude and settled in the Fair Park area. However, the times were difficult. In 1930, Percy was working as a cabinetmaker in the auto industry. As the Great Depression loomed on, the auto industry literally dried up in Milwaukee. Nevertheless, Percy prevailed, and by 1940, he was still working as a cabinetmaker with full time hours and an annual salary of \$1,634, The national income average for 1940 was \$1,368.



During the early years of the Great Depression, the east end of West Adler was the only street in Fair Park with a small business corridor. See the list and notes below.

<i>Addresses on W. Adler in 1933</i>	<i>Names of businesses from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
7023	Paul H. Taddey Grocery
7118	Robert P. Reinhardt Tailor
7212	Charles J. Lukey Grocery
7313	Charles E. Reed Barber
7324	Mervin Reiching Shoe Repair
7428	Adler Street Market
7432	Adler Street Home Bakery

#### **Summary and notes from census and other records:**

- The small Fair Park neighborhood was aptly served during the early years of the Great Depression, with three grocers, a barber, tailor, bakery, and shoe repair shop.
- Paul Taddey, the grocer, was a merchant anomaly for the times. He'd attended a year of college. The son of German immigrants, Taddy was unable to sustain himself in the grocery business. Probably due to the economic downturn of the times, he was working as a laborer in the private sector by 1940.
- Robert Reinhardt, the tailor, was the son of German immigrants. He'd first had a tailor shop on Cold Spring Rd. before moving to the Fair Park neighborhood. He'd completed the 8th grade.
- Mervin Reiching/Retching, the shoe repairman, was something of a phantom on Adler. He appeared in records only for 1933. No records of him exist anywhere prior to or after that year.

#### *Fair Park after the Great Depression*

Development of the neighborhood stopped during the Depression years and through World War II. However, the postwar housing boom that followed had only a small effect on Fair Park. By 1949 there were still few through streets in the area. The same number of households remained on Adler, grew from seven to eight on South 76th Street, and only a handful appeared on most other blocks.

However, by 1949 Adler Street had lost all its businesses, save for a tavern. South 76th that had five businesses in 1933, now had six. See list and notes below.

<i>Addresses on S. 76th St. in 1949</i>	<i>Names of businesses, industries from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
540	Carl J. Fabos Tavern
638	Standard Oil Company (bulk plant)
671	Milwaukee Road (W.A. Freight Station)
675	Continental Oil Company
679	Victory Steel Supply Company
684	Trator Transport Company

- **Summary and notes from census and other records:**

- By the late 1940s more residents were relying on the automobile and supermarkets than in 1933, which decreased the number of grocery stores in the area.
- As national Prohibition had ended, taverns were now making their reappearance all over Milwaukee.
- Carl J. Fabos, with the tavern, was the son of a father from Romania and a mother from Hungary. He had served in World War Two. Today there is still a tavern at that address, called Liquid Johnny's.
- The Milwaukee Road had filed for bankruptcy in 1935 and was run under a trusteeship until late 1945.
- The industries in the small Fair Park neighborhood were major employers of residents on Milwaukee's West Side. Victory Steel Supply Company still operates at the same address and has just under 50 employees.

During the 1950s, the City of Milwaukee annexed the western tip of today's Fair Park neighborhood. The neighborhood experienced a gradual population increase, resulting in many of the Cape Cod and ranch homes on the western edge of the neighborhood (see photos below).

### **Current populations (as of 2021)**

Today, Fair Park has less than 1,500 residents. Of these, over 6 in 10 are European Americans (the majority of which still claim German ancestry), nearly 2 in 10 are Latino (mostly of Mexican ancestry), and nearly 1 in 10 are African American. There is also a scattering of Asians (including those of Chinese, Indian, Hmong/Lao, and Korean ancestry), American Indians, and people of multiple backgrounds in the neighborhood.

Fair Park is a lower middle-class neighborhood with a median household income of just over \$40,000 a year. The main occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of production, administration, and management. Fair Park has nearly three times the number of residents in the health technician field than the proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

Just over 6 in 10 property units in Fair Park are likely to be rented. Rents are reasonable with over 6 in 10 rental units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month. Costs of owning a home are higher than in many Milwaukee areas, with select costs for 7 of 10 properties (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, taxes, insurance) ranging from \$1,001 to \$2,000 a month.

## INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Fair Park Business Center**, at 620 S. 76th St., a real estate business center.
- **Pettit National Ice Center**, at 500 S. 84th St., an official US Olympic training site (see photo).
- **Park & Ride**, near Adler St. and 76th, a place for locals to leave their cars and board city, Greyhound, or Badger busses.

## RECURRING NEARBY OUTINGS (Health conditions permitting)

In the following section the website addresses have been eliminated due to technical problems with the various ways different web browsers display PDF files. Website information on these events is available through the book *Milwaukee Area Outings on the Cheap*. See below.

### ICE FISHING & WINTER SPORTS SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Fri. 12-7pm; Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 9am-2pm	Wisconsin State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th, West Allis	Rows of exhibits with products and services dedicated to the ice fishing and winter sports enthusiast.	Free

### HMONG NEW YEAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Sat., Sun. 8am-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Celebration marks the end of the Hmong harvest season, which ends on November 31, and a time of several days of music, singing, dancing, games, and food.	unk

### WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEDDINGS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jan., Sat., Sun. 10am-4:30pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	The latest trends in wedding gowns, tuxedos, photographers, florists, music, sample wedding cakes and food tastings, over 100 exhibitors.	unk

### MILWAUKEE BOAT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jan., one week, two weekends (except Mon & Tue)	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest boat show with over 400 boats from over 80 manufacturers, yachts, aluminum fishing boats, ski boats, pontoons, runabouts & jet skis, plus dock systems & marine accessories.	unk

### GREAT LAKES PET EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. 1-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest charitable event that raises money for companion animals in Wisconsin. Featuring exhibitors including local Wisconsin rescues, pet products and services, great entertainment, and the best shopping for pet lovers.	unk

### WOMAN UP!

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Feb. Sat. 10am-4pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	A day to celebrate all walks of a woman's life with 250+ vendors and experts in health care, fitness, finance, beauty, education and food as you shop, sample, and listen to presentations.	unk

### MILWAUKEE/NARI SPRING IMPROVEMENT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Feb. Thu-Sun., 12-8pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Home improvement trade show with special attractions and interactive entertainment.	unk

### MILWAUKEE RV SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Feb. Thu. thru Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Displays and sales of a wide range of recreational vehicles including pop-up campers, travel trailers, 5th wheels and motorhomes.	unk

### MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL SPORTS SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Mar. Sun. thru Wed., see hours on website	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Exhibits on fishing, hunting, camping, boating and outdoor adventure.	unk

### WINTER POWWOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Mar., Sat. 11am-10pm, Sun. 11am-6pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	American Indian traditional powwow with interactive tribal dances planned to include the general public, with extensive marketplace, traditional foods, and family friendly environment.	unk

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Jun., Jul., Aug. Wed.'s, 6-11pm	State Fair Park, Budweiser Pavilion, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Milwaukee's most popular local bands entertain thousands of fans each week at this indoor/outdoor family friendly concert venue.	Free

### GREEK FEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jun. Fri./Sat. 11am-11pm, Sun. 11am-9pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Festival of Greek food, dance, concerts, marketplace.	Free

### WISCONSIN STATE FAIR--\$2 THURSDAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Thu. (promotion ends at 4pm)	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Barnyard animals, crafts, live music, big name entertainers, food, exhibits, and, of course, a midway.	\$2 with 2 non-perishable food items or donation

### WISCONSIN STATE FAIR—FAMILY FUN MONDAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Mon. 8am-6pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Barnyard animals, crafts, live music, big name entertainers, food, exhibits, and, of course, a midway.	\$5 adults, free kids <12

### HOLIDAY FOLK FAIR INTERNATIONAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid November, Fri.- Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Multicultural festival of music, food, dance, and the arts.	unk

### HORSE EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Thu. 7am- 9pm, Fri. 7am-5pm, Sat. 7am-9pm, Sun. 7am-1pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Wisconsin State 4-H horse expo including English and Western pleasure, showmanship, trail, and more.	Free

### MAKER FAIRE MILWAUKEE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sat. 9am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Showcase of invention, creativity, tech enthusiasts, crafters, artists, educators, tinkerers, students and others.	Free

### HARVEST FAIR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 9am-11pm, Sun. 9am-5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Autumn fair that features rides, food, games such as pumpkin bowling, and contests such as the pumpkin chuckin'.	Free

## FAMILY FREE DAY AT THE ZOO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., Mar., select Sat.'s 9:30am-4:30pm	Milwaukee County Zoo, 10001 W. Bluemound Rd., Wauwatosa	If you want to stay warm, we have many indoor animal exhibits for your enjoyment. If you're more of the outdoorsy type, you'll also find many outdoor animal exhibits.	Free

## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT—ZOO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 4- 8pm	Milwaukee County Zoo, 10001 W Bluemound Rd., Wauwatosa	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, animals, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations,	Free, pre-registration required

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing.

## QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

*If you are a resident of this neighborhood and wish to make an interesting observation about it, please send your quote to [JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net)*

## PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 91st & Adler



Today's neighborhood-  
Pettit National Ice Center



Today's neighborhood-  
Fair Park Business Center



Today's neighborhood-76th & Main St.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on 91st & Adler looking east

For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods* and Jill Florence Lackey's and Rick Petrie's *Germans in Milwaukee: A neighborhood history*.

Do you have great photos of this neighborhood? Are you a resident with an interesting quote about this neighborhood? Do you have recurring outings, additions, corrections, or general comments about this neighborhood? Please email your input to:  
[JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:JFLanthropologist@sbcglobal.net)