

**Approximate boundaries:**

**N**-W. Ramsey Ave; **S**-W. College Ave;  
**E**-I-94, **W**-S. 27<sup>th</sup> St

# FAR SOUTH SIDE *Goldman Park*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Goldman Park is a moderate-density neighborhood. Home architectural styles are mainly 1950s to 1970s ranch houses with a number of newer two-story residences. The neighborhood topography is flat with a scattering of gently rolling hills. A few houses in the neighborhood are on large wooded lots. Most of the streets follow a grid pattern, except for few winding thoroughfares. Some streets in the southwest corner of the neighborhood do not have curbs or sidewalks.

The business district is along South 27th Street--one of the major commercial corridors in the city. The street teems with fast food restaurants, strip malls, and car dealerships. There are no public parks or public green spaces in the neighborhood.

## HISTORY

Goldman Park is one far south side neighborhood among many that makes up today's Garden District. The boundaries of the Garden District are those of the 13th Aldermanic District, which include the western half of Goldman Park. All Garden District neighborhoods were once part of the Town of Lake, with boundaries of Lake Michigan to South 27th Street and Greenfield to College Avenues. By the mid-1950s, the City of Milwaukee had annexed the areas that today encompass the Garden District.

### Early populations

Many of the far south side neighborhoods that comprise today's Garden District owe a debt to the dreams of a local Norwegian named John Saveland. Saveland owned a booming business on Water Street that provided provisions for fishing boats, steamships, and schooners that sailed from Milwaukee.

And he also had an interest in real estate. In 1887 Saveland organized a group of investors that purchased 30 acres of land bordered by today's Bradley, Howard, Whitnall, and Howell. The group hoped to attract upper middle class home buyers to their project--people who would work in the city and retire to their county estates at the end of the work day.

But despite a convenient Milwaukee streetcar with stops along Howell Avenue, few lots were sold in the early days. Saveland ultimately turned some of the land into a recreational venture, with an amusement hall and grounds. It wasn't until the time of Saveland's death in 1909 that the area was finally beginning to attract settlers. These were not the upper middle class professionals that Saveland had expected, but south side working class people--mostly Poles.

*What do Goldmann's Department Store--once on Mitchell--and this neighborhood have in common?*

The answer is Leopold and Leo Goldman. Back in 1898 the brothers assisted their father with the opening of Goldmann's on Mitchell. Years later they started Goldman Realty, and some of their property interests were in neighborhoods in the Town of Lake. They named and dedicated several streets in today's Goldman Park in 1931, sometimes using the "gold" from their surname, such as in the cases of Mangold and Goldcrest Streets. Others they named included Henry and Kimberly,



Today's neighborhood-  
House with outdoor animal sculptures  
east of 18th & Ramsey

but the reasons they selected these names are not known. The neighborhood today carries the Goldman name.

Goldman Park was one far south side area that began to attract residents during the Great Depression. Most were Poles and Germans, with a scattering of French Canadians, Irish, and Italians. See a family profile below.

### **Goldman Park family profile (1930s)** (Information from U.S. Census and other public records)

#### **The Bembeneks**

Milwaukee's only Bembenek family settled at various locations in the Garden District. In the late 1920s and 1930s, the family of Roman and Frances (nee Duszynski) owned a home at 3241 South 12th Street in today's Morgandale neighborhood—at that time in the Town of Lake. Roman and Frances were immigrants from Poland. Roman worked first in a farm machinery factory (possibly Allis Chalmers) and later as a carpenter in a steel foundry. The couple's children at the time were Helen, Stanley, Leopold, Paul, Joseph, and Mary.

Son Paul Bembenek ended up in the Goldman Park area. In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served active duty in World War II. He married Phyllis M. Moczynski and moved to 6234 South 27th Street and, in the late 1950s, to 2430 West College Avenue—both in today's Goldman Park neighborhood. He later moved to Milwaukee's southern suburbs, died in 2004, and was buried in Union Grove Cemetery in Racine County.

The Bembenek family drew national media attention when the daughter of Paul's younger brother Joseph was charged with murdering Christine Schultz, ex-wife of her husband Fred Schultz, a Milwaukee policeman. Lawrencia (Laurie) Bembenek, a former police officer herself, was convicted based on circumstantial evidence, but the conviction drew criticism primarily because of issues surrounding the chain of custody of the murder weapon and hair evidence. After serving years at the Taycheedah Correctional Institution, Lawrencia escaped through a window, but was later found in Canada. Because of the controversy surrounding the case, Bembenek was allowed to plead no contest to second degree murder and was released for time served.

For years Bembenek tried to have her sentence overturned, but was unsuccessful. A TV movie, *Run Bambi Run*, was made based on the case. However, her health failed in her late forties and she died at the young age of 52.

#### *Post World War II*

While housing was reaching some areas on the far south side such as Goldman's Park in the early 20th century, it wasn't until the end of World War II that the housing market really began to boom. By the late 1950s Goldman Park was nearly filled with just under 350 residences, a school, and a scattering of businesses. Newly arriving settlers were migrating from Near South Side and Historic South Side neighborhoods. —mostly Poles, some Germans, and later in the century, Latinos.

### South 27th Street

The business corridor that was developing in Goldman Park as the result of the housing boom was South 27th Street. Below is a list of neighborhood businesses on this street in 1968.

<i>Addresses on S. 27th in Goldman Park area in 1968</i>	<i>Names of businesses, apartments, offices, and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
5900	Ramsey DX Service Station
5912	(Walter) Jeski Food Store Grocers
5928	Lake City Liquors, Inc.
5942	Hilltop House Home for the Aged
6000	Richard Barnes Physician
6036	Courtland Heights Apartments
6050	Courtland Heights Apartments
6206	Rux Hi-Way Service Station
6218	Shamrock Inn Tavern
6280	Hi-41 Laundro-Mat
6284	College Bakery

### Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, Goldman Park has just under 2,000 residents. Slightly over half are European Americans (most still of German and Polish ancestry, but with a substantial number claiming Irish and Italian). Just over 4 in 10 are Latinos (mostly Mexican, but including quite a few Puerto Ricans). There are also a scattering of Asians, American Indians, African Americans, Arabs, Jordanians, Norwegians, and people of multiple backgrounds in the area. The neighborhood has significantly more men than women.

Over two-thirds of the property units in Goldman Park are owned. The price of home ownership is high by Milwaukee standards. Select costs for approximately 6 in 10 homes (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, insurance, taxes, contracts to purchase) range from \$1,501 to \$2,000 a month. Rents are modest, with nearly 9 of 10 units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month.

Goldman Park has a bimodal pattern in household incomes. Over 3 in 10 fall into the lower middle income level (with annual household incomes of \$25,001 to \$50,000) and over 3 in 10 fall into the upper middle income level (with annual household incomes of \$75,001 to \$150,000). The largest number of occupations claimed by residents are in the fields of administration, sales, and production. Three times as many list farming as their chief occupation than the proportions in other Milwaukee areas.

Gardening (or as some apparently say—farming) is a major hobby among Goldman Park residents—a tradition carried over from the time when the neighborhood was part of the Town of Lake. In 2008, the Common Council approved a resolution to name all the neighborhoods in the 13th Aldermanic District (which includes the western section of Goldman Park) the *Garden District of the City of Milwaukee*, capitalizing on a long tradition of gardening among residents

and businesses. At the time, Alderman Witkowski said, “Residents and businesses here have worked hard to solidify this identity. We have had perennial exchanges and gatherings, lectures by noted gardeners, and even awarded area businesses landscaping awards to encourage and foster the character of our area.” The idea for the Garden District grew from discussions between the alderman and residents about the interest in and tradition of gardening and landscaping within the district. The effort began in earnest in early 2007, when a group of individuals formalized a garden committee and met regularly to create a vision for the 13th Aldermanic District that focused on gardening and landscaping to beautify and improve quality-of-life.

## 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.

GARDEN DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. through mid Oct., Sat.'s 1-5pm	Just south of Howard on 6th St.	Market of fresh vegetables and other vendors.	Free

GARDEN DISTRICT CRAFT FAIR			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Apr., Sat. 9am-3pm	3333 S. Howell	Fair of over 25 vendors, concessions, prizes, bake sale, and more.	unk

SLEDDING--WILSON			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Winter, daytime	Wilson Recreation, 4001 S. 20th St.	Sledding hills for family and friends.	Free

GLOW SKATE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Dec., Fri. 7:30-9pm	Wilson Park Arena, 4001 S 20th St.	Skating, glow-in-the-dark necklaces, holiday lights, music, prize drawings and a gourmet hot-chocolate bar (skate rentals available).	\$5

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--WILSON			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4, 9am-10pm	Wilson Park, 1601 W. Howard Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, music, games, fireworks.	Free

### EGYPTIAN COPTIC BAKE SALE—OAK CREEK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Dec., Sat., Sun. 10am-6pm	St. Mary & St. Antonious Coptic Orthodox Church, 1521 W. Drexel Ave., Oak Creek	Christmas bake sale, ethnic food, church tour, Egyptian souvenirs.	Free

### TASTE OF EGYPT—OAK CREEK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Aug., Fri. 12-8pm, Sat. 10am-80pm, Sun. 11am-7pm	St. Mary and St. Antonious Coptic Orthodox Church, 1521 W. Drexel Ave., Oak Creek	Opportunity to sample Egyptian foods at Egyptian Christian church, alcohol-free family fun.	Free

### OAK CREEK LIONSFEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Sep., Fri. starts 3pm, Sat. 12pm, Sun. 9am, Mon. 12pm	9327 S. Shepard Ave., Oak Creek	Labor Day long weekend festival with food, Brew City Wrestling, raffle, midway rides, and more.	Free

These outings are provided courtesy of MECAH Publishing. To access the book that provides nearly 600 outings—all priced under \$10—for the entire Greater Milwaukee area, go to <http://mecahmilwaukee.com/NonFiction.html>

## QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

### Quotes from an ongoing oral history of the Garden District by Urban Anthropology Inc.<sup>1</sup>—about THEN

“Well, being a closet historian, I had the privilege of going through some film from the Milwaukee Recreation Department and seeing what these pocket parks looked like in the 20s and 30s and that realm. It was so different. The landscaping was all flowers. It was so dense you couldn’t see from one corner to the other. With kids, you have activity in the park, but it was much more of a gathering space in the 20s, 30s, 40s than now. In more recent times, the differences are safety issues and letting kids do things on their own. When I was a kid it was different. Now we are a little more cautious in what we are doing. They aren’t as much a gathering place as they once were.”

## Quotes from an ongoing oral history of the Garden District by Urban Anthropology Inc.—about NOW

“I realized early on that there was great power in neighborhood associations, but we had none. There was great power in business associations, but we had none. It helps to have them, so I went out and formed them.”

“My children are now grown up, but we did enjoy a lot of activity—for example, Fourth of July, fireworks, go for swimming, gather all the families and do barbecues here.”

“The neighborhood has had a large population of police and firefighters – and they didn’t live a lot downtown. Mainly white policeman and firefighters. But the residency requirement has been lifted, so in the next 10 years, most of the city employees will most likely have scattered.”

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<sup>11</sup> Urban Anthropology Inc. complies with human subjects requirements of formal research and asks informants to sign informed consent forms that stipulate anonymity, hence names are not provided with the quotes.

## PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-  
20th & Ramsey



Today's neighborhood-Houses at 18th & Ramsey

Todays neighborhood-Winding street at 22nd & Bridge St.



Todays neighborhood-Houses 23rd & Mangold



Todays neighborhood-22nd & Bridge St. looking east





Today's neighborhood-House with outdoor animal sculptures east of 18th & Ramsey

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 Dr. Jill Florence Lackey at: [jflanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:jflanthropologist@currently.com)