

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Ohio Ave; S-W. Morgan Ave;
E-S. 35th St, W-S. 39th St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *Harder Oaks*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Harder Oaks is a small neighborhood of about four-square blocks. It is principally residential, and most of the houses are Period Revivals—a style popular in the first half of the 20th century. The neighborhood is just east of the Alverno College campus. The only non-residential feature is the Audubon Technology and Communication High School. The neighborhood has no business corridor.

HISTORY

A charming, genteel neighborhood with fewer than 500 residents, Harder Oaks is often considered to be a subdivision of its larger neighbor, the Jackson Park neighborhood.

Early populations

In the 1920s second- and third-generation residents with substantial incomes on the South Side were settling at Milwaukee's edge, in the Jackson Park, Southgate, and Southpoint neighborhoods. Most of these migrants were German or Polish—often Catholics. Many built upscale homes along South Forest Home Avenue. But by the end of the 1920s America was experiencing the Great Depression and most building stopped.

This was not true of Harder Oaks, which developed in the 1930s. The neighborhood began as Harder Oaks Park, a subdivision of Jackson Park. Jackson Park was a neighborhood already showcasing some of the finest Period Revival architecture on the South Side. During the late 20s and early 30s architects were adapting colonial Gothic, Tudor, Renaissance, and English cottages to American tastes. In Harder Oaks this trend upgraded and attracted some of the wealthier south siders.



Today's neighborhood—
Houses on 38th & Holt

Harder Oaks would gain a prestigious neighbor in 1946. The School Sisters of St. Francis purchased 50 acres of the Fischer Farm on 39th and Morgan as a place to expand earlier operations. The work of the School Sisters had begun in Milwaukee in 1887 when they established St. Joseph Convent on 27th and Greenfield—which at the time was at the edge of Milwaukee. The Convent spawned a school that was known as the St. Joseph's Academy and High School for Girls and Young Ladies (as John Gurda once said, "Try spelling that out on a sweatshirt"). In 1920 the Academy added a two-year post-secondary program and renamed itself St. Joseph Normal School. By the 1930s the Normal School morphed into a four-year institution under the title of Alverno Teachers College. It was this institution that the School Sisters hoped to further expand at the 50-acre site on the border of Harder Oaks—an area that was once again at Milwaukee's edge.

By the 1950s the institution was known as Alverno College, and the campus was again expanding. Original buildings included the main administration structure (now Founders Hall) and its classrooms, chapel, cafeteria and kitchen; the auditorium and gym on the south;

and Corona Hall (dormitory) on the north. By 1956 the resident population outgrew Corona Hall, and the construction of Clare Hall was begun. In the 1960s Loretta Hall (now Austin) and the Nursing Education Building were added. In the 1970s Weekend College (now known as Alverno on the Weekend) was launched to reach out to working women who lacked the time to earn their degrees. Over 1,000 students commuted daily to the campus that was just beyond the boundary of the Harder Oaks neighborhood.

See the resident profile of an Alverno leader below.

Harder Oaks resident profile (late 20th century)

(information from Milwaukee City Directory and other public records)

Sister Bernarda Handrup

In the late 20th century, Sister Bernarda Handrup lived at 3415 South Princeton Avenue in the center of the Harder Oaks neighborhood. She had served as third Vice President of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean at Alverno College from 1954 to 1987, the year of her death.

Born in 1927 in Chicago, Illinois, she appears to have been the daughter of German immigrants, Bernhard Handrup and Mathilda Babel.

During her years at Alverno, she and Sister Austin Doherty pioneered the college's ability-based curriculum. The two spearheaded the research and analysis needed to develop the curriculum, which focused on eight abilities: Communication, Analysis, Problem Solving, Valuing in Decision-Making, Social Interaction, Developing a Global Perspective, Effective Citizenship, and Aesthetic Engagement. Not relying on letter grades to assess student performance, the college fell under a flurry of criticism and skepticism from other academic institutions during the 1970s. Both Handrup and Doherty weathered the storm.

Sister Bernarda Handrup died in the neighborhood at age 60. She is buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Students are still commuting by the thousands to Alverno College, bordering the tiny haven of Harder Oaks. Harder Oaks' population has remained relatively unchanged. The overwhelming majority of the residents are European Americans, with the highest number claiming German and Polish ancestry. About 1 in 20 are Latinos. A few immigrants live in the neighborhood, including a handful from Mexico, Central America, Burma/Myanmar, and Serbia. The population is slighter older than average and women outnumber men in the neighborhood by over 25 percent.

More neighborhood households fall into the upper middle class (with annual incomes between \$75,000 and \$150,000) than any other category. Housing values are high and owning a home typically costs over \$2,000 a month. Currently home ownership is 100 percent.

Residents are also highly educated compared to Milwaukeeans overall. Just under 2 in 10 adults have attained bachelor's degrees. The highest number of resident occupations are in the fields of administration, food service, and education.

INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURE

- **Audubon Technology and Communication High School** at 3300 S. 39th St., a college-oriented school with emphasis on technology, community, and careers.

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.

MOVIES AT SOUTHGATE CINEMA

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily	3320 S. 30th St.	Popular movies at a Marcus Theater.	unk

TOUR OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily 8am-4:30pm	2405 W. Forest Home	Tour the beautiful Chapel Gardens, Landmark Chapel, and the Hall of History that tells the story of Milwaukee dignitaries, including European founders of Milwaukee, several mayors, major African American activists, and brewery tycoons.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4 8am-10pm	Wilson Park, 1601 W. Howard Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, free ice cream, fireworks.	Free

MILWAUKEE FIRE MUSEUM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
1st Sun. of each month, 1-3pm, (except holidays)	1516 W. Oklahoma Ave.	Opportunity to see exhibits and artifacts of the Milwaukee Fire Department back to the 1800s; stories of history of Department and fires.	Free

UMOS MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Sun. 10am-12pm	Starts at 20th & Oklahoma Ave. (see route on website)	Southside parade of arts, floats, local organizations honoring Mexican Independence Day.	Free

SLEDDING

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

WINTER FEST AT JACKSON PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Dec., Sat. 12-3 pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Face-painting, cocoa, crafts for kids, music, and more.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--JACKSON

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4, 8am-10pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, free ice cream, fireworks.	Free

JACKSON PARK FARMERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. thru early Sep., Thu. 3:30-7pm	3300 W. Forest Home Ave.	Fresh food from Wisconsin farms, baked goods, crafts, art.	Free

Most of 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

If you are a resident of Harder Oaks and have an interesting observation to make about your neighborhood, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@scurrently.com

PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-Audubon Technology and Communication High School



Today's neighborhood-Houses on Princeton Ave.

Today's neighborhood-Houses on 38th & Holt



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@currently.com



www.urban-anthropology.org