

**Approximate boundaries:**  
**N**-W. Capitol Dr; **S**-W. Lisbon Ave;  
**E**-N. 76<sup>th</sup> St; **W**-N. 84<sup>th</sup> St

# NORTHWEST SIDE *Nash Park*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Nash Park is a mainly residential neighborhood with a commercial corridor on Capitol Drive. There are a variety of housing types in this neighborhood, including many mid-20th century ranch, Cape Cod, and Colonial-style homes interspersed with a few Tudors and early 20th century bungalows. Most of the streets follow a grid pattern except at the southern boundary where West Lisbon Avenue cuts through at a diagonal.

The neighborhood's public green space, also named Nash Park, is a small 9.3-acre commons with a soccer field and a tot lot. See neighborhood photos below.

## HISTORY

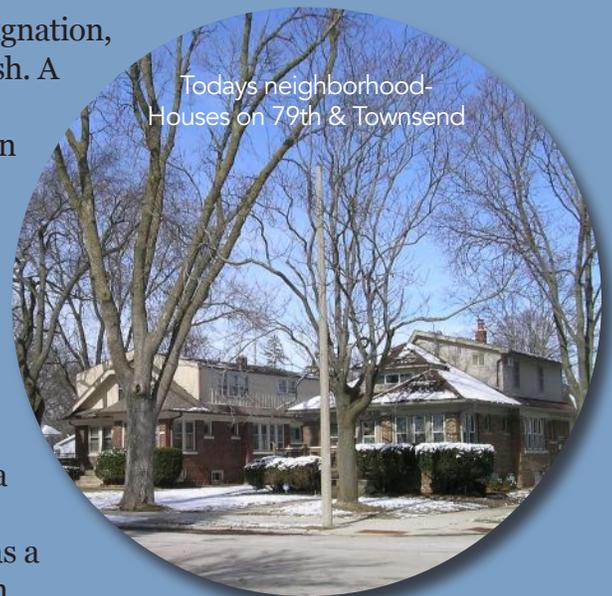
The neighborhood of Nash Park, the park by the same designation, and Nash Street all owe their names to Charles Dennis Nash. A Vermont native with banking experience, Nash settled in Milwaukee in 1853 and founded the Bank of Milwaukee. In 1859 he became a founding member of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company—to whom Nash lent money during a later financial crisis. Nash's son George named Nash Street after his father in 1897. The park and the neighborhood continued the tradition.

### Early populations

Although Nash Park did not actually develop as a neighborhood until well into the 20th century, it did have a scattering of very early settlers. The arterial at the neighborhood's southern border, Lisbon Avenue, began as a plank road in the 1850s. Named for its destination, Lisbon connected Milwaukee to the town of Lisbon. Small hamlets of mainly German farmers grew up along this road in the Nash Park area (then part of the unincorporated Town of Wauwatosa).

However, the Nash Park area did not draw residents in earnest until the 1930s and these again tended to be Germans migrating west from Milwaukee's northside neighborhoods. In 1933 the area had few developed roads and only 30 households, and most of these were located on Lisbon or 76th Street (then Wauwatosa Avenue). By 1940 the number of streets and households had more than doubled. The developing neighborhood also received a bonus during the decade. Beginning in 1933, support from the Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration allowed Milwaukee County to transform tax-delinquent real estate into parks. The area that would later be known as Nash Park would become a recipient, as would nearby Dineen Park.

At least one of the earliest arriving families to live in the Nash Park area during the Great Depression years did not purchase their home. The family rented. See below.



## Nash Park Random Resident (1940s)

*Name selected randomly from the 1940 City Directory in the Nash Park area  
(photo and other information found in public records on Ancestry.com)*

### Hugo A. Marx

Hugo Marx was 29 years old in 1940. Sometime between 1930 and 1940 Hugo and his young family had rented a house at 8102 W. Keefe Avenue in today's Nash Park area. He was raised in the Sherman Park neighborhood and had graduated from Washington High School (*see his school photo from the high school yearbook to the right—from Ancestry.com*). Hugo's parents, Joseph Isadore Marx and Martha Maria Magdalena Marx (nee Heuer), were German immigrants, possibly of Jewish origins.

At some time in the 1930s, Hugo married Isabel Purtell, the granddaughter of Irish immigrants who had settled in rural Dodge County, Wisconsin. By 1940 Isabel and Hugo had two young children, Dennis, age 2, and Sharon, age 1. They would soon have another child, Jeannie. Family members attended St. Catherine's Congregation in the Sherman Park area. In 1940, Isabel's sister, Lucille Purtell, was also living with them in the \$40 a month rented house on Keefe. Lucille told census-takers that she had a job as a maid, doing "housework," but records do not show if she was in service for her sister's family or some other family.

Hugo appeared to be making gains in the workforce, despite the Great Depression and a rapidly growing family. After graduating from high school, he had taken a job as a clerk for an insurance agency. However, by 1940 he switched to auto mechanics and bought his own garage.

But tragedy would hit this family. On October 10, 1943, Hugo died at age 33. The cause of his death is not known. He wasn't a World War II enlistee. Despite having a brother Harry who served in the U.S. Army in Australia during the war years, Hugo never enlisted. Were there health issues that kept him out of the military, or was he ineligible because of his three young children? Records shed no light on this. Hugo's funeral was held at St. Catherine's Congregation and he was buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in the neighboring Dineen Park neighborhood.

Shortly after Hugo's death, wife Isabel and the three very young children moved to Pewaukee, Wisconsin, where she apparently had relatives. She never remarried and remained in Pewaukee to her death.



## Post-World War II

The neighborhood finally reached maturity following the end of the Great Depression and World War Two, when, like most Milwaukee neighborhoods, it experienced a housing boom. Commerce continued to grow on Capitol Drive.

### Capitol Drive

Business of any kind was slow to develop in Nash Park. By the 1950s a few businesses began to open on West Capitol Drive. The thoroughfare had originally been named Lake Street. In 1926, the city was trying to eliminate duplicate names and renamed the street Capitol Drive. W.J.C. Flieth had suggested the designation because the capitol in Madison was due west of it.

The following chart shows the businesses on West Capitol in the Nash Park area in 1955. See notes below.

Addresses on W. Capitol Dr. in 1955	Names of businesses, offices, apartments, and organizations from the <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u>
7609	Hackl & Draeger's Texaco Gas Station
7638	Krueger's Hardware Store
8035	Rev. Paul A. Tanner, office
8404	James Dooley Bait Shop

### Summary notes from the U.S. Census and other records:

- In 1955 Texaco stations were ubiquitous in Wisconsin. For many years, Texaco was the only company selling gasoline under the same brand name in all 50 US states.
- Rev. Paul Tanner (priest) had been a chaplain for St. Mary's Convent (Home for the Aged). The convent was founded by Salvadorian nuns who cared for the elderly, beginning in 1903. The convent went through several naming transformations—from "St. Mary's Home for Old Ladies" to "St. Mary's Home for Aged Ladies" to "St. Mary's Nursing Home." The building was razed in 2013. Tanner may have been living on 80th and Capitol in 1955 because of the proximity of Divine Savior High School about a mile west on Capitol. The school was under the direction of these nuns.

In the second half of the 20th century African Americans began to migrate to the neighborhood. This happened for two reasons: (1) the need for housing following the razing of over 8,000 homes in the African American Bronzeville community in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s (see Halyard Park neighborhood), and (2) the availability of family-supporting jobs in the former Granville and Northwest Side communities. As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly, particularly after the passage of the national fair housing law and the Milwaukee fair housing law in 1968. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and move into the middle class.

Unfortunately, the deindustrialization movement that began in the 1980s arrested this course. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. What had been a working-and middle-class area on the Northwest Side was in economic decline.

## Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, Nash Park has approximately 2,500 residents. Of these, almost 6 in 10 are European American, with the overwhelming majority still being German. Almost 3 in 10 residents are African Americans. In addition, about 1 in 20 residents are Asians (almost all Asian Indian), and the remainder are Latinos (mostly of Mexican ancestry), American Indian, or residents of multiple backgrounds. The neighborhood also has substantially more women than men.

Over half of Nash Park residents live in low or lower middle-income households (with annual incomes under \$50,000). Despite this, the neighborhood is a very well-educated one, with nearly half its population holding bachelor's or graduate degrees. The occupations claimed most often by residents are in the fields of administration, food service, sales, and education. Nash Park has over twice the number of people employed in social services, medical technology, and computers/math than other areas in the city.

Just over two-thirds of the property units in Nash Park are owned. In over half the cases, select costs for home ownership (e.g., mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase, taxes, insurance) go for \$1,001 to \$1,500 a month. Rents are modest, with over half the rental units going for \$501 to \$1,000 a month.

## IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Milwaukee German Immersion School**, at 3778 N. 82nd, a highly rated school for English speaking students where all classes are taught in German.
- **Nash Park**, at 7800 W. Nash St. (see photo below).

## 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.

DINEEN PARK GOLF COURSE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Warm weather months	Dineen Park, 6901 W. Vienna St.	1 course, 18 holes	Contact Milw. County Parks

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4, 8:30-11:30am	Enderis Playfield, 2978 N. 72 <sup>nd</sup> St.	Parade, games, music, watermelon-eating contest.	Free

## FREE FAMILY SWIM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Tue. 6:00-6:55pm females; 7:00-7:55pm males	Washington H.S., 2525 N. Sherman Blvd., enter main gym door on Sherman Blvd.	Indoor swimming with swim caps available for purchase (children 7 and under must be accompanied by adult). 875-6025	Families, 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 in Nash Park and wish to make an interesting observation about this neighborhood, please send your quote to [JFLanthropologist@currently.com](mailto:JFLanthropologist@currently.com)*

## PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-Nash Park

Today's neighborhood-Houses on 78th & Keefe Ave



Today's neighborhood-  
Milwaukee German Immersion School  
at 82nd & Vienna



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](mailto:JFLanthropologist@currently.com)