

Approximate boundaries:

N-E. Locust St; **S**-E. North Ave;

E-N. Oakland Ave, **W**-Milwaukee River

UPPER EAST SIDE *Riverside Park*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

The Riverside Park neighborhood is a hilly neighborhood, with relatively steep hills along the Milwaukee River. The area has a significant amount of green space due to the neighborhood's park, also named Riverside Park, a 25-acre commons on the east bank of the Milwaukee River. The park includes a large area to the south of Riverside High School that extends east to Oakland Avenue. The Urban Ecology Center occupies the south end of the park. The Milwaukee Rotary Arboretum is just to the south of Riverside Park and occupies 40 acres along the east bank of the river. One branch of the Oak Leaf Trail cuts through the neighborhood running north/south between East Locust just east of the river and East North Avenue just west of Oakland.

Most of the moderately dense residential housing is on the eastern section of the Riverside Park neighborhood. The houses tend to be mainly early 20th century wood frame duplexes and late 19th century Queen Anne two-story homes. There are also a few bungalows and some multi-unit apartment buildings along Oakland Avenue.

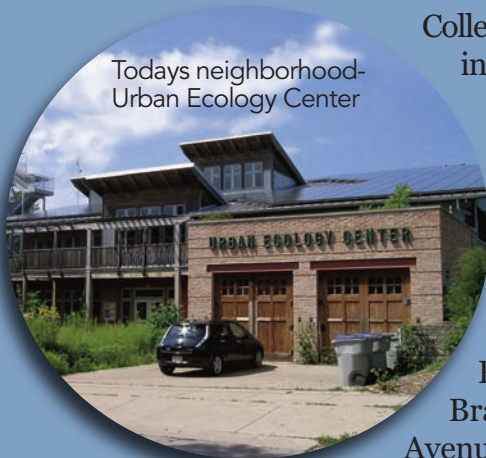
The main commercial corridors are on the south end of the neighborhood along North Avenue and another commercial area along Oakland Avenue just south of Locust Street. See neighborhood photos below.

HISTORY

Very early on, a trio of prosperous men from New England left their mark on today's Riverside Park neighborhood—particularly on its street names. Bartlett Avenue was named after John Knowlton Bartlett who was born in New Hampshire and was a graduate of Yale Medical College. A land speculator as well as a physician, Bartlett came to Wisconsin in 1841 and became a founding member of the Milwaukee County Medical Society in 1846. In 1847, Milwaukee County politician, Charles Larkin, named the Riverside Park street after him.

A few years later another New Hampshire native came to Milwaukee. This was Joel Parker, who had distinguished himself in Massachusetts by being appointed chairman of the Cambridge Law School at Harvard in 1847, the same year that he began acquiring property in Milwaukee. Parker's original tract was south of today's Riverside Park and was roughly bounded by today's Warren Avenue, Brady Street, Prospect Avenue, Kane Place, Newhall Avenue, North Avenue, and the Milwaukee River. The land was platted as the Cambridge Subdivision after the Cambridge Law School, and its central street became Cambridge Avenue—an avenue that extends into today's Riverside Park.

Less than a decade later another New Englander left his mark on the area. In 1857 the neighborhood's central street, Newhall, was platted and named after Daniel Newhall, a native of Massachusetts. Daniel Newhall had arrived in Milwaukee in 1844 to make his fortune. He was successful as a trader in the city's burgeoning wheat industry, and in 1857 he built the Newhall House Hotel, often called the finest of its kind in the Midwest. Unfortunately, in 1883, the hotel burned down and 70 people were killed.



Today's neighborhood—
Urban Ecology Center

Early populations

Although Riverside Park got its street names from prosperous New Englanders, there was nothing well-heeled about the populations that permanently settled the neighborhood. In the late 1800s industrial workers began to migrate northeast from Milwaukee's center in search of work. Most of these were Germans. They were attracted in part by the prospective employers of Worsted Mills, a yarn factory, and a cluster of icehouses near the Milwaukee River.

Riverside Park remained a working class neighborhood well into the 20th century. Oakland Avenue, on its eastern border, became a major commercial corridor. The proprietors were as unpretentious as the industrial workers, and most lived above or behind their shops, or mere blocks away. While many of the shopkeepers were German, the merchants, as in most Milwaukee neighborhoods, tended to be more diverse than the residents, including Jews, African Americans, Poles, and several Appalachians. Below is a list of businesses on Oakland between North Avenue and one-half block north of Locust in 1927. (Note that Milwaukee changed its addressing system in the early 1930s.) See notes following the chart.

<i>Addresses on N. Oakland in 1927</i>	<i>Businesses, apartments, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
	North Avenue
494	Frank B. Cale Barber
547	Emilie M. Pohlke Chiroprapist
557	Henry W. Hegemann Carpet Contractor
559	Margaret Moran Dressmaker
589	Samuel Matthews Baths Annie C. Matthews Dressmaker
600	Oak Crest Apartments
649	Oakland Avenue Garage
666	Anton Schmidt Mason Contractor
680	Riverside Park Garage
686	Josephine Hennes Confectioner
689	Bert E. Wilkenson Confectioner
690	Giles G. Gregory Barber
691	Lewis K. Benson Baker
692	(Hallock) Winkie's Hardware Store
695	(Hyman) Gilbert's Grocery Inc. East Side Mutual Building & Loan Association
696	Michael G. Cyganek Shoes Robert D. Curtin Real Estate
698	Hyman Sack Dry Goods
701	Flora Werner Beauty Parlor

<i>Addresses on N. Oakland in 1927</i>	<i>Businesses, apartments, offices, and organizations from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
702	Anthony Gahn Meats
703	Riverside Magazine Shop
	Approximately Locust Street
704	National Tea Company Henry J. Jung Jeweler Charles H. Kendall Dentist Cyrus L. White Physician
705	Riverside Food Market Ray M. Fitzgerald Dentist Charles M. Cody Dentist
706	Economy Drug Store

Summary notes and information from U.S. Census and other public records:

- Most of the businesses on Oakland were near its northern border; the southern section of the street was mostly residential.
- This stretch of Oakland Ave. had 7 shops selling food (groceries, candy, bakery, meats).
- This stretch had only one apartment building in 1927.
- As in most Milwaukee neighborhoods prior to 1970, few of the shopkeepers had attended high school. In addition, most were immigrants or children of immigrants. As in most commercial corridors on the north side of Milwaukee, women were well-represented among the proprietors.
- Frank Cale, the barber, was an anomaly on the street in that he was neither an immigrant nor a son of an immigrant. He was born in Iowa and his family had deep roots in Appalachia.
- Emilie Pohlke, the chiropodist, was a German immigrant. Despite her profession as a foot doctor, she had only completed the 7th grade in school.
- Henry W. Hegemann, the carpet contractor, was also a German immigrant.
- Margaret Moran, the dressmaker, was an older single women in 1927. She may have been related to Frank Cale the barber. Her family also had deep Appalachian roots in the same areas.
- See profile of Samuel and Annie Matthews below.
- Josephine Hennes, with the candy store, was the daughter of German immigrants.
- Giles G. Gregory, the barber, was also a child of German immigrants.
- Michael G. Cyganek, with the shoe store, was an immigrant from the German sector of Poland. He'd worked in a foundry before opening his own shop.
- Lewis K. Benson, the baker, was the son of a Norwegian immigrant.
- Hallock Winkie, with the hardware store, was the son of a German immigrant father and grandson of an immigrant from England.
- Hyman Gilbert, the grocer, and his wife Bessie were Jewish immigrants from Russia.
- Hyman Sack, with the dry goods store, was another Jewish immigrant from Russia.
- Anthony G. (actually J.) Gahn, the butcher, was not an immigrant or son of an immigrant, but was similar to other shopkeepers, having completed only the 8th grade in school. His store would have a long tenure on the street.

See a profile of one business family on Oakland in the 1920s below.

Riverside Park business family profile (1920s) (Information from census and other public records)

Samuel and Annie Matthews

Early in Milwaukee's history, African Americans had lived all over the city. Solomon Juneau's cook, Joe Oliver, was an African American. Many were skilled artisans and a few were proprietors. Such was the case with Samuel and Annie Matthews.

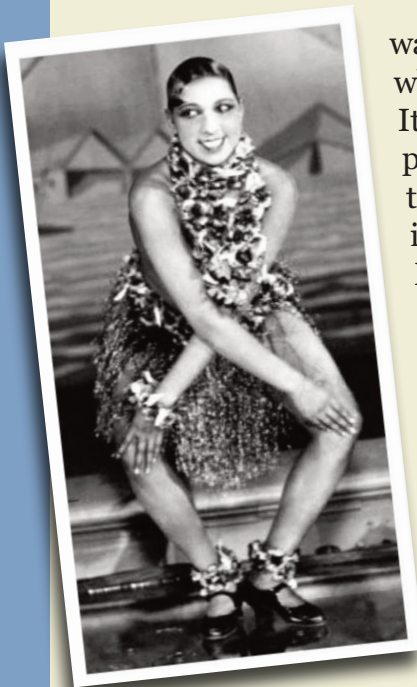
In 1927, Samuel/Sanford Matthews, a massage therapist, operated a clinic on Oakland, near Bellevue. He would have been 70 years old at the time. In the early 20th century, massage therapy was often used to treat World War One patients who suffered from nerve injury or shell shock. Many types of lotions were invented in the 1920s (see photoⁱ). Wealthy patrons often used the massage parlor as a form of beauty treatment.

Samuel Matthews was born in Virginia in 1857. He was likely born into slavery, as Virginia had policies that were aimed at moving free blacks from its borders.

Annie Matthews, Samuel's wife, was a dressmaker in the same building where her husband operated his clinic. It is very possible she was successful with white as well as black patrons. The 1920s was the time of the jazz age, and black entertainers such as Josephine Baker had strong influences on couture, including the banana skirt and the flapper style (see photoⁱⁱ). Annie Matthews was born in Alabama in 1861, also probably into slavery. She would have been 66 in 1927.

It is not known how long the Matthews couple lived in Milwaukee. They had arrived in the 19th century, as they were living on Jefferson Street in 1900, where Samuel again listed his occupation as a masseuse and Annie as a dressmaker.

Of course, some massage parlors at that time, as well as now, were just fronts for prostitution. It does not appear likely in this case, as the Matthews couple were elderly and had been in business for so long at the two addresses.



Changes to the east

Happenings in the Downer Woods neighborhood would influence Cambridge Heights. While Downer Woods, just east of Cambridge Heights, had attracted small colleges since the turn of the 20th century, something happened in 1956 that would have a strong effect on both neighborhoods. This was the year that Wisconsin State College on Downer merged with the downtown University of Wisconsin Extension to become the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. From that point on, both neighborhoods began to draw more students and university staff as residents.

Oakland Avenue would gradually change, especially after the 1956 merger. Below is a list of the businesses and offices that occupied storefronts on Oakland the year after the merger, in 1957. Already there were very early signs of a street that would eventually share its resident focus with a growing population of students in temporary housing. See notes at the end.

<i>Addresses on N. Oakland in 1958</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2303	Apartments
2304	Glendale Apartments
2309	Apartments
2315	Apartments
2344	Kolmer Research Center Cosmetics
2618	Oak Lodge Apartments
2625	Theodore J. Curry Tobacco Jobber
2632	Byer Court Apartments
2636	Oak Crest Apartments
2748	Donald Warshauer Lawyer
2830	Jim & Harold's Auto Service Guaranteed Auto Body Shop
2831	Oakland Standard Service Gas Station
2845	Owl Restaurant
2847	A.J. Gahn Meats & Grocery Market
2850	S.P. Electric Company Contractors
2853	Gilbert Liquor Company Retail
2856	Kalt's Tavern
2857	Max Rodin Meats Inc.
2858	Victor P. Hansen Furrier
2860	Mrs. Marie Benjamin Florist
2862	Francesa's Foods Restaurant
2863	Peggy Kay Beauty Shop
2864	Sherwood Smart Gift Shop
2866	John E. Sanborn Dentist
2868	Katherine K. Corset Shop

<i>Addresses on N. Oakland in 1958</i>	<i>Names of businesses and organizations from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
2900	East Side Federal Savings and Loan Association
2901	Joe Plotkin Delicatessen
2904	Fred W. Schmidz Collection Agency
2905	Oakland Bakery
2906	Riverside Shoe Repair
2907	East Side Foods Groceries
2908	Oakland Laundromat
2910	Richard P. Shecterie Chiropractor
2914	National Food Store Groceries
2915	Economy Drug Store

Summary notes and information from U.S. Census and other public records:

- The number of businesses on this street did not vary significantly over 31 years. And as in 1927, most of the Oakland Ave. businesses were around the northern border of the neighborhood.
- Some of the differences on the street reflect the changing demographics of the residents—particularly the presence of a student population. The number of stores selling groceries was cut just about in half, but three restaurants/delis were present (there were none in 1927).
- In 1927, there was only one apartment building. In 1958 there were seven. There was also a liquor store, a tavern, and a laundromat on the street by 1958.
- As in 1927, women were again well represented among the proprietors.
- Because the last publically accessed U.S. Census is for 1940, not much information could be found on these shopkeepers.
- A few businesses from 1927 were still on the street. These included A.J. Gahn Meats, the East Side Federal Savings and Loan Association, and the Economy Drug Store. It appears that the National Tea Grocery Store became known as the National Food Store in 1958.

The coming of the green

The park that occupies the western half of the neighborhood was always significant. In 1890 the Board of Park Commissioners, then a department of the City of Milwaukee, purchased the park from the Cream City Land Company. The commissioners quickly sought to correct the problem of the railroad tracks of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad running through the center of the park by building a culvert under the tracks to allow safe passage of pedestrians from one end of the park to the other. The park, originally called River Park, immediately became a haven for east side residents. Because it bordered the Milwaukee River, residents now had easy access to the water for ice skating in the winter and boating in the summer. The commissioners renamed the park Riverside Park in 1900.

Over the next century, the railroad tracks were transformed into today’s Oak Leaf Trail. By the 1990s, area residents sought to increase the use of the park by turning it into a hub for environmental education. These efforts culminated in the current Urban Ecology Center, which began in Riverside Park and today has multiple locations. The Riverside Park branch includes the “green” building

which houses resource areas and classrooms and is home to live animals, educational exhibits, and resource materials about the environment. Outdoor/indoor programs include open rock climbing, lectures, poetry readings, owl prowls, bird walks, and stargazing, to name just a few.

The Riverside Park branch of the Urban Ecology Center also includes the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum (see photo). A “living museum of trees,” this 40-acre site features samples of 70 trees indigenous to Southeastern Wisconsin. The arboretum has multiple uses including expanding the outdoor classroom area for the Urban Ecology Center, serving as a site for research, reducing storm water runoff that improves water quality, adding to the diversity of native plant species, and increasing community access to the river.

Current populations (as of 2017)

In the years that followed the advent of UW-Milwaukee, Riverside Park became a resource for students and university staff seeking housing. Today, just under half of all residents are between 18 and 29. The median household income of residents is slightly over \$30,000 a year, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle income stratum. This might reflect the large number of students living on these blocks. The main occupations in the neighborhood are in the domains of food service, administration, and sales. Riverside Park has over two times the number of residents in the fields of science and entertainment than their proportions in other Milwaukee neighborhoods.

Riverside Park is not very diverse along color lines. Over 8 in 10 residents are European Americans and most of these have ancestry in Germany, Ireland, and Poland. About 1 in 13 are African Americans and there is a scattering of Asians (most of Chinese descent), American Indians, and Latinos (most of Mexican descent).

INTERESTING NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Wisconsin Paperboard Corporation**, at 1514 E. Thomas Ave., one of the few industries to survive the deindustrialization era, employing hundreds of Milwaukeeans today.
- **Riverside University High School**, at 1615 E. Locust St., with 85 percent of its graduating students entering college each year.
- **Urban Ecology Center**, at 1500 E. Park Place, an environmental education institution in Riverside Park (see description above).

RECURRING NEARBY OUTINGS

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.

EARLY MORNING BIRDWALK--RIVERSIDE			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Most Thu.'s 8-10:30am	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	A walk for bird watchers of all ability levels to explore Riverside Park for birds	Free, but might need to register

OWL PROWL FOR FAMILIES			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. Tue. 6-7:30pm	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	Educational hike through Riverside Park to listen for nocturnal creatures (includes hot chocolate)	\$9 adults, kids \$6

ENCHANTED FOREST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Oct., Sat. 5:30-7:30pm	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	Opportunity to see Riverside Park come alive with nocturnal characters.	\$9, \$7 kids

OPEN ROCK CLIMBING

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
May-Dec., 1st Sun. of month 2-4pm	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	One free climbing session with the possibility for additional climbs if time allows.	Free, donations welcome

MAPLE SUGARING AT RIVERSIDE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Apr., Sat. 10am-2pm	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	An in-depth look at maple sugar sap harvesting, presented by Urban Ecology Center	Free

URBAN STARGAZING

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun., Thu.'s 7-8:30pm	Riverside Park 1500 E. Park Pl.	Lively discussion about astronomy and if the skies are clear, might go stargazing.	Free, but \$5 donation suggested

ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURES

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Various times, fall and spring semesters, Sat. or Sun., see website	Sabin Hall, 3415 N. Downer Ave.	Lectures by renowned archaeologists for an educated lay audience, sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America—Milwaukee Society	Free

UWM SCIENCE BAG

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Fall and spring semesters, Fri. 8pm (occasional Sun. matinee)	Physics Building, at E. Kenwood Blvd. and N. Cramer St., rm. 137	One-hour shows designed to educate and entertain all age groups on various aspects of science, supported by College of Letters & Science.	Free

FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Feb., 10 days, see website	UW-Milwaukee Union Theatre 2200 East Kenwood Boulevard	(Subtitled) films in the French language—award winning, little known, classical, popular, and concessions available.	Free

GUEST LECTURE SERIES ON THE ARTS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Most Wed.'s 7:30- 9pm	Art Center Lecture Hall, 2400 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Lectures on a variety of art-related topics including visual art, film, mythology, performance, story-telling, photography, and more.	Free

GLORIOUS GALAXIES

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jan. thru late Feb., Fri.'s 7-7:55 pm	Manfred Olson Planetarium, UW-M Physics building, 1900 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Chance to explore other galaxies (over 170 million in existence). Explore shapes, collisions, and black holes.	\$3

CUPID'S CONSTELLATIONS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Feb., Wed. 7-8pm	Manfred Olson Planetarium, UW-M Physics building, 1900 E. Kenwood Blvd.	One-night special showing of Cupid's Constellations, constellations in familiar patterns such as hearts, and tales of love including that of Princess Andromeda and Perseus.	\$5

STUDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid May, Fri. 7-10pm	UWM Union Cinema, 2400 E. Kenwood Blvd.	A juried showcase of the best short films and videos from the pioneering UWM Department of Film, Video, Animation, and New Genres.	Free

UWM'S LATIN AMERICAN FILM SERIES

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Apr., one week, see website for times	UWM Union Cinema, 2400 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Films including international award winners from countries throughout Latin America, in Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Kaqchikel Maya, with subtitles where needed.	Free

STARS & S'MORES

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Aug., Wed. 7-8:30pm	Manfred Olson Planetarium, UW-M Physics building, 1900 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Opportunity to make delicious s'mores with friends and family while looking through telescopes and enjoying a special Planetarium program as well!	\$3

TIE-DYING SHIRTS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Aug., Wed. 5-7pm	Manfred Olson Planetarium, UW-M Physics building, 1900 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Chance to make a tie-dyed T-shirt and get a free s'mores kit with each shirt.	\$10

SUMMER EVENINGS OF MUSIC

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Beginning mid Jun., approx. weekly for summer (see website), 7:30-9pm	Helene Zelazo Center for the Performing Arts, 2419 E. Kenwood Blvd.	Fine arts quartet and others; RSVP	\$10

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>

QUOTE FROM RESIDENT

If you are a resident of Riverside Park and have interesting comments about this neighborhood, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

PHOTOS



Today's neighborhood-UWM Cambridge Commons on North Ave.

Today's neighborhood-House on Bartlett & Bradford



Today's neighborhood-Cambridge Ave. looking north to the Wisconsin Paperboard Corporation



Today's neighborhood-Old industrial building on Park Place (Urban Ecology Center in the background)

Today's neighborhood-Houses on Thomas Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Rotary Arboretum



Today's neighborhood-Riverside Park



Today's neighborhood-Sculpture in Riverside Park

For more information on Milwaukee neighborhoods, refer to John Gurda's *Milwaukee, City of Neighborhoods*.

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

¹ Photo attribution: https://c1.staticflickr.com/4/3843/14783749835_804731636c_b.jpg

¹¹ Photo attribution: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Baker_Charleston.jpg