

Approximate boundaries:
N-W. Center St; S-W. North Ave;
E-N. Sherman Blvd; W-N. 60th St

NORTHWEST SIDE *Uptown*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Uptown is a densely populated neighborhood with mainly two-story wood frame houses and one-story bungalows. Uptown has a large number of faith organizations and bars. Streets generally follow a grid pattern except for West Lisbon that runs at a diagonal between 45th Street and 59th Street. See neighborhood photos below.

HISTORY

There are six neighborhoods that comprise a larger area known as Sherman Park. Uptown is a neighborhood on the southern boundary of the Sherman Park complex.

Residents began to settle Sherman Park in the late teens and early twenties of the 20th century. Many were attracted to the suburban look of the area that at this time was the edge of the city. Developers had created wide, tree-lined streets and boulevards, but the beautiful homes were the neighborhood's signature.

Early population

The first arrivals to the area were primarily Germans and Czechs migrating from various Milwaukee neighborhoods. Later migrants were diverse groups representing over 20 nations from nearly every continent. However, the largest of the later arriving groups were Jewish and African American. To understand the later migration patterns, one must look to another Milwaukee neighborhood that thrived in the middle of the 20th century.

Bronzeville origins

The "Bronzeville" community had been home to the ancestors of many key players in the current Sherman Park neighborhood. The community was located in an area between downtown Milwaukee and North Avenue and roughly 1st Street to 12th Street ((the widest boundaries given by some local historians).

The area had first been home to a large segment of Milwaukee's German community. By 1910 a 10,000-strong population of Jewish immigrants from Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine had settled in the area. Within a few years African Americans from the South began their Great Migration to the North in response to needs to fill jobs in mainly urban centers. By the 1950s the black population in Bronzeville and nearby areas was nearly 50,000.

Two institutions that would later be critical to the stability of one of Sherman Park's neighborhoods were founded in the Bronzeville area. Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital—St. Joseph's Campus (also known as St. Joseph's) had its roots in a little house on Walnut Street and built its first hospital on 4th & Reservoir. The second is Beth Jehudah synagogue, which was on 11th and North Avenue until the 1950s. Both institutions are today in the St. Joseph's neighborhood of the Sherman Park complex.



Many of the older activist families in Sherman Park lived in or had close relatives in the Bronzeville area before migrating northwest. In fact, the Bronzeville area had two dynasty families that would later be critical to the development of Sherman Park and surrounding areas. The Twerskis were one dynasty family. They had founded the Beth Jehudah synagogue. The Coggs were another dynasty family and today occupy many leadership roles in Milwaukee politics.

Long before the Twerskis and members of their congregation moved to Sherman Park, Jews from all over Europe had settled in the area. Below is a profile of one of these families that lived in the Uptown neighborhood.

Uptown resident profile (Great Depression era)

*Name selected randomly from the 1935 City Directory in the Uptown area
(Information from U.S. Census and other public records)*

The Eisenbrands

John and Stella Eisenbrand and their children, Bernice and Weldon, moved from Red Wing, Minnesota to Milwaukee sometime before 1910. John was the son of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Stella was the daughter of Jewish immigrants from Sweden. The couple originally settled on West Center where their son Weldon graduated from West Division High School.

John and Stella later purchased a house on 37th Street. John worked as a commission salesman and when daughter Bernice married, she and her husband moved in with the couple.

Son Weldon married Dorothea Helen Ziehms and by 1929, at the start of the Great Depression, moved to 59th and Lisbon in the Uptown neighborhood. He began work as an equipment engineer, but a few years later opened a hardware store at his residence.

The store survived the Great Depression and sometime in the 1940s he and Dorothea with children, John and Lynn, purchased a home a few blocks north of his store on Hadley, in the St. Joseph neighborhood. The house at the time was valued at \$3,500.

Upon retirement, the Weldon Eisenbrand family moved to Sebring, Florida. Dorothea died there in 1989 and Weldon in 1993.

What happened to Bronzeville? Bronzeville was leveled in the 1950s and 1960s. During these years, two government programs were displacing major populations in Milwaukee. One program was the urban renewal, which had been designed to improve central city housing. During the same time period, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission was building major freeway corridors in the heart of the city. One corridor ran right through the heart of Bronzeville. Over 8,000 African American dwelling units were lost and nearly 100 percent of its business district.

Current populations (as of 2021)

As new populations left the central city and moved into the area, the neighborhood faced its own challenges. At times residents struggled to understand cultural differences, a challenge that still exists today when new populations arrive.

The ethnic groups themselves were internally diverse, and some moved in and out of the area. The history of the Jewish population in the neighborhood was particularly complex. The original Jewish population was comprised of Reform and non-practicing Jews, with a few Orthodox. When this population migrated out of the neighborhood and into the suburbs, they were eventually replaced by a strong Orthodox population that lives in all of Sherman Park today, and worships at Beth Jehudah Synagogue. They developed their own self-help organizations and school (Yeshiva Elementary School).

Today approximately three-quarters of the Uptown population is African American. Slightly less than one-quarter of the population is European American (including Jewish). Approximately 6 in 10 Uptown residents live in lower middle class households (with annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000) or low-income households (with annual incomes lower than \$25,000).

Despite the income levels, the Uptown neighborhood is relatively well educated. Residents have a higher percentage of people with bachelor's degrees than Milwaukee generally.

IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES

- **Washington High School of Information Technology**, at 2525 N. Sherman Blvd.
- **Milwaukee French Immersion School**, at 2360 N. 52nd St.
- **Viet Hoa Supermarket**, at 4900 W. North Ave., a retail and wholesale food market

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.

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

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION			
When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-12:30pm	Sherman Park, 3000 N. Sherman Blvd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games.	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

Quotes from oral history of Sherman Park conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2009¹: About THEN

“Sherman Park, when we moved in, was one of the elite neighborhoods in Milwaukee, with its boulevards and beautiful homes.”

“I came to Sherman Park . . . it must have been around 1973. I came to be a part of the Orthodox Jewish community centered in congregation Beth Jehudah. I was a part of the community before moving, by the way, it was probably more like '73. I have been a part of the community since the 60s, probably the earliest is 1966.”

Quotes from oral history of Sherman Park conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc. in 2009: About NOW

“There is a small group of people who go bicycling on Wednesday nights. They now talk to each other on the Internet instead of talking to each other at Sherman Park. They would usually go to a custard stand somewhere. . . it varied from five to ten people. There is walking your dog [practice]. At this time of evening, you will notice, it is a social event. Much as radio and television, we have day parks, there is a certain time when these people walk the dogs and the neighborhood takes on a different flavor. You will see groups of people who are getting prepared for walking and they all out and they have a social world of dog walking. The Sherman Perk proprietor has dog dishes out so you can walk over there and your dog can get water. So it is one of the social activities is taking your dog for a walk. The other one is just taking a walk. Especially the older people, the ones on their front stoop, would put on their straw hat and many of them you would see in the mornings out for a walk. Walking was certainly one of the activities they do, but they are not conspicuous leisure.”

“I think one very great thing that has happened is the little coffee shop; it has been a real social hub. Another thing that improved a great deal is St. Joseph’s Park Concerts in Gangler Park. That is a real fun thing to do. You see people from all ethnicities, all ages, and it’s filled with neighborhood people.”

¹ 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-
Viet Hoa Supermarket



Today's neighborhood-Milwaukee Police Dept. District Three Communications Operation Center

Today's neighborhood-
Washington High School of Information Technology



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:

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www.urban-anthropology.org