

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Howard Ave; **S**-W. Waterford Ave;
E-S. 76th St, **W**-S. 84th St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *Woodland Court*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Located on Milwaukee's southern boundary, Woodland Court is a residential neighborhood with moderate population density. Housing stock is mainly mid-20th century ranch-style interspersed with a few bungalows from the 1920s and 1930s that pepper West Howard Avenue. The main business district is along South 76th Street.

Woodland Court's topography is flat to gently rolling hills. The majority of the streets follow a rectangular grid. The three east/west streets of West Van Beck, West Norwich, and West Tesch Avenues end in *cul de sacs* on the eastern ends. There is no public green space save for a small wooded area at the west end of Van Beck behind an apartment building. See photos below.



Today's neighborhood-
Houses on W. Norwich Ave.
looking west

HISTORY

At the time that the first homes were built in the Woodland Court area, the neighborhood was in the unincorporated Town of Greenfield, which once extended from 27th to 124th Streets and Greenfield to College Avenues.

Early populations

In the 1920s, much of today's Southwest Side began to transition from a farming district to clusters of settlements that would become Milwaukee neighborhoods. Most of the early European-American arrivals were Poles and Germans. Many settled first in the Jackson Park neighborhood, but some turned west and ventured further into the countryside, creating a minor housing boom. However, the advent of the Great Depression, followed by World War II temporarily reduced the rate of development.

Post World War II

A major housing boom *after* the war pressed many families of returning servicemen and others further west. Some were now migrating in from the Old (or Historic) South Side. At the same time, the City of Milwaukee was engaged in a massive annexation program in the area. Between 1948 and the mid-1950s, a series of annexations added territory between Lincoln Avenue and Cold Spring Road and South 40th Street and South 100th Street. The area became eligible to receive city services such as road building and road improvement, which in turn attracted more residents. Most of the new settlers continued to be Poles and Germans, but the Woodland Court area that focused on construction of apartment buildings would also attract a diverse mix of residents, including Swiss, Italians, French, Serbians, Austrians, Jews, Cubans, Bohemians, English, and Irish. By the late 1960s, Woodland Court was well into

development with new roads under construction or being extended and just under 300 residences—about half being apartment units and about one-quarter still vacant.

See an example of a renter below.

Woodland Court resident (1960s) *(Information from U.S. Census and other public sources)*

Frank A. Zokan

Sometime prior to the 1970s, Frank A. Zokan moved to an apartment in the mammoth Woodlawn Court complex at 3950 South 76th Street. Records suggest he may have never married or had children.

Looking at Frank's early history, one might argue he found living alone a welcome change. Frank was born in 1919 on Milwaukee's South Side, the son of Slovenian immigrants Blaise/Blaz Zokan and Anna Zokan (nee Kranj). In 1920, Frank lived in a household with his parents, four siblings, and four boarders. The rented house was on Greenbush Street (today's South 4th Street) in the Walker's Point neighborhood. Frank's father worked as a laborer in a leather works factory and his mother ran the rooming house. The boarders were a multicultural bunch. Nicholas Malcolb, a Russian immigrant worked as a scale repairer in a packing house. John Malko, also born in Russia, labored in a machine shop. Albert Dege, the son of a German immigrant, was also a machinist. Igace Sulada, born in Croatia, had a job in a tannery.

By 1930, the Zokans had purchased their own home on 1st Avenue (today's South 6th Street), still in Walker's Point. Frank's dad was now a shoemaker in a shoe factory and his mother still ran the rooming house. The faces of the boarders had changed. Among the five was John Peterson, an immigrant from Sweden, who worked in a malt company. John's brother, Arvid Peterson, also worked at the malt company. Frank Haupt, an immigrant from Germany, worked as a painter in a paint shop. Fred Mutschler, son of a German immigrant, was a tanner. And John Green, born in Norway, had a job as a laborer in a rigging store.

By 1940, Frank had lived with seven siblings in their Walker's Point home. He had completed two years of high school and took a job as a clerk. His father was now an independent shoemaker and his mother, we assume, was still in charge of the rooming house. Living with them was another group of diverse boarders. John Flannery, son of an Irish immigrant, was a park attendant. Brank Billas, born in Greece, worked as a dish washer. Lloyd Triplette, from New York, was a barber. And Vitko Staut, born in Yugoslavia, was working his way through college in the newspaper trade.

By October of 1940, Frank had enlisted in the field artillery branch of the National Guard and served during World War II. It is not known if Frank returned to his Walker's Point home after the war or whether he struck out on his own. But at some point, he moved to the Woodland Court neighborhood. He might have been right at home with the ethnic mix of renters he encountered in the large apartment complex.

Sometime before 1995 Frank moved to Florida. He settled in the town of Gulf Breeze, and died there in 2004.



South 76th Street

A business corridor was developing on South 76th Street during the 1960s. Below is a list of businesses and apartments within the Woodlawn Court borders in 1971. See summary and notes that follow.

<i>Addresses on S. 76th St. in 1971</i>	<i>Names of businesses and apartment buildings from Milwaukee City Directory</i>
3908	Dean's Hometown Service Station
3913	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3915	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3917	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3919	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3928	Boy Blue Ice Cream Stores
3939	Sentry Food Stores
3943	Gull Pharmacy
3945	Frenchy's Poodle and Grooming Salon
3947	Russell Nooyen Osteopathic Physician
3949	Adelman Laundry and Dry Cleaners
3955	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3957	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3959	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3961	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3963	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3965	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3967	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3969	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3971	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3973	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3975	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3977	Woodlawn Court Apartments
3979	Woodlawn Court Apartments
4001	Apartments
4003	Apartments
4005	Woodlawn Court Apartments

Summary and notes from census and other records:

- Technically, only those addresses on the west side of the street were within Woodland Court, but residents in this very small neighborhood would have no trouble accessing businesses on both sides of the street.
- The neighborhood was well served with a supermarket, drug store, gas station, cleaner, and a myriad of housing possibilities.
- The ubiquitous Woodlawn Court Apartments would eventually change its name to Woodland Court that matched the name of the neighborhood.
- There still is a Boy Blue Ice Cream shop in the Greater Milwaukee area at 82nd and Lincoln.
- Adelman Laundry was a family-run business with multiple locations in Milwaukee (at least 40). The president of the business during these years was Albert "Ollie" Adelman. He was a great baseball fan. When the New York Yankees came to Milwaukee for the 1958 World Series, Adelman took out an ad, telling the visiting team members: "We will do the laundry and dry cleaning for you and your family during your stay in Milwaukee, without charge. As long as you are going to be taken to the cleaners, you may as well be taken by the very best." Unfortunately, the Braves lost the Series.

Arrival of Latinos

Latinos (mainly Mexicans) began to settle on the *near* South Side in the 1920s and slowly migrated south into the Polish areas. Since the 1970s, the Mexican community has grown all over the South and Southwest Side, including Root Creek.

A number of push-pull factors influenced the population changes. During the early 1900s Mexican immigration to the United States expanded because of worsening economic conditions in Mexico. A large wave of Mexicans also left the country during the political and economic turmoil created by the Mexican Revolution of 1910. In addition, both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were often recruited by local industries to fill workplace needs. Beginning in 1917, the US government implemented a series of immigration restriction policies to curb the influx of Mexicans, mainly in response to local claims that Mexicans (who often worked for low wages) were taking jobs away from 'true' Americans.

But they found a place to fit in. Latinos—particularly Mexicans--were able to settle successfully alongside Poles in particular because they shared so many traits in common. These included the Catholic faith, the focus on the Madonna figure, polka music traditions, similarities in childrearing and eldercare practices, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, the small Woodland Court neighborhood has just over 1,000 residents. Of these, nearly 6 in 10 are European Americans (over half still claiming German or Polish ancestry). Approximately 2 in 10 are Latinos (most with Mexican ancestry and the rest with Caribbean and South and Central American ancestry). There is also a scattering of African Americans, American Indians, Asians (most of Indian and Pakistani descent) and people of multiple racial backgrounds in the area.

The median household income in Woodland Court is just over \$36,000, placing the neighborhood in the lower middle-income stratum. Just over 35 percent of residents hold a bachelor's or graduate/professional degree, which is relatively high for Milwaukee. The occupations cited most often by adult residents are in the fields of administration, production, education, and management. The neighborhood has significantly more residents working in local government than other Milwaukee areas.

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.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST FAMILY FESTIVAL--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jul., Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 3-11pm, Sun. 12-9pm	8500 W. Cold Spring Road, Greenfield	Festival including rides, games, wine cellar, bingo, food, music, and more.	Free

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
First week Aug., weekday 5:30-8:30pm	Konkel Park, 5151 W. Layton Ave., Greenfield	Fun evening of free food, games, rides, chance to dialogue with local police and community organizations.	Free

DAN JANSEN FAMILY FEST--GREENFIELD

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late May, Fri. 5-11pm, Sat. 12-11pm, Sun. 12-4pm	Konkel Park, 5151 W. Layton Ave., Greenfield	Festival of rides, car show, live entertainment, and more.	Free

ST. MARY PARISH FESTIVAL—HALES CORNERS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jul., Fri., Sat., Sun., see website for hours	9520 W. Forest Home Ave., Hales Corners	Festival to bring parishioners together in a spirit of community, including food, games, concessions, live music, raffle and more.	Free

CROATIANFEST--FRANKLIN

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jul., Sat. 11am-11pm; Sun. 11am-6pm	Croatian Park, 9100 S. 76th St., Franklin	Festival with Croatian food, live music, kids' activities, games, and more.	unk

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

“My family lived at the Woodland Court Apartment complex in the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. The apartments were gorgeous with split levels and balconies. The complex was laid out like a park. I recall there was a Sentry just a half block away near Howard. There was a Ponderosa about a block to the south. You could walk to a small shopping center just south of the Ponderosa where there was a movie theater and a Chinese restaurant with the best pressed duck in the world. But 76th Street had a frigid aura with non-stop, fast-moving traffic and detached strip malls and projected an overwhelming sense of loneliness, despite constant activity.”

--Anonymous

If you are a resident of this neighborhood and wish to make an interesting observation about it, please send your quote to JFLanthropologist@currently.com

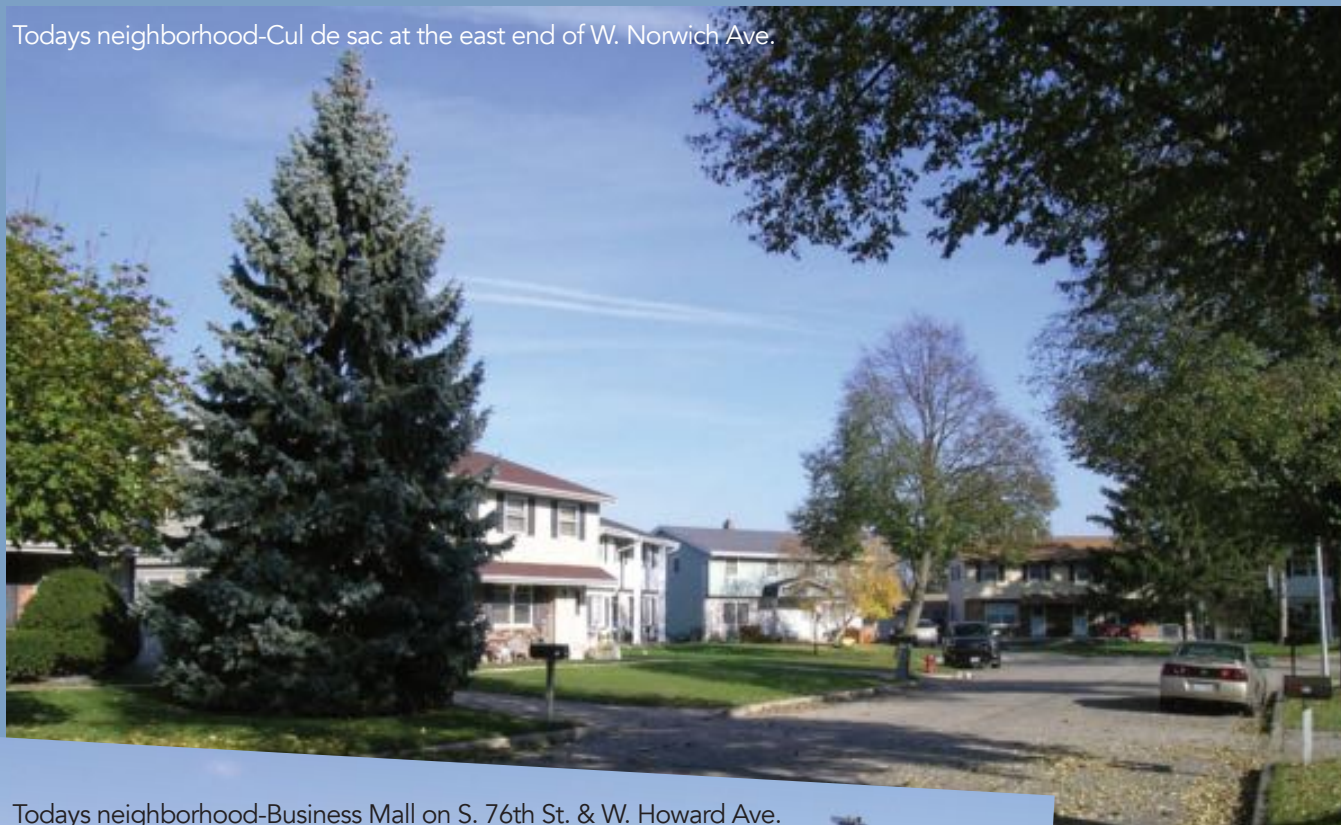
PHOTOS

Today's neighborhood-Houses on W. Norwich Ave. looking west



Today's neighborhood-Houses on S. 83rd & W. Tesch Ave.

Today's neighborhood-Cul de sac at the east end of W. Norwich Ave.



Today's neighborhood-Business Mall on S. 76th St. & W. Howard Ave.



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



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