

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Brown Deer Rd; **S-W.** Good Hope (partially);
E-Pacific RR Co.; (partially); **W-N.** 91st (partially)

NORTHWEST SIDE *Land Bank*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

There are very few residences in Land Bank. Those that exist are early to mid-20th century bungalows or colonial style houses with some apartment buildings near North 76th Street on the neighborhood's eastern border. The area is mainly industrial buildings or office parks. There are business corridors along North 76th Street north of Good Hope Road and on the neighborhood's northern border along West Brown Deer Road.

Land Bank's topography is relatively hilly, with gently rolling to some fairly steep inclines. There is no public green space but there are many undeveloped areas of open fields and wooded land throughout the neighborhood. See photos below.



HISTORY

Over 50 neighborhoods on Milwaukee's northwest side once comprised the Granville Township in Milwaukee County, which extended from Hampton Avenue on the south to County Line Road on the north, and 27th Street on the east to 124th Street on the west. The Milwaukee neighborhood of Land Bank was once in the Town of Granville and was part of the hamlet of old Granville Station.

Early populations

According to the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (March 22, 1877) there were originally three small settlements in Granville. The first, in 1835, was the family of Jacob Brazelton which included 11 sons. The second was duo Daniel R. Small and W.P. Woodward from Indiana who pitched their tents in the center of the Granville area shortly after the Brazelton family arrived and later built homes. The third group of settlers, the Joseph R. Thomas family and S.C. Enos, arrived shortly after Small and Woodward.

Within a few years a new group arrived from the town of Granville in Washington County, New York. The assemblage included the Evert, Brown, Crippen, Lake, Dutcher, and Norton families. They gave their new home the name of their former home in New York.

But it was not these earliest settlers that established much of the culture of Granville, Township. That role belonged to a wave of Pennsylvania "Dutch" (i.e., Germans) who arrived just a few years later from Telford, Pennsylvania, including the Wambold, Leister, Scholl, Barndt, Price, Bergstresser, Borse, Klein, Martin, Huber, Groll, Horning, and Lewis families. The Pennsylvania Dutch, under the leadership of Samuel Wambold, quickly established the German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church (now known as Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church) in 1847. The following year, the church's pastor, Wilhelm Wrede, called a meeting of local Lutheran ministers at the church. This group would later become the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A museum of these early synod activities now stands on 107th Street (see outings).

In the 1840s there were over 200 people living in Granville Township, and the numbers continued to grow. A small Irish community settled on Granville's eastern border to the center of the township. Initially they set up tents, built brush shanties, and log cabins. But during these early years, Granville Township remained strongly German, and more Germans arrived every year.

Old Granville Station

Much of today's Land Bank was part of a Granville hamlet known as Granville Station. The current Milwaukee neighborhoods of Granville Station, Riverton Heights, Polber Heights, Buchel Park, and sections of Land Bank once made up old Granville Station. The hamlet was centered on the south side of Brown Deer Road at 107th Street and Granville Road. An 1858 map shows a hotel, two stores, two general stores, a wagon maker, and a blacksmith in the hamlet. By 1886, the hamlet had added a painter, an undertaker, a brick factory, cigar factory, two schools, and two general stores. The population was 115. The area also had a railroad line with two stations that closed after World War II. The hamlet grew slowly throughout the late 19th and early 20th century.

Movement toward annexation

In 1956 the residents and property owners of Granville were given a choice to consolidate with the City of Milwaukee. Needing services that Milwaukee could offer— especially water--the majority of voters said yes to the referendum. By the 1960s, the western portion of Granville (16.5 square miles) was annexed by Milwaukee and the eastern section consolidated as the Village of Brown Deer. Milwaukee became one of the few large cities in the United States that still had working farms within its boundaries.

A new population arrives

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 industry in the former Granville community. As in most German-dominated areas in Milwaukee, the integration of the new population proceeded relatively smoothly. Many African American families were able to purchase homes and move into the middle class.

Land Bank development

Except for the downturn of the Great Depression, economic prosperity reigned in the area that had been the Town of Granville. While the area remained predominantly rural through the early half of the 20th century, industries gradually began to open in these neighborhoods. Beginning in the 1960s, a Milwaukee Industrial Park and Land Bank was constructed between West 76th and West 91st Streets. The area eventually became the most concentrated base of industrial employment in Wisconsin.

A man partially responsible for this development is profiled below.

Land Bank profile

(Information from U.S. Census and other public documents)

Donald A Sleske

Donald Sleske was one of the original members of Milwaukee's Department of Economic Development that oversaw the land bank program. At the time that the Milwaukee Industrial Park and Land Bank was being developed, Sleske lived on the southern border of Granville, at North 88th Street and Hampton Avenue.

Sleske was born in 1921 to parents Edmund J. and Edna (nee Kuetemeyer) Sleske. He grew up in a rented unit on North 15th Street near Vienna. There he attended and graduated from Rufus King High School (see his photo from the 1938 Rufus King yearbook). Donald's parents had been born in the Midwest. Father Edmund worked as a salesman.

After high school, records suggest that Donald married and then separated (he later remarried Harriet Sleske). He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 and went to serve in Belgium. There he was captured by Nazi Germany and was imprisoned for approximately 300 days. While he was in a Nazi prison camp, his brother Robert also enlisted in the Army. Serving as a P-38 pilot during training exercises in California, his plane crashed, killing Robert in 1945. Donald was liberated in November of 1946.

Back in Milwaukee, records suggest that Donald may have attended Marquette University. He later took a job with the City of Milwaukee and ended up in the Department of Economic Development. He and others were charged with developing the land bank program that ended up adding the scores of industrial firms to the Granville area.

Before his death, Donald and his family moved to Florida. He died there in 1984 but was buried at Valhalla Cemetery in the former Granville Township. A short time after his death, city officials renamed one of Land Bank's Streets. Fountain Court became today's Sleske Court.



During the years that the Milwaukee Industrial Park and Land Bank project was being developed, these were the businesses that operated on North 76th Street within the Land Bank neighborhood.

Addresses on N. 76th in 1972	Name of business and organization from the Milwaukee City Directory
7259	Barnaby Restaurant Inc.
7309	J.D. Griffiths Company Delivery J.D. Griffiths Builders Company Griffiths-Krueger Cement Contractors Inc.

<i>Addresses on N. 76th in 1972</i>	<i>Name of business and organization from the Milwaukee City Directory</i>
7309	J.D. Griffiths Lumber Mart
7330	Le Sabre Club Restaurant
7341	Allied Pools
7350	North Side Recreation
7377	Transformer Design of Milwaukee Inc. (Manufacturing, transportation, power supply)
7411	Legler Miniature Golf Company
7567	Gustave C. Legler Golf Range
7965	Bradley Road Sunoco Service Gas Station
8015	Clark Oil and Refining Company
8075	Syndstrand Tool Corporation
8155	Metzger Machine and Engineering Company (heating and air conditioning)

Notes:

- Technically, only those companies on the west side of the street were within the Land Bank neighborhood, but residents could easily access businesses on either side of the street.
- The presence of the miniature and full golf range demonstrates the rural nature of this area in the early 1970s, while the manufacturing companies show the direction this neighborhood was taking.

The Land Bank neighborhood remained highly industrial into the 21st century. The Milwaukee Industrial Park and Land Bank grew beyond the boundaries of the current Land Bank neighborhood, currently extending from 68th Street on the east to 114th Street on the west. The development today comprises over 1,200 acres with over 150 businesses. Vacant parcels of land are a rarity.

Current populations (as of 2021)

Today there are fewer than 500 residents living in the primarily industrial Land Bank neighborhood. Of these, slightly over one-half are African Americans and slightly under one-quarter are European Americans (mostly of mixed European ancestry). Nearly 1 in 10 are Asians (all Hmong) and there is also a scattering of Latinos (most of Mexican and Dominican extraction).

The median household income in Land Bank is just over \$64,000, placing the neighborhood in the middle income category. The main occupations claimed by adult residents are in the fields of administration, production, and management.

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.

TOUR OF MUSEUM OF WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD (WELS)

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
By appointment	Salem Lutheran Landmark Church, lower level, 6814 N. 107th St.	Tour of more than 1,000 artifacts and pictures of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	Free, but donations welcome

GRANVILLE BID CAR, TRUCK, AND BIKE SPECTACULAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sun. 10am-3pm	Russ Darrow, 7676 N. 76th St.	Exhibition of iconic custom vehicles.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4th, 9am-10pm	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, games, fireworks.	Free

OPEN SWIM

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily, 1-5pm, holiday times vary	Noyes Park, 8235 W. Good Hope Rd.	Open swim year-round at indoor pool with diving boards, locker rooms, vending machines.	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://mecamilwaukee.com/NonFiction.html>

QUOTES FROM RESIDENTS

In *The Golden Years of Yesteryear* by Emily Treichel Boehlke (reprinted in *A History of Granville* by Miriam Y. Bird, 1996), Treichel Boehlke writes about her family's history in Granville from the mid-1800s through the late 20th century. The following are passages from this work.

“When my Grandparents Treichel were first married and lived in their one room cabin, the Indians would stop in and admire their baby. . . At Grandfather Hackbarth's the Indians set up camps in the woods every spring and fall when they came to do their trading in Milwaukee.”

“Weddings in the 1860s and later were quite different from today. The invitations were hand written by the bride and groom and they were the hosts, not the parents of the bride. . . the silk material for the brides' dresses was only 18 inches wide, so for a fancy dress, it took 18 to 20 yards of material. It was not unusual for a man to wear his wedding suit 20 to 25 years, or as long as it fitted.”

“. . . the settlers were having church services at the home of Ernest Zautcke, who had brought a reed organ from Germany to help him with his singing. One of the men could read a text from the Bible and the other religious books which they had brought from across. Mr. Zautcke then donated land for a church and school on the corner of [today's] Hopkins and Silver Spring Roads. They were served by visiting pastors from Milwaukee and vicinity.”

“School [of her parents] was then held at the house of one of the member's house one month and at another one the next month, whoever had a room big enough to seat the children.”

“The housewife had to plan well ahead for her household. There was the Arab that would come about once a month with two heavy suitcases full of notions and yard goods for house dresses. When he begged for a night's lodging the housewife would get a spool of thread for payment. Also a man with a big basket of oranges and bananas would come. Bananas were 25 cents a dozen for nice large ones. Later a baker would come once a week with bread and sweets.”

“Every mother had to be well-schooled in home remedies. . . Plants and herbs were gathered in the summer to be dried and stored for the winter, to be used for any and all ailments.”

“Grandfather would sit and knit many mittens and stockings for all the grandchildren while Grandma read to him and tended her many plants of which she had quite a variety.”

“Even the first street cars were propelled by horse power. There were only 2 lines, one on 3rd Street to Williamsburg, a section of the city at North Avenue and Center and [one] further north (an all-German settlement).”

“In the beginning of the 1900s, there was no Silver Spring Drive, not even a wagon trail west of Hopkins Street. But the plans were made to have a road there, so one of the farmers would ride through the woods with horse and wagon or on horseback as best he could, so it would be legally kept as a driveway to the next mile west.”

“During the first World War, all gathering of people was forbidden, due to the spreading of the flu. So at Freistadt Church only every other pew could be sat in, so all the people east of the church came for early services and all those west of the church came for later service. Also all talking and preaching was to be done in English, but Pastor Wehrs insisted on preaching in German as many of his older members could not understand English.”

“There were about 12 to 14 neighbors that exchanged labor. This was a hard job for the ladies also, with breakfast at 6, lunch at 9, dinner at 12, another lunch at 3, and supper at sundown. No 8 hour days.”

“When the first threshing machine came out the farmers started to raise barley for the Breweries in Milwaukee. My father raised quite a lot of it and we girls had to man the farming mill in the evening when milking was done and our lessons were finished. This was a cold and tiresome job until enough was cleared for a load to be hauled to town the next day.

Quotes from an oral history of the Granville neighborhoods currently being conducted by Urban Anthropology Inc.¹—About THEN.

“I’m looking back at the 1980s and it seems like most of the people who were my neighbors were working at the industrial park.”

“We had factory jobs, office jobs, and some professionals. I was a teacher. At that time I wasn’t. I stayed home with the kids. There weren’t doctors or lawyers; there were factory jobs and office jobs. I would say people commuted outside of the area--they didn’t just work strictly in the Granville area. In this district right now we have a big industrial park but that was not there then. I would say people commuted outside of the area.”

“That was a huge city decision--building the land bank, building the manufacturers out there. Because, despite whether or not the folks could get jobs there, the manufacturing business kept this area strong.”

“I think a lot of people worked inside the neighborhood. I think retail because I think there was so much retail here back then. We have a lot of manufacturing in our neighborhood but manufacturing is more of a skill trade and I think even back 15 years ago I think there was just not a huge skilled trade sense in our neighborhood. It is more of a general labor--something more like retail.”

Quotes from the oral history of the Granville neighborhoods—About NOW

“Between 76th and 91st there’s a lot of light industry. I am always amazed by all the firms there.”

“More manufacturing is done there in the Granville area than anywhere else in the State of Wisconsin. More than the valley, more than the city invested in [the] central city.”

“But really for the tax base in the city of Milwaukee, those manufacturing--those jobs-- and those businesses are probably more vital than any mall can ever be.”

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-
Apartments on W. Calumet Rd.



Today's neighborhood-
N. 87th St. & W. Calumet Rd.



Today's neighborhood-
Office building on N. 91st St.
& W. Bradley Rd.



Today's neighborhood-Houses on N. 81st St. & W. Bradley Rd.

For more information on the history of Granville, refer to Miriam Y. Bird's *A History of Granville Township*.

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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