

Approximate boundaries:

N-County Line Rd; S-W. Brown Deer Rd;

E-N. 68<sup>th</sup> St; W-N. 76<sup>th</sup> St

# NORTHWEST SIDE *Northridge Lakes*

## NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Northridge Lakes is a moderate density residential neighborhood. Most of the dwellings are multi-unit condos or apartment buildings that comprise the former Northridge Lakes Subdivision. In addition, there is a small number of recently built, single-family, Colonial-style homes. The majority of houses and multi-unit buildings are closely spaced and set back a distance from the street. The business corridor is along North 76th Street.

The topography of Northridge Lakes is hilly, from gently rolling to moderately steep inclines. Most of the streets are wide and curving and were constructed around the most prominent feature, the Northridge Lake. Considerable green space surrounds the lake. In addition, most of the northern part of the neighborhood north of West Glenbrook Road is undeveloped and wooded. 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 Northridge Lakes was once in the Town of Granville. The neighborhood got its name from the Northridge Shopping Center that opened on the western border of Northridge Lakes in 1972.

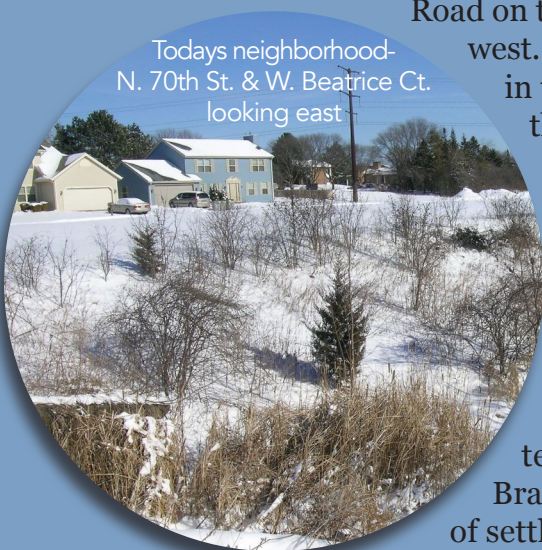
### Early populations

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

Today's neighborhood-  
N. 70th St. & W. Beatrice Ct.  
looking east



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.

### *Economic prosperity in Granville*

Save for the era of the Great Depression, economic prosperity reigned in Granville during most of its history. This was due partially to the work ethic of these early residents. The township remained predominantly rural through the early half of the 20th century. Gradually industries began to open in Granville and the area eventually became the most concentrated base of industrial employment in Wisconsin.

### *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.

### *Changes to former Granville area*

The large area that had been Granville Township was beginning to attract more settlers in the 1960s. Among them were African Americans.

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.

While most neighborhoods that had once been part of Granville Township were attracting more settlers, this was not true of today's Northridge and Northridge Lakes' areas. By the end of the 1960s the two neighborhoods had only a handful of residences— mostly farms—and no businesses. Almost none of the roads that exist in these neighborhoods today had been built then. But major change was about to happen.

### *Changes to the Northridge area*

Between 1972 and 1974 the Northridge Shopping Center and the Northridge Lakes housing development both opened. Both were due to efforts of one family.

See the family profile below.

## Northridge profile

*(Information found in US Census and other public records)*

### The Kohl family

Sometime in the 1930s, Max and Mary (nee Hiken) Kohl moved from Clement Avenue in Bay View to the Sherman Park area. But it was not in Sherman Park that the Kohls invested their greatest efforts. This happened elsewhere, including the Northridge area.

Max was a Jewish immigrant from Poland and Mary a Jewish immigrant from Russia. Although Max had only completed the 7th grade, he proved to be an aggressive entrepreneur. He'd already opened a grocery store in Bay View and was on his way to opening several more.

The couple's children all eventually played roles in the Kohl business, which over the years expanded to 50 grocery stores, as well as several department stores, pharmacies, and liquor stores. The child that grew to the greatest heights in terms of service to Milwaukee and Wisconsin was Herbert Kohl, called "Herb." (See photo.)



Having earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1956 (where he roomed with future baseball commissioner Bud Selig—see Enderis Park neighborhood) and an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1958, Herb Kohl rose to the office of president of Kohl's. Some years after selling the Kohl's empire in 1979, Herb sought a new career in politics. He ran for and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1989, where he served until 2013 when he did not seek reelection.

But Herb Kohl had already been heeding another calling. Following the example of his former roommate, Bud Selig, who had purchased the bankrupt Seattle Pilots in 1970 and brought the team to Milwaukee, Herb Kohl purchased the Milwaukee Bucks of the NBA in 1985. One of the goals of the purchase was to ensure that the team remained in Milwaukee. In 2014, Kohl sold the bucks to Wesley Edens and Marc Lasry, negotiating a deal that included a new arena and would again ensure the team's tenure in Milwaukee.

About the time that the Kohl's stores were sold to Brown & Williamson Tobacco Co., London, Herb invested in two malls, Southridge, its sister mall, Northridge, and hundreds of acres surrounding the malls. Southridge opened in 1970 and Northridge in 1972.

But Herb was not the only successful Kohl child. His brothers Sidney (born 1931) and Allen (born 1937) also rose to prominence in the Kohl business empire. They were the ones who developed Northridge Lakes, a residential development consisting of a mix of inventive multi-family residences. They also created the artificial lake that gives today's neighborhood its name.

The pioneering Northridge was planned and designed as a regional center with a two level mall and four anchors: Boston Store, Gimbels, J.C. Penney, and Sears. The mall soared in popularity during its first decade in business (see quotes from the Granville oral history below). But problems began to plague the area. The deindustrialization movement and attendant decline in household incomes that began in the 1980s arrested the economic prosperity of the area. Manufacturing employment in Milwaukee fell 77 percent, from a peak in 1963 to the present. Neighborhoods that once thrived were in decline. Northridge Lakes, while designed as moderate income housing, never had the chance to rise to its expectations.

The success of the shopping center and the housing development were both dealt a critical blow in 1992 when Jesse Anderson stabbed his wife to death in the parking lot of the mall. He falsely claimed that two black men attacked them and stabbed his wife. Urban legends followed. Many people attribute this crime to the eventual downfall and closure of Northridge mall and the unpopularity of the nearby housing units. Northridge Shopping Center closed in 2003.

### Current populations (as of 2021)

Today, there are just under 2,500 residents in Northridge Lakes. Of these, approximately 7 in 10 are African Americans and just over 2 in 10 are European Americans (most of multiple European ancestries). There is also a scattering of Asians (all of Indian or Filipino descent), Latinos (nearly all of Mexican ancestry), indigenous Africans, American Indians, and people of mixed or “other” racial backgrounds in the area.

The median household income in Northridge Lakes is just over \$23,000, placing it as the seventh lowest income neighborhood in Milwaukee. The main occupations among adult residents are in the fields of administration, transportation, and production. There are over three times more adults in the field of transportation than their proportions in other Milwaukee areas.

Just over 60 percent of all Northridge Lakes property units are owned. Median rents are \$847 compared to the national median of \$949. Today, the Northridge Lakes development is known as Harbor Pointe Apartment Homes.

The site of the former Northridge Shopping Center has fallen into disrepair. After a few failed business start-ups, the City of Milwaukee has claimed it is a public nuisance and placed a raze order on the complex, but current owners have fought the order in court.

### 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.	\$4, \$3 kids <12

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

**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.<sup>i</sup>—About THEN.**

“It was just cornfields there. No business. A few farms.”

“My dad and uncles bought a piece of property on Brown Deer Road--70th and Brown Deer Road. Oh, I think it was about 1972 or 3. It was an acre piece of land just on the south side of the street right across from Northridge Lakes. And that was kind of like when Northridge was going in and they thought it was going to be [one of] the up-and-coming neighborhoods in the Milwaukee area. We were looking to expand our business at that time--my dad and uncles were. So they started building in 1975 and we opened our business in 1976. At that time the Northridge area was the hottest place in town. To work or to live or to have anything going. It was bustling. The city’s first disco was up there called the Fritze. You couldn’t even park. You parked for blocks and blocks [away] because people were in there. You would see sports

personalities all through that whole part of town all the time. I was only 19 at the time. I lived out in Brookfield but I'd drive out at night to hang out at some of these places. It was quite exciting. It was the best mall in the whole state. The place to shop. We'd have all the new stores. Everything. So it was a very cool time."

"I remember when they originally built Northridge Lakes and Servite Woods. That was a higher end community. You know, I think by in large mostly white folks or probably I would say people of means were living there. Of the higher social economic background. Higher income people were living there."

"When the development came through. When they built the mall and they built the Northridge Woods and Lakes. That was all upscale living."

"[I remember] the vibrancy of the shopping center. It was the largest shopping center in the area. I think it was the largest known up and coming community because it used to be a cornfield. I think it was a really neat place."

"Before Northridge closed there was this man named Jesse Anderson. He said that these young black men had attacked him and his wife and had killed his wife. It turned out to be him who killed his wife. But back when the whole thing started it became like this urban legend where these stories started about the Northridge area that were not true and that brought about the demise of the mall. People stopped going there because they were afraid. I've heard worse that has happened at Mayfair that would not ever happen at Northridge. I used to go at night alone and I never saw anything bad that was happening. It was all a racial thing. And most of it wasn't true. It all started from that one event. I also think because of the change in the neighborhood where the landlords weren't living here. The whole woodlands--it used to be home owner occupied and then renters came in. I think that changed. There are still people that are very poor but I don't think there is crime that goes on there. I think it was an image of the neighborhood that wasn't necessarily true."

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

"But there are also a number of apartments throughout the area. [On] the corner of Northridge Lakes there's a large number of low-income housing. Just north of that was built by National Presbyterian Church and that's low income. There's a lot of low income housing in the area that tends to be single parent."

"When I have conversations with people they are like, 'I feel like we are really going to do something,' and so you can see the hope in people's faces. And so that is what I take pride in because getting people to dream again is huge. And so I am just grateful that people are seeing the vision and catching hold to it and walking along with me."

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<sup>1</sup> 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-  
Multi-unit buildings on N. 75th St.



Today's neighborhood-  
N. 70th St. south of W. Glenbrook Rd.



Today's neighborhood-  
N. 70th St. & W. Beatrice Ct. looking west  
(Northridge Lake in foreground)



Today's neighborhood-  
Multi-unit buildings on W. Marine Dr.



Today's neighborhood-N. 70th St. looking west (Northridge Lake in the foreground)

<sup>i</sup> Photo attribution: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f2/Herbert\\_Kohl\\_official\\_photo.jp](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f2/Herbert_Kohl_official_photo.jp)

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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