

Approximate boundaries:

N-W. Oklahoma Ave; **S**-W. Morgan Ave;
E-S. 68th St, **W**-S. 76th St

SOUTHWEST SIDE *River Bend*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

River Bend is a neighborhood of moderate population density. The houses are mainly 1950s to 1960s ranch style with a few Cape Cods throughout. Most of the streets are wide and winding. The main thoroughfare is Honey Creek Drive that partly follows the path of the creek it is named after. There are a small number of businesses along South 76th Street and West Oklahoma Avenue.

Winding from the northwest to the southeast corner of the neighborhood is lovely Honey Creek, the main topographical feature of the area. Green space lies mainly along both sides of the waterway, sloping gently down to the creek. There is also a small City of Milwaukee public commons. River Bend Park is at the corner of West River Bend Drive and South 73rd Street. See neighborhood photos below.



Today's neighborhood-
Near the corner of 71st & Ohio

HISTORY

River Bend is named after the winding Honey Creek that graces the neighborhood.

During the 1920s, the area that is today's Southwest Side of Milwaukee began to transition from a farming district to clusters of settlements that would become Milwaukee neighborhoods. At the time that the first homes were built in the River Bend 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

Most of the early arrivals into the developing area 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 slowed the rate of development.

Post World War II

A somewhat larger housing boom after the war pressed many families of returning servicemen and others west of South 50th. At the same time, the City of Milwaukee was engaged in a massive annexation program in the area. Between 1948 and 1953, 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. While just over 200 residences were settled in River Bend in the mid-1950s, this number would expand greatly in the next five decades.

While most of the early settlers in River Bend were Poles and Germans migrating southwest, there were also a few Italians, English, Irish, Croatians, Slovenians, Canadians, and Greeks. An example of a multicultural family appears below.

River Bend random family (early 20th century)

*Names selected randomly from the 1956 City Directory in the River Bend area
(information from U.S. Census and other public records)*

The Paulsens

In the mid-1950s, the Paulsen family lived at 7024 W. Burdick in the River Bend neighborhood. The family home was very isolated with no other addresses within blocks. Census records suggest the Paulsens may have lived there for decades.

Frank Paulsen was a Slovenian immigrant from the ever-changing central European region. Born in 1894, he arrived in the United States in 1912. A few years later he met and married Anna Schwarzinger, a Croatian immigrant from the Russian sector of Poland. She'd arrived in 1910. Frank took a job as a bench hand in a machine shop. By 1920 the couple had two children, Frank and Margaret.

The Paulsen home became a haven for immigrant relatives. In 1920, the following relatives of Anna lived with the Paulsens: Anna's apparent stepfather, Max Kaljahe (also spelled Katsula/Katsuba), her mother Annie Kaljabe, her 16-year old sister Rose Schwarzinger/Sushatzingen, her apparent half siblings, 9-year-old Julia, 6-year-old John, and 4-year-old Helen Katzula/Katzuba. Frank Paulsen was not the only working person in the household. Max worked as a chipper in a machine shop and sister Rose worked in the stamping works industry.

By 1940, in the throes of the Great Depression, more relatives were living in the Paulsen home. Frank and Anna's children were grown, but Frank also brought his wife Mildred into the home. In addition, Anna's older sister Magdaline was living in the household with her husband Louis Horwath and their 18-year-old daughter Elizabeth. Again, more than one person was contributing to the household. Father Frank was earning a very respectable \$1,768 annual salary in his machine shop--\$800 over the median for men in for 1940. Son Frank also worked as a machinist (*see example photo*¹) and brother-in-law Louis had a job as a blacksmith helper.



Neighborhood businesses

As a neighborhood that arose late in Milwaukee's history, River Bend did not develop a significant commercial corridor. By 1956 only six businesses were open in the neighborhood, and five of these were on South 76th Street. See list and notes below.

<i>Addresses on S. 76th St. in 1956 in River Bend</i>	<i>Names of businesses from <u>Milwaukee City Directory</u></i>
3101	Steiger's Shell Service Station
3115	Erv's Grill Restaurant
3275	George J. Palen Contractor
3325	Town Auto Body and Painting
3469	Mahnke's Food Market

Summary and notes:

- By the mid-1950s Milwaukeeans were dependent on cars for shopping. Most of the neighborhood stores had been sacrificed to strip malls, shopping centers, mega-markets, and super markets. Apparently Mahnke's Food Market survived this trend.
- Two of the five neighborhood businesses on this stretch of 76th served the automobile, demonstrating the growing reliance on cars.
- George J. Palen, the contractor, was an orphan who was later adopted by the Cox family. He'd worked in the shoe business before starting his own business.
- Town Auto Body and Painting may have been owned by Mark Sindicic, an immigrant from Yugoslavia and a World War II vet.
- Mahnke's Food Market may have been owned by Clarence Mahnke, who began his career as a baker and lived on Rogers Street.
- The Shell gas station on 76th and Oklahoma later became a Citgo.

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 River Bend.

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 River Bend neighborhood has slightly over 1,500 residents. Of these, over 9 in 10 are European Americans. The overwhelming majority claim German or Polish ancestry, followed by mixed European, Irish, French, Italian, and Serbian. About 1 in 20 are Latinos--mostly Mexican. There is also a scattering of African Americans, Asians (mostly Vietnamese and Korean), and people of multiple racial backgrounds in the area. The neighborhood skews slightly older than Milwaukee in general.

River Bend is on the cusp of lower middle and middle-income strata with a median household income of just over \$49,000 annually. The occupations cited most often by adult residents are in the fields of administration, production, and education. The neighborhood has over twice the number of residents in the construction and social service fields than the proportion in other areas in Milwaukee.

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.

ICE FISHING & WINTER SPORTS SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Fri. 12-7pm; Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 9am-2pm	Wisconsin State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th, West Allis	Rows of exhibits with products and services dedicated to the ice fishing and winter sports enthusiast.	Free

HMONG NEW YEAR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Dec., Sat., Sun. 8am-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Celebration marks the end of the Hmong harvest season, which ends on November 31, and a time of several days of music, singing, dancing, games, and food.	unk

WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEDDINGS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jan., Sat., Sun. 10am-4:30pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	The latest trends in wedding gowns, tuxedos, photographers, florists, music, sample wedding cakes and food tastings, over 100 exhibitors.	unk

MILWAUKEE BOAT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Jan., one week, two weekends (except Mon & Tue)	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest boat show with over 400 boats from over 80 manufacturers, yachts, aluminum fishing boats, ski boats, pontoons, runabouts & jet skis, plus dock systems & marine accessories.	unk

WINTER POWWOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Mar., Sat. 11am-10pm, Sun. 11am-6pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	American Indian traditional powwow with interactive tribal dances planned to include the general public, with extensive marketplace, traditional foods, and family friendly environment.	unk

GREAT LAKES PET EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jan. 1-5pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Wisconsin's largest charitable event that raises money for companion animals in Wisconsin. Featuring exhibitors including local Wisconsin rescues, pet products and services, great entertainment, and the best shopping for pet lovers.	unk

WOMAN UP!

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Feb. Sat. 10am-4pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	A day to celebrate all walks of a woman's life with 250+ vendors and experts in health care, fitness, finance, beauty, education and food as you shop, sample, and listen to presentations.	unk

WISCONSIN STATE FAIR--\$2 THURSDAY

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Aug., Thu. (promotion ends at 4pm)	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Barnyard animals, crafts, live music, big name entertainers, food, exhibits, and, of course, a midway.	\$2 with 2 non-perishable food items or donation

MILWAUKEE/NARI SPRING IMPROVEMENT SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Feb. Thu-Sun., 12-8pm	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Home improvement trade show with special attractions and interactive entertainment.	unk

MILWAUKEE RV SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Feb. Thu. thru Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Displays and sales of a wide range of recreational vehicles including pop-up campers, travel trailers, 5th wheels and motorhomes.	unk

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL SPORTS SHOW

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Mar. Sun. thru Wed., see hours on website	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Exhibits on fishing, hunting, camping, boating and outdoor adventure.	unk

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Jun., Jul., Aug. Wed.'s, 6-11pm	State Fair Park, Budweiser Pavilion, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Milwaukee's most popular local bands entertain thousands of fans each week at this indoor/outdoor family friendly concert venue.	Free

GREEK FEST

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Jun. Fri./Sat. 11am-11pm, Sun. 11am-9pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Festival of Greek food, dance, concerts, marketplace.	Free

HOLIDAY FOLK FAIR INTERNATIONAL

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid November, Fri.- Sun.	State Fair Park Expo Center; 8200 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis	Multicultural festival of music, food, dance, and the arts.	unk

HORSE EXPO

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Sep., Thu. 7am- 9pm, Fri. 7am-5pm, Sat. 7am-9pm, Sun. 7am-1pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Wisconsin State 4-H horse expo including English and Western pleasure, showmanship, trail, and more.	Free

MAKER FAIRE MILWAUKEE

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Sat. 9am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Showcase of invention, creativity, tech enthusiasts, crafters, artists, educators, tinkerers, students and others.	Free

HARVEST FAIR

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Sep., Fri. 5- 11pm, Sat. 9am- 11pm, Sun. 9am- 5pm	State Fair Park, 640 S. 84th St., West Allis	Autumn fair that features rides, food, games such as pumpkin bowling, and contests such as the pumpkin chuckin'.	Free

WINTER FEST AT JACKSON PARK

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Mid Dec., Sat. 11am-3 pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Face-painting, cocoa, crafts for kids, music, and more.	Free

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION--JACKSON

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
July 4 8am-10pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home Ave.	Parade, Doll Buggy, Bike & Trike, and Coaster judging, free ice cream, fireworks.	Free

JACKSON PARK FARMERS MARKET

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Early Jun. thru early Sep., Thu. 3:30-7pm	3300 W. Forest Home Ave.	Fresh food from Wisconsin farms, baked goods, crafts, art.	Free

AUGUST NIGHTS CONCERTS

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Aug., Thu's, 6:30-8:30pm	Jackson Park, 3500 W. Forest Home (Picnic Area #2)	Concerts in park.	Free

MOVIES AT SOUTHGATE CINEMA

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Daily	3320 S. 30th St.	Popular movies at a Marcus Theater.	unk

NIGHT OUT TRICK OR TREAT

When?	Where?	Description and contact info	Admission
Late Oct., Sat. 6-8pm	Manitoba Park, 49th & Manitoba	Halloween celebration.	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

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 S. 72nd St & Honey Creek Dr.



Today's neighborhood-Honey Creek looking west from S. 72nd St.



Today's neighborhood-River Bend Park



Today's neighborhood-Houses on S. Honey Creek Dr.

¹ Photo attribution: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/Machine_Shop_Men_GPN-2000-000364.jpg

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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