

NORTH LAKE DRIVE HISTORIC DISTRICT
HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. Name

Historic: None

Common: North Lake Drive Historic District

II. Location

The district is located on Milwaukee's far upper eastside and includes the west side of the North Lake Drive that begins at East Park Place and ends at the south property line of the Armin A. Schlesinger House at 3270 N. Marietta Avenue.

III. Classification

District

IV. Owner of Property

Multiple

V. Description

A. Boundaries

The boundaries of the North Lake Drive Historic District are described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of North Lake Drive and East Park Place; then north along the center line of North Lake Drive to the south property line of 3270 North Marietta Avenue; then west along this line to the centerline of North Marietta Avenue; the south along this line to the south property line of 3245 North Lake Drive; then east along this line to the west property line of the same; then south along this line of the west property lines of the properties with frontage on North Lake Drive to the center line of East Park Place, then east to the point of beginning, in the City of Milwaukee.

B. General Character

The North Lake Drive Historic District includes the west side of a residential street that contains some of the city's finest mansions and large-scale residences. The district is located on Milwaukee's upper eastside and is one of a number of upper income residential neighborhoods that extend northward from East Lafayette Place along Lake Michigan, east of Downer Avenue, to Edgewood Avenue. In general, the district is bounded on the east by Lake Park from Park Place to Kenwood Boulevard and above Kenwood Boulevard by modern condominium development; on the north by the North Lake Drive Estates Historic District; on the west by a series of upper-middle class early twentieth century residential areas; and on the south by Park Place. The district contains 35 buildings; all of which were constructed between 1894 and 1929. All of the buildings were originally built as private residences with one, the Horace A.J. Upham House, converted to institutional use. This has not significantly affected the

district's residential character. The focus of the district is Lake Drive. It is a wide, multi-lane arterial that also serves as State Highway 32. Several of the properties, which do not have Lake Drive addresses, are included in the district because they have significant frontage on Lake Drive and contribute to the continuity of the streetscape.

Large, architect-designed residences characterize the district; many of which are mansion-scale. They were built for prominent Milwaukeeans, many of whom were the business and professional leaders of their period. Most of the residences are two and a half to three stories in height. The most frequently used material was dark red and brown brick with extensive limestone trim. Stucco with half-timbering and terra cotta ornaments are also common exterior materials. The district is distinguished from adjacent areas by its large lots, and broad front lawns.

The residences in the district typify the domestic architectural styles that were popular in the early twentieth century. The district was developed during three separate periods, but continuity was maintained by the high quality of design and craftsmanship. The earliest residences built prior to 1905 were eclectic in their design, borrowing from Victorian and Classical Revival sources. During the second period of development from 1905 to 1916 when some of the largest of the mansions were built, the Tudor Revival dominated upper-class residential design. In the last period of development from 1922 to 1929, the picturesque Tudor Revival style was still dominant, although period revival designs drawn from the American Colonial, Georgian and Mediterranean sources were also popular. There are no major intrusions or vacant lots in the district.

VI. Significance

Date Built: 1883 – 1929

The North Lake Drive Historic District is significant as an intact upper-class residential enclave displaying high quality domestic architecture designed by some of Milwaukee's leading architects. It is historically significant as the place of residence of many prominent Milwaukeeans.

VII. History

The development of the North Lake Drive Historic District was the result of the growth of Milwaukee of the late 19th century. At that time the city's population was significantly expanding and people from all economic classes in need of homesites were moving beyond the established central city neighborhoods into wards far from the central business district. The upper eastside, above North Avenue, was considered to be on the city's periphery at that time. Developers, specifically owners of lakefront lands, envisioned distinctive neighborhoods housing Milwaukee's most prominent and wealthy citizens. The North Lake Drive Historic District was of the last of the lake front tracts to be improved for residential development. Lake Drive was planned as the successor to the former "Gold Coasts" along Grand and Prospect Avenues. The residential development of the upper eastside was a slow process. Although subdivisions had been platted as far north as Bradford Avenue by 1876, there had been little house construction. Settlement in this area was so slow that between 1880 and 1885 only one major subdivision, Mitchell Heights, was platted. The land between East Locust Street and East Edgewood Avenue remained largely undeveloped until the early 1900's. The primary reason for this lag in growth was the lack of major urban services and public improvements. The wealthy homeowners wanted water lines, sewers and paved walks and streets in place before building a residence. This was in contrast to the middle and lower income groups of the northwest and

southwest city wards who built extensive new neighborhoods before similar improvements were in place. As the area north of East Park Place was subdivided, developers made significant expenditures for these improvements and passed their costs along in the price of the lots.

The earliest land holders in the district were primarily pioneer businessmen and speculative investors. The largest known landowners in this group were attorney Donald A.J. Upham, whose son, Horace A.J. Upham eventually constructed his residence at 3019 North Lake Drive; civil engineer Peter Martineau, and real estate agent, Charles Quentin. There was also some farming in the district with the largest known farm being that of Clarence Shepard located between Kenwood Boulevard and Hartford, and between Downer Avenue and Lake Michigan. It was subdivided in 1891 as Kenwood Park. Shepard was a wholesale hardware dealer with his shop in downtown Milwaukee, but he maintained his residence at the farm site. The land directly north of the Shepard farm to where Summit Avenue curves northeast to intersect with Lake Drive, in the village of Shorewood, was owned by tanning magnate, Guido Pfister. When this tract was subdivided in 1913 and 1922 as Elmwood and Lake Dells Park, respectively, it was owned by members of Fred Vogel's family, Pfister's partner in the tanning business.

The first improvements in the district were roads. In 1872 Charles Andrews, proprietor of the Newhall House, received a charter from the State of Wisconsin to operate a toll road along the present route of Lake Drive. In that same year he began construction of the Whitefish Bay Toll Road, a plank road, which began at Kenwood Boulevard and extended north to the summer resorts at Whitefish Bay. This plank road, unlike many of the earlier toll roads which were used to facilitate commerce and to encourage settlement, was built to offer an improved route for the many patrons of the Whitefish Bay resorts. Likewise, Downer Avenue, which was surveyed and built by the City of Milwaukee in 1875, was not intended to serve as a residential thoroughfare, but rather to serve as a roadbed for the construction of the Whitefish Bay Railway, which served the resorts.

As previously noted, the first subdivision in the district, Kenwood Park, was platted in 1891 from the Clarence Shepard farm. Nevertheless, the first residential development along Lake Drive within Kenwood didn't occur until 1905. The largest subdivision in the district was Prospect Hill, platted in 1893. Owned by the Prospect Hill Land Company with John George as president and Edward P. Hackett as treasurer, this subdivision was bounded by Kenwood Boulevard, Lake Drive, Park Place, and Downer Avenue. The showpieces of the Prospect Hill subdivision were Newberry Boulevard and Lake Drive upon which the developers spent \$160,000 for paving sidewalks and streets, curbs and gutters, water lines and sewers. In spite of all these improvements, only five residences had been built by 1898 (three are still extant) along Lake Drive and no further new construction occurred until 1914.

The residential development of North Lake Drive occurred in three stages. The first period was in the 1890's when only five residences were built, the second was from 1905 to 1916 when many of the largest of the mansions were built; and the third was from 1922 to 1929 when over 60% of the housing stock in the district was constructed. In each stage the quality and craftsmanship was the highest of the period and reflected the prosperity of their owners who desired distinctive and luxurious residences. The owners of these residences were mostly leading members of the business and professional communities.

The earliest residences were located at the south end of the district between Park Place and Locust Street. The first residence was built in 1894 for William C. Middleton at 2757 North Lake Drive. He was president of the Middletown Manufacturing Company, which made hats, caps and straw goods. His house was a large, rambling brick and stucco Victorian that combined Queen Anne and Colonial Revivals. It was designed by the Milwaukee architectural firm of

Crane and Barkhausen. Next door to the Middleton House was the residence built in 1896 for Edward G. Cowdery at 2743 North Lake Drive. Cowdery was the general manager of the Wisconsin Gas Light Company. In 1908 the house was sold to Albert Elser, the president of First Wisconsin Bank. The architect for the Cowdery-Elser House was Alexander C. Eschweiler. A prominent Milwaukee architect known for his residential work. Eschweiler produced a somber medieval inspired design with German overtones in the terra cotta ornament. Although this was Eschweiler's first design to be built in the district, in succeeding years he would be commissioned to design many more large homes along Lake Drive.

Perhaps more influential in setting the architectural one for the future development of Lake Drive was the George Wiswell House at 2701 North Lake Drive built in 1895. This Elizabethan Revival house with its rambling, multi-gabled, picturesque silhouette, and half-timbering is the earliest of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Revival style houses that would dominate architectural design on North Lake Drive in the twentieth century.

On the other hand, the Lee Dearholt House of 1905 at 3201 North Lake Drive, a lavishly detailed Classical Revival style residence, reflects the "road not taken" in many ways. Although the Classical Revival style was adopted as the favored architectural mode of the wealthy in many cities in the United States in the early twentieth century, in Milwaukee it found little favor and the Dearholt House is the only lavish essay in the style in the district.

The other significant mansions of the period were variations of the English Revival mode. Richard Philipp designated the Tudor Revival Albert F. Gallun House, built in 1914, at 3000 East Newberry Boulevard. He was an exceptional 20th century architect and the Gallun House is regarded as one of his finest residential commissions and an excellent example of the style. Two important examples of the Jacobean style are the Nathaniel Green House, built in 1925 and designed by Herman W. Buemming, at 2951 North Lake Drive; and the Horace A.J. Upham House, built in 1912 and designed by Alexander C. Eschweiler, at 3109 North Lake Drive.

World War I interrupted the development of the district and new construction did not resume until 1922. The district was built to capacity by 1929. It was during the 1920's that the district experienced its greatest period of development. Although many of the houses built in the 1920's were considerably smaller than the earlier residences, the attention to design and detail maintained the architecturally distinctive character of North Lake Drive. During this period a greater variety of historical revival styles were popular including Mediterranean, Norman, Georgian, although the Tudor Revival was still dominant. It was also during this period that a number of luxury duplexes were built. Designed to appear as single family residences, they were concentrated in the vicinity of Locust Street.

VIII. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that North Lake Drive be designated a historic district in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-335 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

IX. Preservation Guidelines

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the North Lake Drive Historic District. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Guidelines for Rehabilitation

The North Lake Drive Historic District is important because of its concentration of well-designed residences exhibiting fine craftsmanship and materials. Throughout the district's history, owners have maintained their properties in nearly original condition. This has resulted in a neighborhood of well-preserved period residences and a cohesive streetscape. These guidelines are based upon those contained in Section 2-335(10) of the historic preservation ordinance. These guidelines are not intended to restrict an owner's use of his/her property, but to serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the district.

1. Roofs

- a. Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they do not visually intrude upon those elevations visible from the public right-of-way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch or gable orientation.
- b. Retain the original roofing materials, wherever possible. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood.
- c. Replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in size, shape, color and texture. Avoid replacing deteriorated roof covering with new materials which differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture so that the appearance of the building is altered.

2. Exterior Finishes

- a. Masonry
 - i. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
 - ii. Repaint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.

- iii. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
 - iv. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.
 - b. Stucco

Repair stucco with stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture.
 - c. Wood
 - i. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as half-timbering, window architraves and doorway pediments. These are, in most cases, an essential part of a building's character and appearance that should be retained.
 - ii. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.
 - d. Terra Cotta
 - i. Unpainted terra cotta should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering naturally glazed or finished terra cotta. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
 - ii. Clean Terra cotta only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method available. Sandblasting terra cotta is prohibited. This method of cleaning destroys the material.
 - iii. Repair or replace deteriorated terra cotta with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Precast tinted concrete or cast fiber glass are recommended replacement materials as long as they are finished with a masonry coating to resemble the original appearance. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or does not resemble the original.
- 3. Windows and Doors
 - a. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configuration of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and

hardware. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash. Avoid discarding original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused.

- b. Respect the stylistic period or periods a building represents. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of character with the building. Avoid using modern style windows units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

4. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- a. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- b. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is essential to the maintenance of the building's historic character and appearance.
- c. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.

5. Additions

Make additions that harmonize with the existing building architecturally and are located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible. Avoid making additions that are unsympathetic to the original structure and visually intrude upon the principal elevation.

B. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscape of North Lake Drive is visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of period street and landscaping features. There are no noncontributing buildings or visually prominent inappropriate additions to historic structures. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and the period

streetlights contributes to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

1. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
2. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and street lighting that is compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.

C. Guidelines for New Construction

There has been no new construction in the district since 1929. It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting

New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the district. This includes setback, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures, and the relationship between the main building and accessory buildings.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions, including foundation, body and roof; and, individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding material traditionally used in the district. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

D. Guides for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable, if approved by the Historic Preservation

Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive affect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.

6. Replacement

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale or by a new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (see New Construction guidelines).