

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
NORTH LAKE DRIVE ESTATES HISTORIC DISTRICT

I. Name

Historic: None

Common: North Lake Drive Estates Historic District

II. Location

The district is located on Milwaukee's far upper eastside and includes nine mansions in the 3200, 3300 and 3400 blocks of North Lake Drive.

III. Classification

District

IV. Owner of Property

Multiple

V. Description

A. Boundaries

The North Lake Drive Estates Historic District consists of three non-contiguous parcels. The southernmost parcel is described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the east curb line of North Lake Drive and the south property line of 3234 North Lake Drive, then east along this line to the shore of Lake Michigan; then north along the lakeshore to the north property line 3318 North Lake Drive; then west along this line to the west property line of 3319 North Lake Drive; then south along this line to the south property line of 3270 North Marietta Avenue; then east along this line to the east curb line of North Lake Drive; then south to the point of beginning in the City of Milwaukee.

The second parcel is described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the east curb line of North Lake Drive and the south property line of 3400 North Lake Drive; then east along this line to the shore of Lake Michigan; then north along the lakeshore to the north property line of 3432 North Lake Drive; then west along this line to the east curb line of North Lake Drive; then south along the east curb line to the point of beginning in the City of Milwaukee.

The third parcel is described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the east curb line of North Lake Drive and the south property line of 3450 North Lake Drive, then east along this line the shore of Lake Michigan; then north along the lakeshore to the Shorewood village limits; then west on the village limits to the east curb line of North Lake Drive; then south along the east curb line to the point of beginning in the City of Milwaukee.

B. General Character

The North Lake Drive Estates Historic District includes portions of a residential street that contains some of the city's finest mansions. 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 Michigan; on the north by the Shorewood village line; on the west by a series of upper-middle class early twentieth century residential areas; and on the south by North Lake Drive Historic District and a modern subdivision fronting on East Hampshire Street.

The district contains nine houses with outbuildings built between 1907 and 1928. All of the buildings were originally built as private residences, but over the last 40 years several of these properties have been adapted for institutional uses. These changes have 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.

Architect-designed, mansion-scale dwellings, some with outbuildings, set on expansive grounds, characterize the district. The lakeside of the district contains some of the largest estates in Milwaukee with setbacks of up to 300 feet and lots covering up to five acres. The architecture reflects the period revival styles popular in the early twentieth century and exhibits the highest quality in craftsmanship and materials. The residences are mostly two and one-half or three stories in height and are constructed of masonry materials. The most frequently used material was dark red and brown brick with extensive limestone trim.

VI. Significance

Date Built: 1907-1928

The North Lake Drive Estates 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 Estates 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 Estates 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 that 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 area were primarily pioneer businessmen and speculative investors. The largest know landowners in this group were attorney Donald A. J. Upham, 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 and Kenwood Park No. 2. 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 area 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 plant road, which began at Kenwood Boulevard and extended north to the summer resorts. Likewise, Downer Avenue, which was surveyed and built by the City of Milwaukee in 1875, was not intended to serve as residential thoroughfare, but rather to serve as a roadbed for the construction of the Whitefish Bay Railway, which served the resorts.

The district was developed from Kenwood Park No. 2 on the west side of the street and from large tracts of land on the east side prior to the official platting of Lake Dells Park in 1922. Residential development occurred between 1907 and 1928. Included in the district are three residences of the locally prominent Uihlein family. They were the sons and daughters of the Uihlein brothers who assumed control of the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company in 1875. The largest of the uihlein mansions was that built for Joseph Uihlein at 3318 North Lake Drive. Built in 1907 and enlarged in 1914 and 1917 it was designed in the Jacobean style by Milwaukee architects Charles Kirchoff and Leslie Rose. This firm was among the top designers in the City and the favorite of the Uihlein family. Kirchoff and Rose also designed the Erwin and Paula Uihlein House in 1913 across the street at 3319 North Lake Drive, an Early English Renaissance style

residence. The third residence was built in 1915 for Robert Uihlein at 3252 North Lake Drive. William J. Kozick designed it in the Georgian Revival.

Fitzhugh Scott was the architect of the Armin Schlesinger House at 3270 North Marietta Avenue. Originally addressed as Lake Drive, this residence was built in 1911 for Schlesinger who owned several companies that dealt in coal and coke. It was designed in a heavy handed variation of the Tudor Revival style and was featured in the August, 1914 issue of the *Western Architect* as one of Scott's most accomplished works and of the finest examples of that style in the City. In 1927 William Brumder, president of the Germania National Bank, purchased the house. The Milwaukee State Teacher's College (now the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) purchased the mansion in 1946 for use as a women's dormitory. It is still owned by the University and was converted to offices in 1970.

Alexander C. Eschweiler designed the Orrin W. Robertson House at 3266 North Lake Drive in 1912 and the Henry M. Thompson House at 3288 North Lake Drive in 1913. The Robertson House is a masterful example of the Chateausque style and was built at the request of Mrs. Robertson after a trip to Europe where she became acquainted with the Chateau Azay-le-Rideau in France's Loire Valley. Robertson was a local businessman and entrepreneur who was president of the Western Lime and Cement Company, manufacturers and distributors of oil products. He lived in the house from 1921 to 1928.

The third and longest single occupant was tanning executive David B. Eisendrath. He and, later, his wife, lived in the house from 1930 to 1963. The following year it was sold to a religious order, Our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle and became a residence for Catholic nuns. In 1971 the house was sold to the Community of St. Mary's, an Episcopal order of nuns, who in turn, sold it to the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, another order of Catholic nuns. The Daughters of Charity resided there until the present owners; Dennis and Mary Bersch purchased the house, in 1981. The Berschs' have returned the house to its original use as a single-family residence.

The Thompson House is a restrained adaptation of the Tudor Revival with a minimum of exterior ornament that is a combination of carved stone and wood. Thompson was a lumber executive who was secretary-treasurer of his father-in-law's company in Mosinee, Wisconsin and, later, president of three lumber companies in Zenda, Walworth and Elkhorn, Wisconsin. He came to Milwaukee in 1868 at the age of seven, where his father was a surgeon at the old Soldier's Home. Thompson remained in Milwaukee until 1888; he had been employed by the Marine Bank, when he married Stella L. Dessert, of one of Wisconsin's leading lumber families. After the extensive timber reserves were exhausted, the Thompson's returned to Milwaukee in 1902.

Mrs. Thompson purchased the present site of the house that year, but they would live at two other locations in Milwaukee before building their lakefront mansion. The Thompsons remained in this house until her death in 1946 and his death in 1947. The next year their daughter sold the house to Our Lady of the Cenacle, A Roman Catholic order of nuns, as a retreat house. This order occupied the house until 1973 when it was sold to the Western Province of the Community of St. Mary, an Episcopal order of nuns, for the same use.

There are two other estates in the district together with the subdivided lots that once comprised their grounds. These are the lakeside estates of Samuel A. Field at 3432 North Lake Drive and of Stanley I. Stone at 3474 North Lake Drive. The Field House was built in 1890 and originally located at the east end of State Street on Milwaukee's lower eastside. Field came to Milwaukee from eastern New York in 1849 and amassed a fortune in real estate. His Tudor mansion, designed by August Fiedler of Chicago, was built specifically to house his impressive art collection. George L. Kuehn purchased the Field House in 1920, but in 1928 the city condemned the site for the expansion of Juneau Park. Instead of allowing the residence to be demolished, Kuehn had it disassembled stone by stone and moved to its present Lake Drive site. Originally, the house was a full three stories, but in the rebuilding Kuehn had the roof lowered one floor and used the surplus stone to construct a four-car attached garage. Kuehn also added a new tile roof and solarium. The Stone House built in 1928, in an outstanding example of a French period revival mansion. Designed by the architectural firm of Whitney and Beck, it boasts an impressive green Vermont slate roof. Stone was treasurer of Herzfeld-Phillipson Company and an executive with Boston Store.

VIII. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that North Lake Drive Estates be designated a historic district in accordance with the provisions of Section 8-308 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

IX. Preservation Guidelines

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle 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 Estates 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 Estates Historic District is important as one of Milwaukee's best concentrations of well-designed mansions 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 intact sites. These guidelines are based upon those contained in Section 2-335(10) of this 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 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 that 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) Repoint 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 materials, which is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

b. Stucco

- (i) Repair stucco with a 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 architrave 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 it is 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, hood, 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 then 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 metal strip awnings or fake shutters which are not in proportion to the openings or which are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window 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

- a. 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 principle elevations.

B. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscape in North Lake Drive Estates 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 contribute 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

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. New buildings should not obstruct the vistas from the street to the house.

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. The construction of any single building addition or accessory building shall not increase the total gross floor area of all structures on the lot by more than 20%. The total gross floor area of all additions or accessory buildings constructed after July 27, 1984, shall not exceed 50% of the total gross floor area of all structures on the lot on that date.¹

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 materials 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. Guidelines 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 Commission shall take the following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, into consideration when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can 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

¹ Resolution, File No. 980106, Common Council, adopted July 9, 1998

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect 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 which would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (see new Construction Guidelines).