

OMENA

*Old Millard East
Neighborhood Association*

Summer 2016

Free
TAKE ONE



Western Electric 2

Millard Days Schedule 14

Old Millard Map 22

Multisport Complex 30

Progress in Millard 32

Safest Neighborhoods 36

Omaha Track 42

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Photographer unknown, looking East

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Renewing Community, History & Accessibility

Our Mission

- To foster pride and encourage neighborhood involvement within the Old Millard East Neighborhood by providing opportunities for the participation in community work and social events.
- To provide for the safety and security to the people who live in the Old Millard East Neighborhood.
- To combat community deterioration, promote future development and to beautify the Old Millard East area.
- To improve and create a positive image of the Old Millard East Neighborhood, by endorsing the Association's name, by publicizing the activities and goals of the organization and its members.
- To encourage and communicate with home owners, tenants, landlords, businesses, religious organizations and government to cooperate for the common good of all.
- To increase the size of our membership and neighbor involvement.

Scope

Old Millard East Neighborhood Association is defined by any person residing on 120th Street west to Millard Avenue between L Street and Q Street is eligible for membership.

Membership

Households: \$10 (includes email updates)

Business Membership: \$100 (includes website listing, email updates, advertising discount)



Old Millard East Neighborhood Association

Publication Sales, Distribution & Design

Immediate Solutions
www.imsomaha.com

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ABC Printing

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www.omenaconnects.com/advertise



Western Electric

Millard Nebraska 1956-2011

Photo courtesy of Western Electric former employees



Photo courtesy of Western Electric

"The Twisters"

History of Western Electric Plant

1956

Western Electric announces plans to construct a manufacturing facility in Omaha to produce dial equipment and telephone cable. Production begins two years later. The plant quickly establishes a reputation of being a top provider of exchange cable, cross bar and PBX equipment for the Bell system, a company video states.

1970's

The plant, known as Omaha Works, has 7,700 employees.

1984

The company faces industry changes in 1984 after the court-ordered breakup of the Bell System. The plant would be known as AT&T Technologies' Omaha Works.

late 80's

The communications industry sees rapid advancements in technology.

mid 90's

AT&T splits off its products and systems business. The plant becomes the property of that company known as Lucent Technologies. Lucent then would spin off three businesses, including Avaya Inc. The plant becomes part of Avaya.

2003

Avaya sells its Connectivity Solutions division and the plant to CommScope Inc.

2010

CommScope Inc., announces that it will close the plant, cutting 400 jobs.

2011

Plant closes in July.

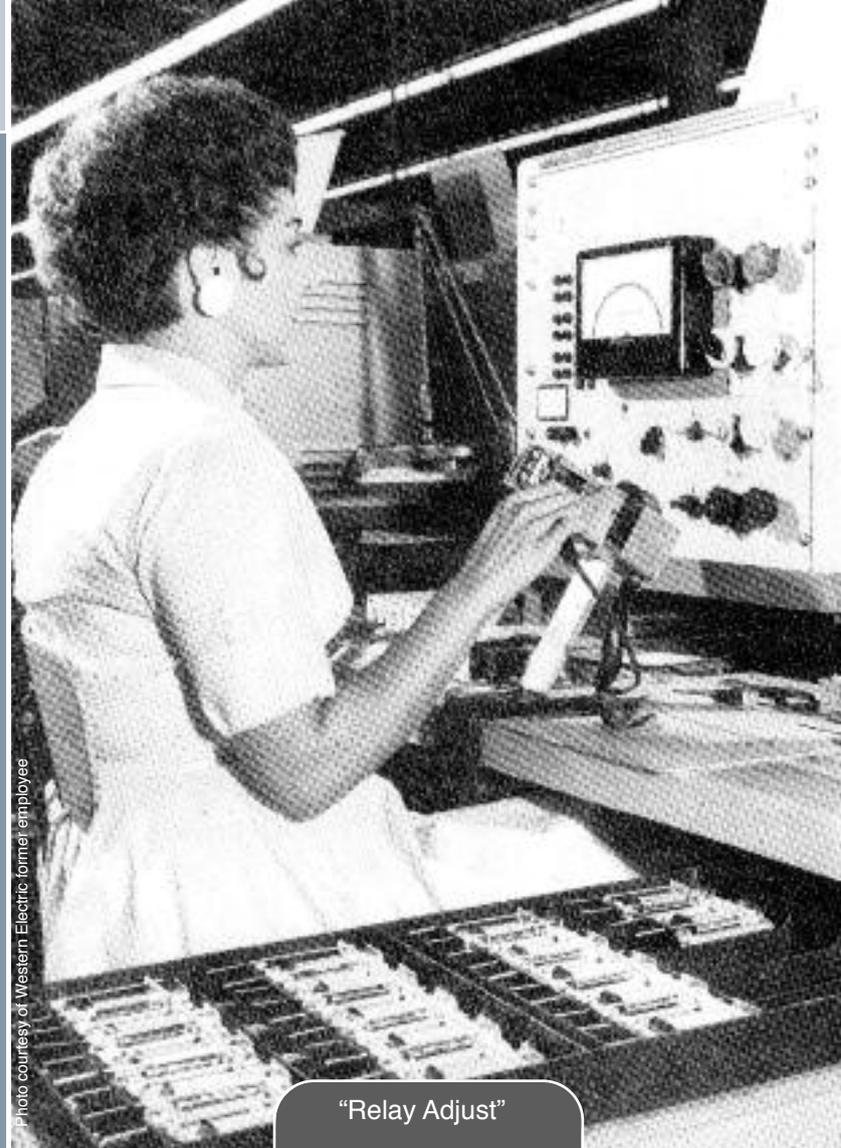


Photo courtesy of Western Electric/former employee

"Relay Adjust"



Photo courtesy of Western Electric former employee

August 9, 1956



Wayne Harris was 19 when he started working at former Western Electric plant in Millard. It was 1959.

"I got laid off from here in town at Nebraska Crib and Silo and they told me (Western Electric) would be a good place to check on. They hired me within a week," he said.

Thus began a 40-plus-year career for Harris - one of many Fremonters who trekked to the plant for decades to earn a good living for themselves and their families.

Friday marked the end of an era for area residents when the plant, now known as Connectivity Solutions, officially closed.

Now Fremonters are remembering the plant as a place that - at one time - may have offered the closest thing to job security.

"For a person with just a high school education, it was considered a really good job," said Fremonter Dan Koenig, who was 18 when he began working at the plant in January 1970. "Everybody figured you'd have a job that would last your lifetime when you got out there."



The job opportunities opened up for area residents after Western Electric announced plans in 1956 to build a manufacturing facility in Omaha. Production began two years later and the plant quickly became a top provider of exchange cable, cross bar and PBX equipment for the Bell system.

By the late 1970s, the plant had 7,700 employees, but the telecommunications industry faced changes in 1984 after the court-ordered breakup of the Bell system. Company spin-offs resulted and the number of plant employees decreased throughout the years.

The last company, the North Carolina-based CommScope Inc., announced in 2010 that it would close the plant, cutting about 400 manufacturing jobs. The company cited a slowdown in customer spending among reasons for closing the plant.



Koenig and other Fremonters are saddened by the plant's closing.

"I think those times are gone when you could work at a place for 30 or 40 years. I never thought I'd see the day that the plant would close. I think it's very sad," said Harris' wife, Daphne, who worked at the factory for three decades.

Wayne and Daphne Harris were among several married couples employed at the plant. When Daphne started working at the plant in 1970, the couple's youngest child was a year old. They had a live-in babysitter who attended what was then Bahner's College of Hairstyling.

Daphne enjoyed working at the factory.

"I don't think anyone could find a better place to work," she said. "It was a real clean place to work. ... The floors would shine like in a schoolroom."

Area residents said the plant offered good wages and benefits.

"It was good money and it was a good job," said Shirley Dwyer of Fremont, who worked there from 1969-98.

Fremonter Mona Johnson, a 31 1/2-year employee, agreed.

"I thought it paid pretty good," she said.

For many local residents, the plant helped provide a future for their families.

"There are a lot of people who put their kids through college on this job. I had four kids who went to Washington School, then Bergan and on to college," said Koenig, whose wife, Cheryl, began working at the plant in 1972.

"We worked a lot of overtime to be able to do this," he added, also noting the two worked opposite shifts when the children were young or else had a babysitter.

Joyce Nick of Cedar Bluffs and her late husband, Jerry, worked at the plant as well. Jerry retired after three decades. Joyce said she was laid off three times, but worked at the plant 27 years before she retired in 2000.

"I kept going back," she said. "It was the best job around. It had good benefits and a lot of things for people."

But more than money attracted Nick to the plant.

"You met a lot of good people and they were all there making a living, just like you," she said. "I had a lot of good bosses and good department chiefs and my work constantly changed. ... You could move to different departments."

Nick noted the Bell system's divestiture brought people from different parts of the country to the plant.

"You met people from the East Coast and the South. ... There were always a lot of interesting people. You met good people and developed friendships," she said.

For Fremont area employees, working at the plant meant commuting.

Koenig remembers when a private bus transported people from Fremont to Millard. The Koenigs also drove fellow employees to work. Riders dozed, read or talked about their lives or their families during the trip which lasted 45 minutes each way.



"Everybody in the car pool got pretty close and got to know each other pretty well," Koenig said.

Nick was part of the Koenigs' car pool for years.

"They were very dependable, very good people and we loved them. We still do. We went to their children's weddings and graduation parties - just like one big family," she said.

Wayne Harris drove fellow employees to work, too.

"We very seldom missed work because of the snow," he added.

There are times when Harris, who retired in 2000, misses the place. He misses the people and good times they shared.

"It was a lot of fun and there were a lot of new people out there all the time," Harris said. "We had a lot of friends out there."

Reprinted with permission from Fremont Tribune/Tammy Real-McKeighan



May 24, 1957

Photo courtesy of Western Electric former employee

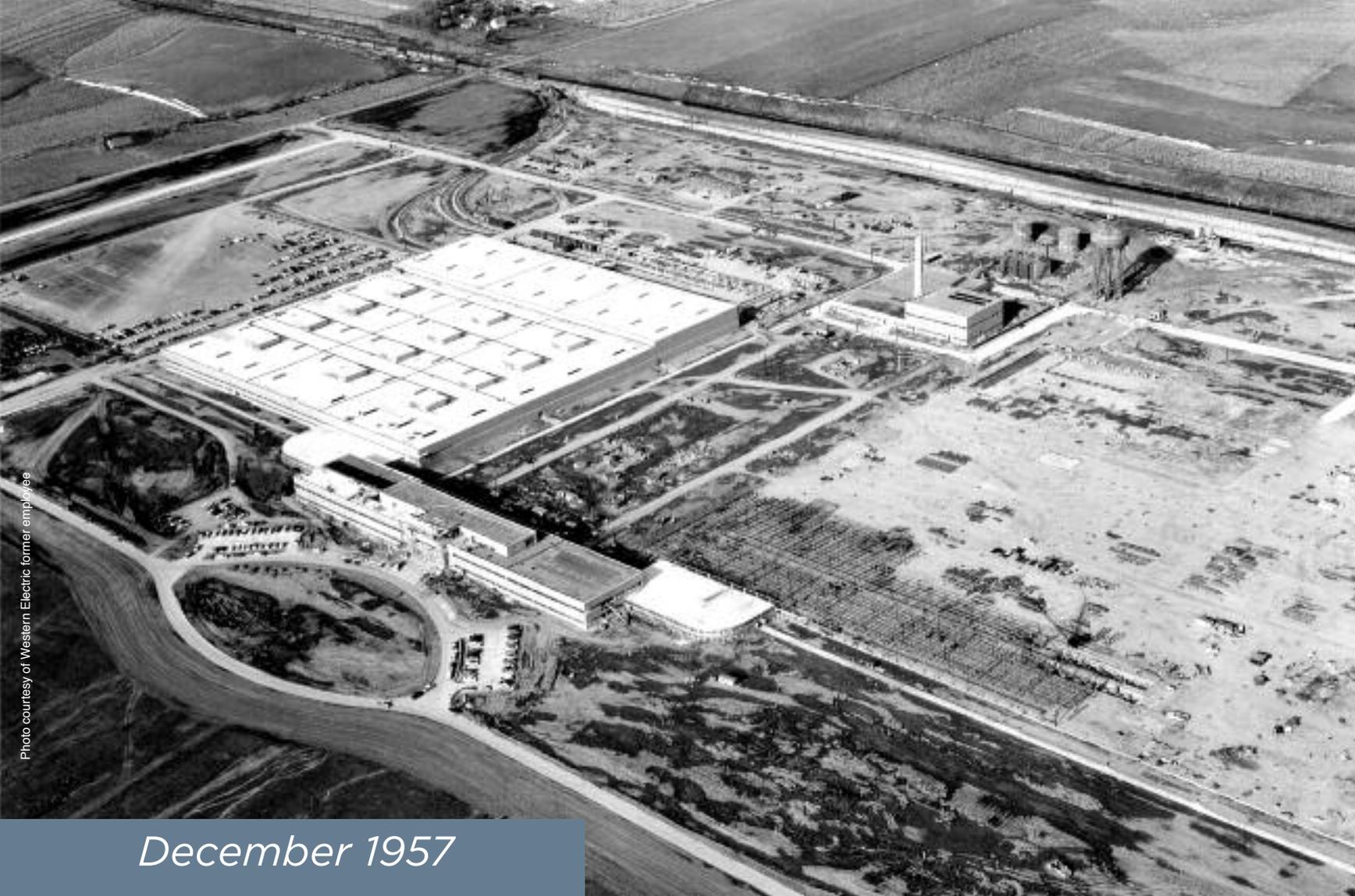


Photo courtesy of Western Electric former employee

December 1957



120th Street

Millard Central
Middle School

L Street

132nd Street

Millard Ave

Industrial Road

Photo courtesy of Western Electric, former employee

December 23, 1958



April 1, 2016

©2016 David C. Rathbun

Do you have an awesome garden? Are you proud of your landscaping?

Send us your photos to be included in our Fall 2016 issue.
Email dave.r@omenaconnects.com



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Clean-Up and Walk Your Block



Each year OMENA and Oak Hills HOA host the annual Spring Cleanup sponsored by the City of Omaha. This is a great way to get rid of stacks of unwanted left-overs, doors, windows, playground sets or whatever is stacked beside your garage.

One week prior to this event, we organize a Walk Your Block campaign. This is designed to clean up any winter trash around your block, meet your neighbors and take pride in your area.

Again, this year was a great turnout with several truckloads of trash taken out of Millard by Deffenbaugh. Thanks again to the Oak Hills HOA for hosting and the City of Omaha for sponsoring this event.

A Special thanks to the volunteers that help make this event a success!



Walk Your Block Pre-Cleanup



HEAVY day at the cleanup!



Chris D. Taking a Break from the Action



PROUD TO REPRESENT WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY – DISTRICT 6

Millard Days

August 23-28, 2016

Tuesday, Aug 23

Carnival 5:00pm - 10:00pm

Wednesday, Aug 24

Carnival 5:00pm - 10:00pm

Beer Garden 6:00pm - 11:00pm

Music 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Thursday, Aug 25

Carnival 5:00pm - 10:00pm

Beer Garden 6:00pm - 11:00pm

Music 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Friday, Aug 26

Carnival 5:00pm - 11:00pm

Beer Garden 6:00pm - Midnight

Jason Earl Band 7:00pm - 11:00pm

Saturday, Aug 27

Parade 11:00am

Carnival: 11:30am - 11:30pm

Poker Run Registration 11:00am - 1:30pm

Beer Garden 12:00 - Midnight

The Grease Band 8:00pm - 11:00pm

Sunday, Aug 28

Carshow 10:00am - 3:00pm Hobby Lobby

Horseshoes 10:30am Registration

Carnival 1:00pm - 6:00pm

Activity Tent 12:00 - 3:00pm

Face Painting 12:00

Balloon Animals 12:00

KiddieTractor Pull 1:30pm (Registration 1:00pm)

Free Ice Cream Social 3:00pm

Car Show



Parade



Carnival



Horseshoe Tourney



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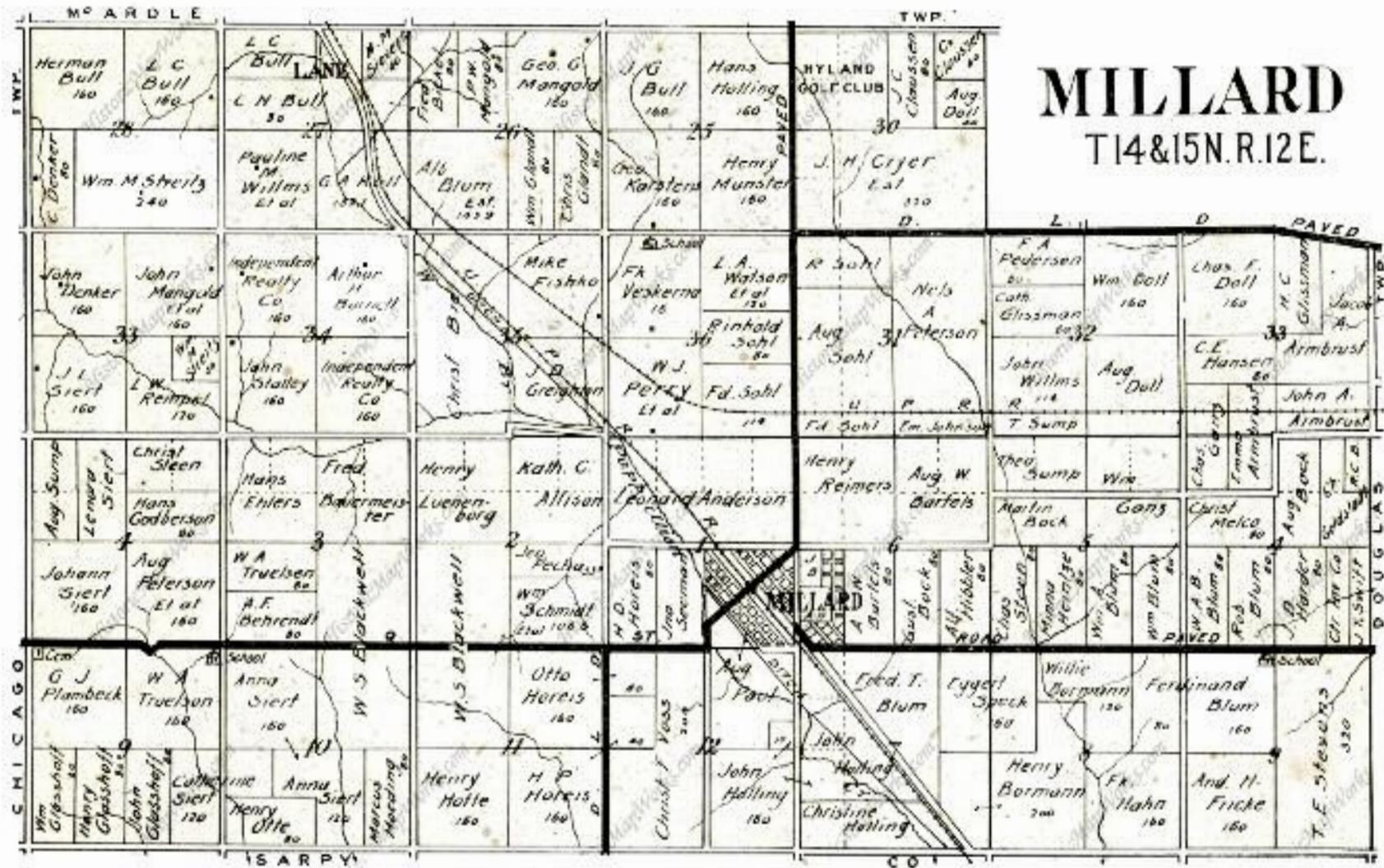
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MILLARD

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Map purchased by OMENA for reprint from historicmapworks.com. Map circa 1925



2015 Millard Days "After Parade Social"

For the past few years, the Old Millard East Neighborhood Association hosts an "After Parade" social with food, drink and conversation. This is a great opportunity for the community to meet new neighbors and reconnect with others. Visit www.omenaconnects.com for details on this years event. Millard Days August 23-28, 2016.



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Millard Early Childhood Family Center

12820 'N' St. (Central Middle School Annex, door 25)

The center houses both the Family Resource Center and Drop In and Play.

Family Resource Center

Nearly 6,000 educational toys, puzzles, and children's books are available to families who live in the Millard Public School District. The Family Resource Center also boasts a large collection of parent resources. Materials are checked out for a 2-week period. The Center also offers laminating, book binding, and access to die cut machines. Materials are best suited for children ages birth to age eight.

Membership is \$15 for 6 months or \$30 for one year.
(Free/reduced rates are available.)

Drop In And Play!

Parents and caregivers of young children (birth to kindergarten) are invited to bring their youngsters and join together to play, sing, read, & create. Our playroom is filled with toys, art supplies, books and more — providing children with many choices and learning opportunities. The room is staffed by an early childhood educator who is available to help facilitate and provide any information to support your child and family. Join us when you can during our open hours.

Participation is free, just drop in...and PLAY!

Family Resource Center hours

Tues. & Wed: 9:00-9:00
Thurs: 2:00-6:30

Questions?

402-715-8595

Call:

Email:

mboyer@mpsomaha.org

Drop In And Play hours

Tues. & Wed: 9:00-12:00
Thurs: 1:00-3:00

Questions?

Call: 402-715-6319

Email: lmwalter@mpsomaha.org



Check us out at
MPS Early Childhood

<http://mpes.mpsomaha.org/earlychildhood>

Preschool Story Time

Preschool story time is a monthly story time for preschool age children and their caregivers at the Millard Public Schools locations listed below. Story time lasts approximately 30 minutes. Simple stories, songs and rhymes will be provided.

Please contact the school with any questions.

School	Time	Meeting Time
Abbott Elementary 1313 N. 156th St.	9:30 a.m.	First Wednesday of the month
Ackerman Elementary 5110 S. 156th St.	9:30 a.m.	Second Thursday of the month
Bryan Elementary 5010 S. 144th St	10:00 a.m.	Third Wednesday of the month
Cather Elementary 3030 S. 139th Plaza	10:00 a.m.	Second Wednesday of the month
Cody Elementary 3320 S. 127th St.	1:00 p.m.	Third Thursday of the month
Disney Elementary 5717 S. 112th St.	10:00 a.m.	Third Thursday of the month
Montclair Elementary 2405 S. 138th St.	9:00 a.m.	Fourth Monday of the month
Neihardt Elementary 15130 Drexel St	9:00 a.m.	First Wednesday of the month
Norris Elementary 12424 Weir St	10:00 a.m.	Third Wednesday of the month
Reagan Elementary 4440 S. 198th Ave.	10:00 a.m.	Fourth Tuesday of the month
Rockwell Elementary 6370 S. 140th Ave.	10:00 a.m.	First Thursday of the month
Sandoz Elementary 5959 Oak Hills Dr.	10:00 a.m.	First Monday of the month
Wheeler Elementary 6707 S. 178th St.	9:30 a.m.	First Tuesday of the month
Willowdale Elementary 16901 P St.	9:00 a.m.	First Thursday of the month



Millard Board of Education:

Jim Sutfin - Superintendent, Dave Anderson, Mike Kennedy, Paul Meyer, Mike Pate, Linda Poole, Patrick Ricketts

A note from our principals

NORRIS ELEMENTARY

This year at Norris we are focusing on the Energy Bus and engaging students in positivity! In February many of our students participated in Google Expeditions and went on 'virtual field trips' around the world. What a great opportunity for our children! We have been busy with our 3rd-5th grade Spelling Bee and 4th-5th grade Geography Bee. It's starting to feel like spring! We are starting to make plans for our teaching garden and we hope to start planting in late April/early May. Our 3rd-5th grade chorus, PRIDE singers, is working hard to prepare for their spring concert. The performance is Thursday, May 19th at 7:00 in the Millard South High School Auditorium. Please join us! We are concluding our Jump For Heart/Hoops for Heart campaign for the American Heart Association and we appreciate everyone's support!

Colleen Ballard, Principal

CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

We have had an awesome year of learning at Central Middle School! Our school is growing, and next year we expect to have over 900 students participating in traditional middle school classes, the Middle School Montessori Program, and the English Language Learner Program.

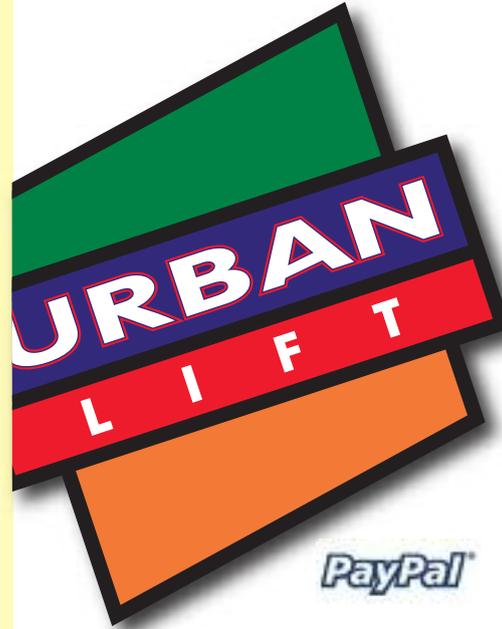
Five Great Things to Know about Millard Central Middle School:

1. Central Middle School is 56-years-old!
2. At Central, we celebrate diversity!
3. CMS has ten Speciality Clubs.
4. Central Cyclones have school spirit!
5. CMS students are excited about the future!

We appreciate the support of the families and businesses in our school community that help us positively impact our students' development. Have a fun summer!

Beth Fink, Ed.D., Principal

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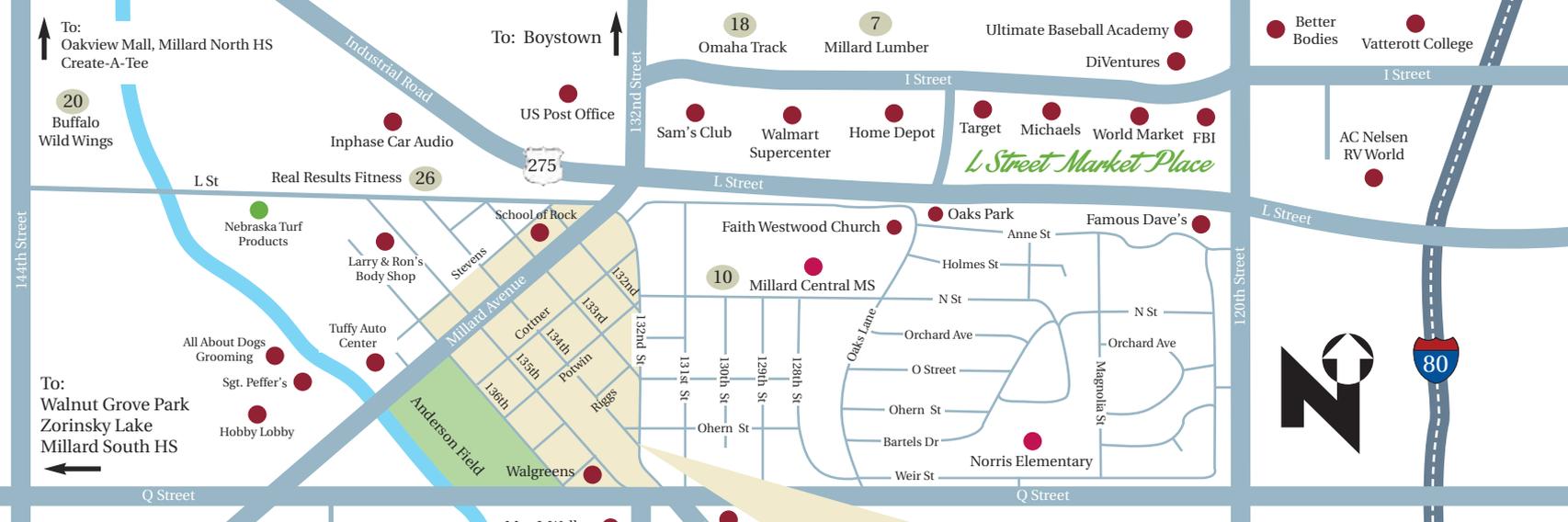
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Old Millard Nebraska 68137

Millard is a former town and current neighborhood in southwest Omaha, Nebraska; the original downtown area (often referred to as 'Old Millard') is near 132nd St. and L St. After lengthy legal fights, the city of Millard was annexed by the city of Omaha in 1971. There also were attempts through both the state legislature and the court system to annex Millard into the Omaha Public Schools, but the Millard Public Schools remained an independent unit; although recently they have been included under the Taxing authority of the Learning Community to extend Omaha's tax base. Millard was laid out in 1870 by Ezra Millard, and named for him. A post office was established in Millard in 1873, and remained in operation until it was discontinued in 1967.





Old Millard East Business Member Legend

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 01 ABC Printing | 10 Reimer Property MGMT | 20 Buffalo Wild Wings |
| 02 Immediate Solutions | 11 Joe's Duck Inn | 21 Advanced Siding & Window |
| 03 Urban Lift | 12 Brick Street Tavern | 22 Don's Coins & Jewelry |
| 04 Olympia Cycle | 13 St. Paul's Church | 23 Pitched Perfection |
| 05 Millard Roadhouse | 14 MAA | 24 U-Haul |
| 06 Omaha Casing | 15 LP Building Services | 25 Overland Constructors |
| 07 Millard Lumber | 16 Blind Dave's Bar | 26 Real Results Fitness |
| 08 Tyson Foods | 17 Sociable Inn | 27 Farmer's Insurance |
| 09 Lumberyard District | 18 Omaha Track | 28 Aksarben Garage Door |
| | 19 Premier Plastics | 29 EZ Money Pawn |



Future Artists from Norris Elementary

Ally, 5th grade



Jimena, 3rd grade



Briton, Kindergarten



Brock, 2nd grade



Max, 1st grade



Poetry from Millard Central Middle School

Heather Spessard-Schroer

Where I'm From
By Kelly V, CMS 8th Grader

I am from beds that I sleep in and adore
From pillows and blankets
I am from the grey house next door
The one that's decorated with trinkets
I am from the clouds; I am one with the rain
The small cherry tree out front, it stands alone
It's small yet mighty, it's dealt with pain
Whose long limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I'm from movies and dark hair
From Tony and Hai
I'm from loud karaoke nights and card games, we play fair
From liars and truth tellers
And 5 Seconds Of Summer.

I'm from Nebraska and Vietnam
Rice and Soy Sauce
From Calum Hoods sudden tweets
Ashton Irwin, Michael Clifford, and Luke Hemmings.

In a picture frame,
and forgotten memories
with untold stories.
I am from the rain,
That washes away.

Where I'm From
By Jahrran P, CMS 8th Grader

I am from baseball.
From laughter and sadness.
I'm from the every other weekend switching of parents.
I am from the old swing set.
The huge pine tree in the backyard.
Whose long limbs I remember as if they are mine.

I'm from the Missouri weekends and respect.
From Dan and PJ.
I'm from sports and eating.
From "Could've done better" and "I love you more".
And "Never forget the little things".

I'm from Omaha and Lawson.
Velveeta mac-n-cheese and Burger Detour.
From the dog bite
To the stitches that healed it.

I'm from Husker Saturdays and wearing red.
Hot cocoa and warm Runzas.
From the last second field goal
To ruin the Texas upset.

This is where I'm from;
What makes me who I am today.

Where I'm From
By Klaryssa M, CMS 8th Grader

I am from bedsheets
From bright screens and charging cords
I am from the small space with big value
A warm and inviting room
I am from delicate white tulips
The gigantic pine tree
Whose long limbs I remember as if they were my own

I'm from grand gatherings and huge smiles
From parents and siblings
I'm from brown eyes and scattered freckles
From Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy
And always sticking together

I'm from rolling hills and great plains
From burgers piled high and pumpkin pie
From a swarm of relatives
Who fight and care for me always

I am from hidden treasures
From off guard photos and old sketches
I am from truth and honesty
And from the people who make me who I am



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WORSHIP SERVICES

Summer (Memorial Day – Labor Day)

Sunday – 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday – 5:30 p.m.

School year

Sunday – 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday – 6:30 p.m.

Saturday – 5:30 p.m.

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A fun paddle sport for all ages, has simple rules and requires little athletic ability. A cross between ping pong and tennis, it can be played at a very low, slow level and at a very high competitive level. But the point is, it's fun.

A Little History

Three men, looking for a sport the entire family could enjoy, created this family sport the summer of 1965 in Bainbridge Island, Washington near Seattle. They had a family dog named, you guessed it - Pickles. And Pickles would routinely run off with the ball. Thus, the name of the game was created.

The original design of the game was derived from the game of badminton. Over the course of a few weeks, the guys changed the original hand crafted wooden pickleball paddles and surface to best fit the needs of the family. They soon found it necessary to lower the net so everyone could play. The guys also moved the game to the blacktop once they discovered the ball bounced better on that surface.

In the 1970s pickleball became a "real" sport with regulated rules. Pickleball is now a sport played throughout the United States and the world by people of all ages. Enjoy!

Where can I play in Omaha?

Prairie Lane Park - 11500 Hascall St (South of Center)
Meadow Lane Park - 11707 Farnam St (South of Dodge)
Elite Fitness - formerly Westroads Club
Search pickleball omaha and find their facebook page.



**Would you like to learn to
play or watch pickleball?
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Nebraska Multisport Complex

Board chooses La Vista over Council Bluffs for project; financing details scarce

By Cody Winchester and Emily Nohr / World-Herald staff writers, Reprinted with permission from Omaha World-Herald

Backers of a proposed multisport complex featuring an Olympic-size swimming pool announced Thursday that they have chosen a site in La Vista over one in Council Bluffs. Information about how it would be financed and built — and how much public money would be involved — remains scarce. But project leaders have met with La Vista, Sarpy County and state officials to discuss possible financial incentives. The board of directors for the Nebraska Multisport Complex, formerly the Omaha Multisport Complex, has been seeking a new site since February, when plans fell through with the City of Omaha to develop the project at Tranquility Park. Board members said they're now under contract to buy three parcels next to La Vista's Southport development near Interstate 80 and Giles Road. The group is "thrilled" to see a project that started in 2011 "finally on a pace to get rolling," board chairman Mike Cassling said. "As I've said before, this will transform the greater metro area, just like CenturyLink, just like TD Ameritrade, just like Holland Performing Arts Center," he said.

The 184-acre property, currently a sod farm, has a taxable value of \$2.1 million, according to the Sarpy County assessor. If it weren't valued as agricultural land, its value would be closer to \$2.8 million, Sarpy County Assessor Dan Pittman said. The site is near Cabela's, Embassy Suites, the La Vista Conference Center, Courtyard by Marriott and PayPal. An Alamo Drafthouse Cinema and other shops are under construction nearby. Project representative Trisha Hoffman-Ahrens said it's too early to speculate on the cost of building the complex. Before the deal with the City of Omaha fell through, the plan was to build at Tranquility Park near 120th Street and West Maple Road. Most of the design and construction estimates were tailored to that site, Hoffman-Ahrens said, and aren't applicable to the new site.

Cassling said the group might save some money on earthwork because the sod farm is flatter than Tranquility Park. "But until we get down to it, we really don't know," he said. "We would just be totally guessing." A planned capital campaign will include philanthropic appeals, Hoffman-Ahrens said. How much taxpayers will be asked to contribute is

unclear. County officials have been briefed, but project backers haven't requested anything specific, county spokesman Fred Uhe said. Cassling said the group doesn't know yet whether it will ask for a property tax exemption. As a nonprofit organization, though, "that's definitely on our radar," he said. The current property owner paid \$47,085 in property taxes for 2014. "We're confident now we can sit down and work out packages, a package from the city, county and state, that can make the project a success," Cassling said.

La Vista City Administrator Brenda Gunn would not discuss incentives under consideration until the City Council has the chance to review the "term sheet" — an informal document laying out each party's responsibilities, as described by city spokesman Mitch Beaumont. La Vista residents have been reluctant to spend public money on the city's own 50-year-old pool on 84th Street. Voters rejected an \$8.5 million bond issue for a new pool in 2012 and shot down a similar proposal in 2008. Project backers have met with the Nebraska Departments of Roads, Revenue and Economic Development, said Taylor Gage, spokesman for Gov. Pete Ricketts. Ricketts was among the public officials supporting the project Thursday. "This project will be an economic driver for the state and provide services that enhance the lives of Nebraska families," Ricketts said in a statement provided by the multisport group.

The project originally was intended to house a 50-meter pool used in the 2012 U.S. Olympic Swim Trials in Omaha, a smaller warm-up pool and tennis courts. Since then, the project has grown in scope. La Vista Mayor Doug Kindig said the sports complex fits the city's plans for the area perfectly. The group hasn't settled on a final design, but the plan now includes five pools, a tennis center and 13 soccer fields. It will be open to all ages, offering swimming lessons, pickleball courts and more. "We have a mission to make sure this is open and accessible to all in the metro area to all socioeconomic classes," Cassling said. After two years of discussions about building the complex at Tranquility Park, the group pulled out because of site problems and a disagreement over public funding.

continued on next page



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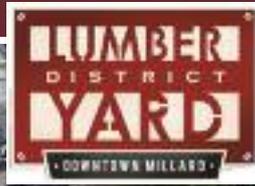
NEBRASKA MULTISPORT COMPLEX
La Vista, Nebraska

Rendering by Holland Basham Architects

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert said then that Cassling and the board asked for too much in their negotiations with the city, including \$20 million in incentives. Cassling later said that the group had already withdrawn some of those requests. But ultimately the group still decided to seek another location. Cassling said the group looked for at least 100 acres of land close to hotels, restaurants and the Interstate. They also looked at Council Bluffs, including a site off the 24th Street exit to Interstate 29/80 near an existing sports complex. Cassling said securing land in Council Bluffs would have taken longer than in La Vista. But he said both cities were "great partners" to work with.

Now organizers can focus on the La Vista site: conducting land surveys, environmental studies, soil tests and a traffic analysis. They said that construction is scheduled to begin as early as this fall and that the complex should open in 2017.

Contact the writer: 402-444-1216, cody.winchester@owh.com



Progress in Old Millard

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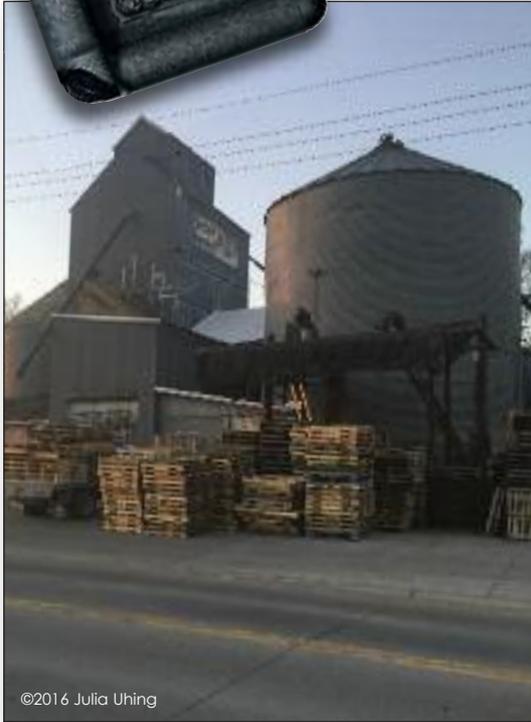
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PHOTO JOURNALISM

A special thanks to Mrs. Kaldahl's photo journalism class for capturing shots of Millard for an assignment!



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This is Makey's Elevator on Chandler. Mackys is a grain elevator and was opened in 1980 by Gene Mackey.



©2016 Brooke Rathbun

The construction workers finish up their work for the day at the Lumberyard District redevelopment project in Old Millard. The development they are working on is a \$50 million redevelopment project invested by Investors Realty, Inc and will have office buildings, apartment complex, and small businesses coming in August 2016.



©2016 Savannah Lacy

An airplane sits beneath an open airplane hangar at the Millard Airport. The Millard Airport is a long-standing landmark in Millard.

Safest Neighborhoods



in Omaha for Families

Safest Neighborhoods in Omaha for Families

Story by Alan Woods, Movoto

The key to raising your family safely in Nebraska's most populous city is to find the right neighborhood. Just like most metropolitan areas, there are high crime areas in the city of Omaha, and there are areas with a low crime that cater to families. Overall, crime is higher in this city than anywhere else in Nebraska. In 2012, there were 5,182 crimes reported in Omaha, most were burglary or car theft. Compare this to 3,014 in the rest of the state. On average, the violent crime rate is lower in Omaha than in other cities of the same size, though. In 2012, there were 6,860 crimes reported in Oklahoma City, with fewer than 1,300 violent crimes like assault or murder. In Omaha, that number is closer to 750. The city of Omaha is a family-friendly choice and finding the safest neighborhoods just makes it that much better.

Armbrust Acre

Armbrust Acres is a lake-front community situated on the north shore of Lake Zorinsky. This area is one of the more pricey neighborhoods in the city, but that is one of the reasons for its safety rating. Home prices range from reasonably affordable at around 200,000 dollars to very expensive. This neighborhood is built around cul-de-sacs and quiet peaceful streets. There are seven public schools in the area, as well as a YMCA and a neighborhood association. If you can afford to spend a little more, then living in Armbrust Acres offers your family security. Violent crimes are low in this area, but auto thefts are well over the national average.

Elkhorn

If you are looking for something in a lower tax bracket, then Elkhorn is a reasonable choice for families. At one time a town itself, Elkhorn was annexed in 2005, despite protests from the local residents. Today, it is a neighborhood on the western edge of the city that still maintains that hometown feel, which is one reason it is a good choice for families moving to the area. To keep the hometown spirit going, there are only three schools in the district, one elementary, one middle school and one high school. They even have their own public school system. On days when there is no school, take the kids out to TaHaZouka Park to enjoy some green space. Elkhorn has a number of new residential areas made for families with big yards and lots of green spaces. The income levels in this area range between 30,000 dollars a year to 149,999. About 16 percent of the population makes more than \$150,000 dollars annually. Statistically speaking, crime rates are low in the little town of Elkhorn, another big plus for families. Most criminal activity is limited to thefts. In 2014, there were no violent crimes reported, no auto thefts and a little over 2,500 property thefts, which is well below the national average.

Millard

Millard is another one of those small towns that the city of Omaha absorbed as it grew. Today it is a neighborhood sitting on the southwest side of the city, but it holds on to its small town feel and family lifestyle. The property in Millard consists of family-sized homes with 58 percent of them having three bedrooms. Only 10 percent come with just one bedroom. The population in this area includes 11 percent children under the age of six. Compare that to more urban areas like the Downtown neighborhood where children make up just six percent of the people living there. The parents raising their children in this neighborhood work in a variety of fields. The industry most represented is retail with 21 percent, but education and health care are close behind. Millard, like Elkhorn, manages its own public school system, but it is much larger. There are four high schools and six middle schools, for example. This area offers some interesting food choices, too. How about before school, you and the kids enjoy Nutella Poptarts at Over Easy on Q Street? Crime rates are low in this area, too. Despite the fact that Millard represents a larger neighborhood with a denser population, there are still few violent crimes there. Most of the crime consists of auto theft and some burglaries. In 2014, there were over 4,000 property crimes in the district and 700 auto thefts.

Westside/District 66

The Westside region, known to the locals as District 66, consists of a number of small neighborhoods such as Loveland, Swanson and Rockbrook. The district spans from S 90th St. moving east to S. 84th. The southern border begins at W. Center Road with the northern boundary ending at Pacific St. The nationally-acclaimed public school system is one thing that makes Westside stand out for families. The people living in this area are generally well educated, as well. The population consists of 44 percent of people with an undergraduate degree and 14 percent have a graduate degree.

This is a middle-income area of the city with 28 percent of the residents making over \$74,000 dollars a year and another 48 percent averaging over \$30,000. Most homes, 49 percent, have at least three bedrooms, as well. The home styles vary, but many come with large lots. You will see classic colonials in regions like Loveland with more contemporary styles in Indian Hills Village. As with the other family-centric areas of Omaha, Westside has a lower crime rate with very few violent crimes. Like many of the Omaha neighborhoods, however; property crimes are little high. In the Westside, there were 684 burglaries and 4,300 property thefts. Life in the Westside neighborhood puts you close to some family fun. Take a ride over to Vala's Pumpkin Patch in nearby Gretna, for example, then head over to the Farmhouse Cafe for dinner. Like any large metropolitan city, Omaha has good neighborhoods and bad. Finding the right balance between family safety, housing costs, and location takes work. Looking for the safest neighborhoods in Omaha for families is a good place to start. It can provide you that stability you need to raise your children in the best possible environment.

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OMAHA TRACK

Story by Cheri Clifton • Photography by Immediate Solutions

By now, I'm sure almost everyone in the area has seen the new building that is located at 12930 I Street. We were curious too, and contacted Mr. Terry Peterson, President of Omaha Track and received a tour of their new corporate offices.

When asked about the building design, Mr. Peterson explained, "We wanted a feel of railroad heritage, to have the look of a railroad depot but still make it corporate. We were looking for a warm, open space that was a nice place to work, and we accomplished that." Most of the trim you see in the reception area is redwood recycled from Paul Masson's fermenting vats. We purchased it when they switched to stainless steel roughly 20 years ago, and these lights came from the Cheyenne Union Pacific Depot. Also throughout the building are scenes from the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads and historic pictures of Omaha. "It's interesting how quickly Omaha evolved," explains Peterson, "here you see Omaha in 1870, it was just a cow town, and then 19 years later you can see how much it evolved. The railroad played a big part in that."

The business that is now Omaha Track started in 1983 on the corner of 84th & F Street selling railroad ties used for landscaping. Railroad ties were a hot commodity for landscaping. Much of Omaha has dirt retention problems and just about every yard had some sort of wall. Back then, people had old stone walls that were falling down. We got in the market right when railroad ties were the hot thing to build retaining walls. That is about the same time the housing market was taking off. It was just by chance that I ended up in the railroad tie business. The man who had owned the business wanted to retire; I just happened to be in town and ended up buying it from him. Previously, I had been the bar and restaurant industry. I started in Kearney, where I attended Kearney State College; I owned nightclubs in Kearney, Grand Island, North Platte. "I didn't have a background in the railroad business, I didn't know anything about ties, I didn't know a tie from a tie tack, but as we went along, we learned a lot about railroads." We were lucky enough to get in on the forefront of some of the things that we are now doing. We have gone from three employees to about 250." As the business has grown, it has evolved as well. "We do many different things, but everything is related to the railroad." Our customer base is other railroads, steel mills, factories, big contractors that are building railroad track. Our main business is recycling railroad steel. We process a half a million tons a year of rail, plates, spikes and all the other things that go with it. We recycle over 2 million railroad ties a year, most of that performed on active rail lines. The Union Pacific and Burlington Northern are our two biggest customers. Both have about 34 thousand miles of track each and both replace about a thousand miles of rail every year and about 4 million wood ties. As it wears out, they need to put in new rail and ties. We have 32 crews that follow behind their rail gangs. They take out the old material; we pick it up and recycle it to the highest and best use.

We classify, grade and recycle all railroad materials to some product. Some is scrap, some is actually good enough to be used as track again, building new track for industries. For an industry user that operates at slow speeds, they can save a significant amount of money using recycled rail instead of new; that used rail could last them 100 years. There's another process called re-rolling that takes the rail, gets it red hot and then runs it through slitters. By running the slit pieces through rollers, new products are made from it. Things like bed frames, garage doorframes, bendable rebar, T-posts for fence posts, all made from recycled railroad rail. With ties, we have two facilities in Wisconsin, one in La Crosse and one in Superior that grind up old ties for fuel for electricity.

We have another company that does a process called flash butt rail welding. Rail comes from the steel mill in 80 ft long lengths and we weld them together into 1600 foot long strings so there are no joints anymore. We have another company in Parsons, KS that fixes rail cars. We have another company here in Omaha, at the back of the property where we build trucks for the railroad industry. You've probably seen trucks that go down the tracks, we actually build those trucks, from pickups to the big trucks that can go down the rails.

Omaha Track also owns two antique railroad cars, one built in 1928 and the other in 1950. The 1928 car is an executive car built by the Pullman Manufacturing Company. Built for Percy Todd, the president of the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad, it has quite a history. Peterson explained, "It's like a house built in 1928, everything from the floor up is still pretty much the way it was built. It's all mahogany inside, really gorgeous. From the floor down, the mechanicals are all new to meet railroad standards." We always wanted to have a place where we could bring our railcars, so we built a rail spur coming up from the shop so that we could move them up here. One of the things that we are going to do is to start a catering business based on the railcars. We have an executive chef, and he is very good, but we don't have enough dinners and lunches to keep a chef busy full time. So, we're going to start a catering business based on the railcars and they will be available for people who want to use them. We haven't really gotten this off the ground yet, we're still putting our marketing plan together; but probably by the middle of this year, we'll start having those railcars available for special events. People could rent them for dinner for customers, clients or family.

We are hiring, we look for people in all kinds of positions, anywhere from fabricators, welders, mechanics in our truck equipment division, equipment operators, and laborers. About 100 of our people work all over the country, we work wherever the railroads go. About 20% of our employees come from a railroad background. Most of our employees are E-rail safe certified, they all have had their railroad safety training and know all the railroad rules and regulations; they have to be live track safety trained before we ever start putting them on live track.

We like to think we are pretty employee friendly. One thing I learned in the hospitality business is that you're really only as good as your employees, so make sure your employees have a vested interest in your business. Our philosophy has always been if the company does well, our employees are going to do well. We have a generous profit sharing bonus plan for our employees, which can amount to 20 to 25 percent of their yearly salary, based on the profitability of the company. The railroads have very good retirement plans and they have very good health plans. Because we are working close conjunction with the railroads, we have plans pretty close to what they have. We have a very generous 401k plan, a great health care plan and employee wellness plans. For a small company we believe we have a very good of a benefits package. Visit omahatrack.com for a list of employment opportunities.

We would like to thank Mr. Peterson for the opportunity to visit Omaha Track for this publication.



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