Community Area #21
Avondale

Population: 35,579  
Number of Structures: 6,252  
Avg. Date of Construction: 1914

Significant Structures: 46

Source: 1990 Census, Harris File, CHRS
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The northwestern quadrant of the city, known until 1889 as the Town of Jefferson, began as prairie and farmland that slowly developed following the opening of the Northwest Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue) in 1848 and two railroad lines in the 1850s.

The Avondale community area was first settled at its southeastern border, where the community of Maplewood was created in 1869. After the 1871 Fire, another settlement grew up around the Chicago and North Western railroad depot near Belmont and Kedzie. It was officially platted as the town of Avondale in 1873. A post office (demplished) was built at Belmont and Troy that same year.

The first church in the area, Allen Church (demolished) was built in 1880 and, by 1884, approximately 50 frame houses had been built in the area. A few 1870s-era residences can still be found at 2955 N. Rockwell, 3110 N. Spaulding, and 3057 N. Avers.

However, it wasn't until the community was annexed to Chicago in 1889 that streets were paved, sewers and sidewalks built, and water service provided. These amenities led to rapid growth throughout the community over the next two decades. Public transportation improved with the extension of horse-drawn streetcar lines through the area. The Elston streetcar line reached Belmont by 1888 and Addison by 1894, while the Milwaukee Avenue line was extended through the community area in 1894. The terminus of the Logan Square elevated line was completed in 1895 at Logan and
Kedzie, just south of Avondale in the Logan Square community area. The California streetcar reached Elston in 1897.

New industries were established along the Chicago and North Western tracks that bisect the community, along the Chicago River at the eastern boundary, and along the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul tracks that form Avondale's western boundary. Frame cottages clustered around these ribbons of factories as well as the brickyards near Belmont and California avenues. Workman's cottages at 2829 N. Christiana and 2322 West Diversey are good examples from the period. Several cottages and Queen Anne buildings survive along Belmont, including the finely detailed commercial/residential structure at 2855. The Gothic Revival-style Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church (1895) at 2651 W. Belmont, and Avondale School (1895) at 2927 N. Sawyer served the growing population in the 1890s.

Growth continued in the 20th century, especially after streetcar lines were extended through the area on Pulaski in 1911 and on Kedzie in 1913. New brick homes, two- and three-flats, and small apartment buildings served a growing population, with many replacing older frame buildings. Worthing & Steinbach built the Renaissance Revival-style St. Hyacinth Church at 3629 W. George in 1917. Commercial growth on Milwaukee Avenue led to the erection of several buildings in the 1910s and 20s, including the Classical Revival-style commercial building at 2942 N. Milwaukee (1916) and the Art Deco-style buildings at 2800 (1930) and 2931 (c. 1928) N. Milwaukee. Industrial growth also continued in the 1920s with the erection of factories at 3961 (1924) and 4201 (1921) W. Belmont and 2600 W. Diversey (1923).

The community has witnessed little new construction since 1940, and the construction of the Kennedy Expressway through the center of Avondale in the 1950s saw the demolition of many older frame homes.

The focus of the Chicago Historic Resources Survey was on buildings erected prior to 1940. Buildings and developments erected after that date generally are not included in the inventory.
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An 1890 map of Chicago's northwest side, including Avondale.

Survey information for this community area was accurate at the time it was first surveyed in June 1987.
For an explanation of column headings, see page II-1.

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