



# RE-ECHO

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## JEWISH MIGRATION TO ST. LOUIS PARK

In the years immediately following World War II, the Jewish community of the city of Minneapolis was looking for a place to go in order to leave what was termed “the capitol of anti-Semitism in the United States” by author Carey McWilliams. How and why did they choose St. Louis Park?

Researcher Jeff Norman and the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest are working on a project to document the post-World War II migration of the Jewish community from (primarily north) Minneapolis to St. Louis Park. Jeff has done a great deal of research and conducted many interviews with key people who were around during that time. One such interview was with Jeffrey Fine, son of Adolph Fine, who built many homes, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings (including Texa-Tonka Shopping Center) during those boom years. Jeffrey Fine says that his father built homes in St. Louis Park because he was a builder and there was a demand for them, and it was just a coincidence that he was Jewish. As a child, Jeffrey said he was never aware of any anti-Semitism in the Park. He says the Village was very accommodating and cooperative to all builders during that time.

So why did the Jewish community pick St. Louis Park over other suburbs to settle in? Perhaps it was just that cooperative attitude. From the very beginning, Park has had a welcoming attitude. One example is the commercial development along Excelsior and Minnetonka Boulevards. Shopping centers, gas stations, restaurants and bars were patronized by people from neighboring suburbs that didn't allow them. While there are examples of anti-Semitism and racism in early deed restrictions, after WWII Park became the home of many synagogues and two thriving Catholic churches. See our web page on Race, Creed, and Color at [www.slphistory.org/history/racecreedcolor.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/racecreedcolor.asp)

Another compelling reason was posited in an interview with former City Planning Director Bill Thibault. He pointed out that much of St. Louis Park was already platted and ready for development. The Lenox and Park Manor subdivisions had been platted in 1913, and had over 400 and 600 lots respectively, mostly undeveloped. While other suburbs still had mostly farmland, Park was ready, willing, and able to build houses right away.

If you have any insights into this topic that you would like to share with Jeff, feel free to contact him at [Jeffnorman@sharedground.org](mailto:Jeffnorman@sharedground.org) Also see our web page on Jewish Migration at [www.slphistory.org/history/jewishmigration.asp](http://www.slphistory.org/history/jewishmigration.asp)

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