

Wicker Park

The West Town community of Wicker Park is bounded by Ashland and Western Avenues to the east and west, and Bloomingdale and Division Streets to the north and south. Milwaukee Avenue, a major cross-road through the area, was originally an Indian trail running between Milwaukee and Chicago. In the 1840s, the trail was "paved" with wooden planks and reopened as the Northwest Plank Road, later renamed Milwaukee Avenue.

Wicker Park, in the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, became home to Chicago's wealthy Germans and Scandinavians. Once an area uninhabited on the western edge of the city, it provided an alternative to a population who had been spurred by the Anglo-Protestant establishment residing on Chicago's lakefront.

The fire of 1871 also influenced the architecture of Wicker Park. Having witnessed the vulnerability of wood construction to fire, most Wicker Park residents built large mansions made almost entirely of brick and stone. By the 1890s the area was an architectural showplace, consisting of a variety of styles, including Victorian Gothic and Italianate. Many of these houses surrounded the four-acre park after which the community was named.

Not everyone who settled in Wicker Park, however, was wealthy and resided in large houses. By the late nineteenth century, Bell Avenue had become home to working-class African Americans and Eastern Europeans who lived in the small cottages dotting the street. Labor activists also resided in that section of Wicker Park, including the martyrs of the Haymarket Riot.

By 1930 Wicker Park began to undergo a dramatic racial and class transition. The wealthy Germans and Scandinavians abandoned their mansions, while the area's poor and working-class residency grew. Poles drew the area into the "Old Polonia" of surrounding West Town. Further changes came in the 1950s when a large Spanish-speaking population began to emerge. This transition coincided with a post-World War II housing shortage, and many of the mansions were divided into multifamily units and rooming houses. By the 1960s and 1970s, Wicker Park was a predominantly poor and working-class neighborhood with a large Hispanic population.

Efforts to revitalize Wicker Park in the early 1980s initiated another wave of changes to the neighborhood. Young white professionals bought many of the old houses and restored them to single-family residences. Gentrification stirred racial and class tensions, as it displaced much of the area's poor and mostly Hispanic population. By the 1990s, however, Wicker Park had achieved a level of cultural and racial heterogeneity. And with commercial development along Division and North Avenues, the neighborhood had become again one of the most desirable in Chicago.

Charles and Joel Wicker purchased 80 acres (324,000 m.) of land along Milwaukee Avenue in 1870 and laid out a subdivision with a mix of lot sizes surrounding a four-acre (16,000 m.) park. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 spurred the first wave of development, as homeless Chicagoans looked to build new houses. Wicker Park proved especially popular with German and Swedish merchants, who built large mansions along the neighborhood's choicest streets—particularly on Hoyne and Pierce, just southwest of North & Damen (then Robey). At the end of the 19th century, the area was known as "the ethnic Gold Coast" and Hoyne was known as "Beer Baron Row", as many of Chicago's wealthiest brewers built mansions there. In the 1890s and 1900s, immigration from Poland and the completion of the Metropolitan West Side Elevated Lines greatly boosted the population density of West Town, especially in areas east of Wicker Park; the corner of Division, Milwaukee, and Ashland retains the moniker "Polish Triangle" to this day, and the exiled government of Poland met in Wicker Park during World War I.

By the 1940s, Wicker Park was a predominantly Polish neighborhood, and that stretch of Division Street had earned the nickname "Polish Broadway" for the high concentration of Polish bars and taverns along the street. The Gold Star bar at 1755 W. Division is one of the few remaining survivors from this era of the street's history. After World War II, many Poles moved to newer, less crowded housing further northwest, and Wicker Park became more ethnically diverse with an influx of Puerto Rican immigrants. Some urban renewal projects were undertaken to combat "urban blight" in some parts of the neighborhood, but disinvestment continued at a rapid clip. Chicago and Wicker Park reached a nadir in the 1970s, a decade when the city overall lost 11% of its population; during the 1970s, hundreds of insurance arsons were reported in Wicker Park, and many small factories in the area (many in woodworking) closed or moved away. Efforts by community development groups to stabilize the community through new affordable-housing construction in the 1980s coincided with the arrival of artists, attracted by the neighborhood's easy access to the Loop, cheap loft space in the abandoned factories, and distinctly urban feel.

In 1995, the Division Street Gateways were erected at Artesian Avenue and Mozart Drive—two abstracted Puerto Rican flags, each constructed from 45-ton of steel. Today, the neighborhood is perhaps best known for a lively community of artists and musicians; however, gentrification has recently brought a large yuppie contingent into the area. Nonetheless the neighborhood is still quite full of local character.

Bucktown

Bucktown gets its name from the large number of goats raised in the neighborhood during the 19th century. A male goat is a buck.

The neighborhood of Bucktown is located on the near northwest side of Chicago about two miles from downtown and directly adjacent to the neighborhood of Wicker Park, bounded roughly by the Kennedy Expressway on the east, Western Avenue on the west and Fullerton and North Avenues on the north and south.

The neighborhood's origins are rooted in the Polish working class, which settled in the area in the 1830s. A large influx of Germans began in 1848 and in 1854 led to the establishment of the town of Halstein, which was eventually annexed into Chicago in 1863. Additional population inluses include European Jews, Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants. In the last quarter of the 20th Century, a growing artists' community led directly to widespread gentrification, which brought in a large population of young professionals.

In 1863, Chicago annexed the territory east of Western Avenue and south of Fullerton. (This neighborhood—now Bucktown—was known as Halstein for its population of German factory workers.) Six years later, the area just to the north (east of Western, between Fullerton and the river) became part of the city.

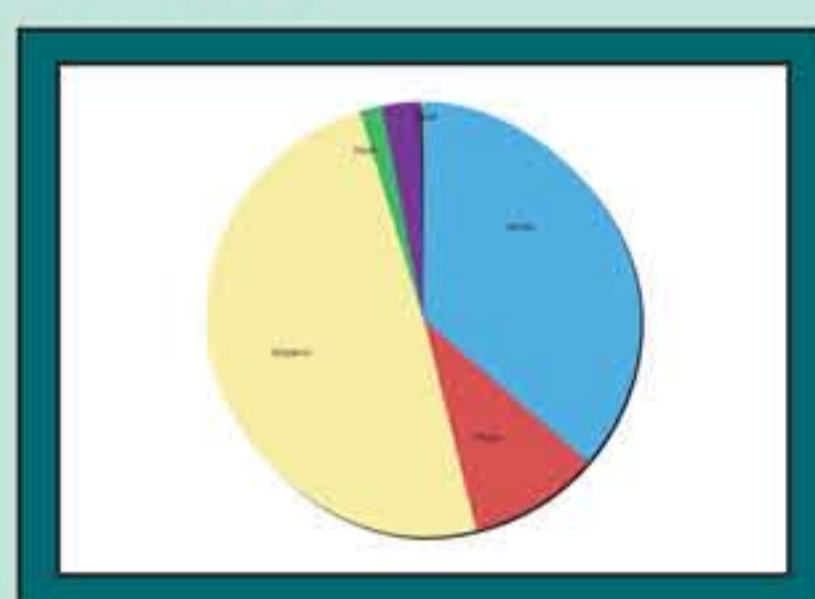
The three spires of St. Stan's, St. Hedwig's and St. Mary of The Angels still dominate the Bucktown skyline and hold within them the history of Bucktown and, in many ways, the history of Polish Catholics in America. All three were the handiwork of Father Vincent Michael Barzynski, the iron-willed pastor of St. Stan's who came to Chicago in 1874 just as the first wave of Polish immigrants were arriving.

In the 1950's, Bucktown began changing. Not racially changing, as we sometimes think of it (but that would come), but physically changing, and the chief instrument of that change would be the automobile.

The more affluent in the community began moving northwest. But for those left behind, the automobile was a double-edged sword because automobiles required roads, more precisely expressways, and in 1955 Bucktown lay dead center in the path of the largest in the world, The Kennedy Express

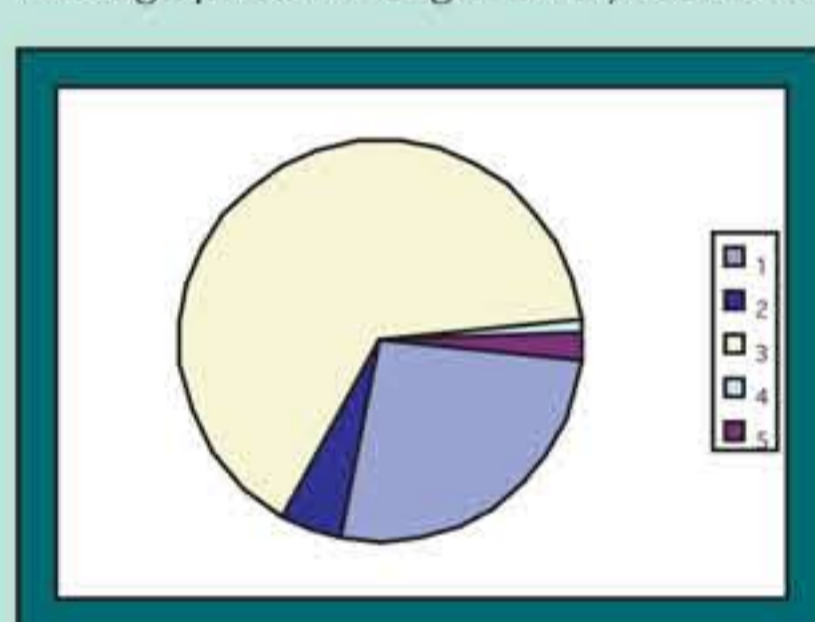
Wicker Park Demographics:

34.9	White
9.13	Black
46.9	Hispanic
1.73	Asian
2.9	Other



Bucktown Demographics:

Population (2000): 82,715	
26.3%	White
5.19%	Black
65.1%	Hispanic
1.31%	Asian
2.13%	Other
Median income: \$36,245	
Average price for single-family residences: \$631,997	



The Green Map Project is a global eco-cultural movement. The purpose of the Green Map is to expose both the positive and negative actions of the area in order to question our environmental ethics and consumer life styles. Sustainability is a state of mind and way of life. Incorporating sustainability principles, concepts and approaches in both formal and informal education processes will help institutionalize these concepts and encourage their widespread adoption.

The definition of sustainability is to meet the needs of people today and ensure that next generations will experience the same quality of life. The Ravenswood and Uptown areas have an accessible and efficient public transportation system that results in cleaner air and a high reliance on mass transit over personal autos. There are many parks, public and private gardens, and open spaces that allow residents and children to experience healthy activities available all year long in the out-of-doors. Good physical and mental health throughout the community is essential to allow citizens to participate fully in community life.

Home design and maintenance can promote and model more sustainable lifestyles. Healthful, non-polluting approaches at home and throughout the community can contribute to sustainability and support the local ecosystem.

There is a multitude of small locally owned businesses that serve community needs while keeping large corporate chain stores at bay. Green stores and restaurants abound that sell fresh organic foods, products, services and vegetarian dishes. Individuals contribute to local and global sustainability when they adopt more responsible patterns of buying and consumption, thereby consuming less energy and fewer resources. Bucktown, Wicker Park, Ukrainian Village and E. Ukrainian Village are culturally enriched neighborhoods with plenty of galleries, art stores, music venues, churches and public schools which appeal to the diverse population living here.

Residents living productive and sustainable lives are the foundation of a healthy community. In these neighborhoods, the choices for living sustainably are present, now, it's up to them to make the choice.

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map

BUCKTOWN | WICKER PARK
UKRAINIAN VILLAGE | EAST UKRAINIAN VILLAGE