

Bronzeville is known for its stately greystones, including these along Prairie Avenue.

# Welcome to the Neighborhood: **BRONZEVILLE**



# What's Selling in Douglas?

(including Bronzeville) *FastStats 8035* – (Year to Date, February 2015)

**11 Units**

Median price: **\$69,000**  
Attached Single Family

**2 Units**

Median price: **\$109,850**  
Detached Single Family

Check out neighborhood stats for all 77 Chicagoland neighborhoods and select suburbs at [www.ChicagoREALTOR.com](http://www.ChicagoREALTOR.com). FastSTATS consists of average sales price, median sales price, market time, units sold and percent change for Chicago and the suburbs.



By **Rebecca Boykin**, Senior Public Relations Specialist

**K**nown as the birthplace of Chicago's version of the Harlem Renaissance, Bronzeville appears to be enjoying a new renaissance in real estate and development.

Chicago REALTORS® who specialize in the Bronzeville neighborhood on Chicago's South Side say it's drawing more and more buyers with its convenient location and affordability – and this influx has helped drive new retail development.

In the early 20th century, Bronzeville became known as the Black Metropolis and flourished between 1910 and 1920, during the peak of the Great Migration, when thousands of African-Americans left the south for Chicago in search of jobs. It became the city's center for African-American culture, home to jazz clubs and the city's African-American newspaper, the Chicago Defender.

Bronzeville's lush history earned it Chicago Landmark status as the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville District. The neighborhood is located in the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas on the South Side. The Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Illinois College of Optometry are based in the neighborhood. It's centrally located to public transportation, accessible via the Green or Red Lines of the Chicago Transit Authority or the Metra Electric District Main Line, and the Dan Ryan Expressway.

*Continued on page 28*

Chicago Blues District





Continued from page 27

Sanina Ellison of Chicago Homes Realty Group is a Bronzeville resident who has specialized in the neighborhood for 14 years, and says buyers appreciate its historic roots. "It's been what Harlem represented in New York City. That's what Bronzeville is to Chicago," Ellison said.

Many pivotal figures in African-American culture called Bronzeville home, including Andrew "Rube" Foster, founder of the Negro National Baseball League, Ida B. Wells, a civil rights activist, journalist and organizer of the NAACP, Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman pilot, Gwendolyn Brooks, famous author and first African-American recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, singers Sam Cooke and Lou Rawls and legendary trumpet player Louis Armstrong.

That history continues to propel its future.

"Now, we're also seeing a lot of new single-family homes," Ellison said. "It's a nice mix of old and new properties. Older residents have seen the neighborhood change. A lot of new residents are looking to make sure Bronzeville returns to what it once was. They want to make sure there's a bustling community for our children as well."

In 2006, Bronzeville experienced a condominium boom when a lot of residential apartments were converted. Then, the Great Recession caused a new construction cool down.

In addition to new construction returning, other redevelopment projects are lovingly restoring historic properties. "A lot of older buildings are being renovated. They're keeping the integrity of the community yet making it more modern, and exterior to keep the neighborhood," Ellison said.

In 2013, *This Old House* magazine ranked the neighborhood as the Midwest's best neighborhood for finding a historic home with a lot of heart. Bronzeville is home to an array of period homes, including Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque-styles built from 1881 to 1910 during the Great Migration.

Sheila Rugege Dantzler of Related Realty works and lives in the area, and says she's seeing a resurgence in the market.

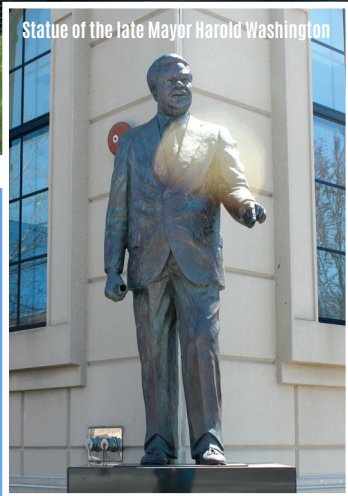
"I started selling in Bronzeville in 2007. Developers were doing new construction and condo conversions. Then, condos everywhere took a hit. It's been tough for the last couple years. However, it's coming back," Dantzler said.

Less than 5 miles from the downtown and close to the lakefront, Bronzeville's location and its affordability are strong selling points. The 31<sup>st</sup> Street beach is just a jog or bicycle ride away.

Tynisha Belk of Coldwell Banker Residential sees many first-time buyers drawn to Bronzeville, including renters deciding to buy.



Bronzeville mural (49<sup>th</sup> Street and Wabash Avenue)



Statue of the late Mayor Harold Washington



Jazz sculpture outside Harold Washington Cultural Center



Pearl's Place, 3901 S. Michigan Ave., is a popular Bronzeville restaurant





Bronzeville is drawing new retail, including this Walmart Neighborhood Market



Bronzeville Bench



Victory monument

"It's very close to downtown. It takes 30 minutes tops to get downtown and offers affordable prices," Belk said.

With the IIT campus (3300 S. Federal St.) nearby, many of Bronzeville's residents work or go to school there.

Ellison sees a wide variety of clients, including those who are moving from out of town and looking to be close to transportation.

Similarly, Dantzler is seeing a mix of clients.

"It's a diverse community and they want to stay," Dantzler said. "They're waiting for retail and commercial – so it can pick up the slack for the sparse lots."

Retail development also is gaining momentum in Bronzeville. A new **Walmart Neighborhood Market** opened last fall at 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. The neighborhood's past and future converge at Pershing Road and King Drive, where a Mariano's grocery store will be built on the land that once housed Chicago Housing Authority's Ida B. Wells housing development.

The planned Mariano's is luring other retail to the area. More retail space is planned in a vacant lot across Martin Luther King Drive from the site where a new Mariano's grocery store will be built. Mariano's held a groundbreaking ceremony in January.

"It's just what the neighborhood needs – for more retailers to come in and populate the market," Dantzler said. To catch a bite or coffee, locals frequent **Ain't She Sweet Café** (526 E. 43<sup>rd</sup> St.), **Sip & Savor Chicago** (528 E. 43<sup>rd</sup> St.) and **Pearl's Place** (3901 S. Michigan Ave.).

Other popular spots around Bronzeville include the **Harold Washington Cultural Center** (4701 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive), which hosts movies, live jazz, blues and more. Washington Park is known for its numerous festivals, sporting events and performances throughout the summer.

Other attractions are the Victory Monument, built in the late 1920s to honor African-Americans in the Illinois National Guard and the former location of the **Sunset Café**, a once prominent jazz club that's now a hardware store.

Bronzeville's history, location and affordability continue to lure more residents who are increasingly engaged in the community. A group of residents formed the **Bronzeville Neighborhood Collaborative** to help restore parks for children in the neighborhood. With more retail on the way, signs point to a real estate resurgence.

"It's prime real estate. It's centrally located," Dantzler said. "Bronzeville is a good bet for people who want more space and more affordability." **CR**