

Welcome to the
Neighborhood:

Humboldt Park

By Meredith A. Morris, Senior Communications Specialist

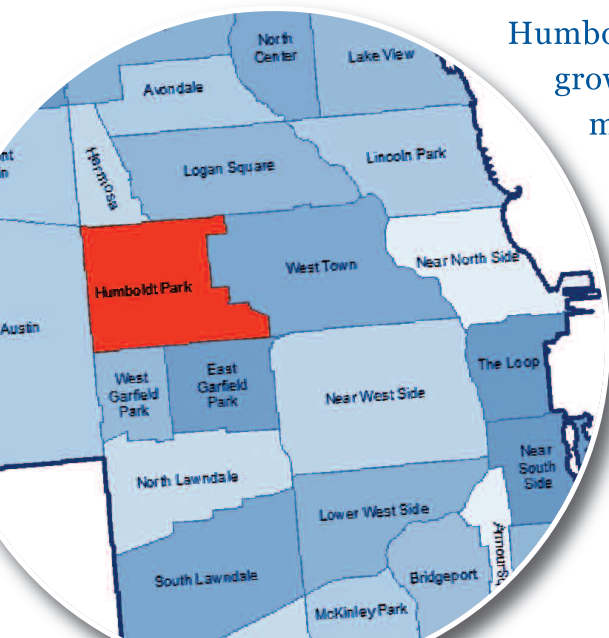
Welcome to Humboldt Park, welcome to the cultural tapestry that enriches this historic neighborhood. Due west of downtown, Humboldt Park's blend of stately homes and ethnic diversity is growing in its appeal to first-time homebuyers and hipsters – many of whom who feel priced out of areas like Wicker Park, Logan Square and Bucktown, REALTORS® say.

Rebounding With the Economy

Anchored by the stunning park itself and a stronghold of Chicago's Hispanic – particularly Puerto Rican – community, Humboldt Park is a fine example of a neighborhood in transition.

"Humboldt Park is one of those places where things are spilling over," said Stephanie Guerrero, broker with @properties. Guerrero, who was raised in the neighborhood, refers to the residential and commercial development gradually expanding into the neighborhood from other areas.

Continued on page 40

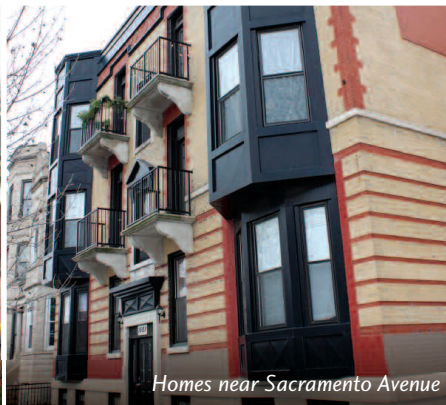


WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

HUMBOLDT PARK



Little Cubs Field



Homes near Sacramento Avenue



Boutiques and Businesses on West North Avenue

Continued from page 39

Essentially defined by North Ave., Chicago Ave., Pulaski Rd. and Western Ave., the neighborhood is also rebounding from a hard hit by the economic downturn and offering some outstanding buyer opportunities, according to Arden Fowler, a Coldwell Banker Residential broker. In 1996, Fowler had his first-ever listing in Humboldt Park.

"There are some great deals to be had. Most of my recent deals have been multiple offers," he said, in vintage two- and four-flats. "If you price them well, they don't stay on the market very long."

A History of Change

Humboldt Park is named for the 219-acre park that's central to the community, opened to the public in 1877 and linked to other parks by the city's elegant boulevard system. Surrounded by greystone homes that are emblematic to the area, the park salutes Prussian naturalist, geographer and explorer Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859).

Generally speaking, today's Humboldt Park community is divided by Sacramento Blvd. into an east and west side; housing costs are higher in the east.

"I knew Humboldt Park in the 1960s and back then it was very ethnically different," Guerrero recalls, remembering vestiges of the Norwegian and Danish populations that were among the community's first inhabitants, dating back to the 1880s and 1890s. According to the Newberry Library, more than two dozen Norwegian churches were built in about that time period, spread across Humboldt Park and Logan Square.

Also erected was an abundance of two-flat homes, as well as bungalows and small apartment buildings. A wider range of cultural groups arrived in the 1920s and '30s, including Italian American, German and Russian Jewish residents attracted by the park and the variety of newer, larger apartment options than they found elsewhere. Puerto Rican residents began arriving in the 1950s, launching the neighborhood's current

status as the "symbolic nucleus of Puerto Rican Chicago" (Newberry Library).

Not "West Bucktown" Anymore

Humboldt Park hit a low point in the 1970s in terms of economic issues and related crime and gang activity but, due to social shifts and changes in policing policies, it's turning around, according to Catherine Borowski, managing broker/owner of WSO Chicago LLC, a property management and leasing firm active in the area for nearly a decade.

"It's up and coming but there's not a lot of press about it yet. People aren't calling it West Bucktown anymore. They're calling it Humboldt Park, which it deserves," Borowski said, noting she's seen increasing interest in apartments.

"The hipsters really want to live here," she said. "I think it's because it's near the coffee shops, boutiques and restaurants on Chicago Avenue, California Avenue and Division Street, where all that activity is. There is so much that's easy to walk to."

Borowski cites a number of excellent Puerto Rican and Cuban-owned shops and coffee houses in the neighborhood, and a growing number of entertainment and dining destinations.

"My clients who just moved in are really excited to start checking out the restaurants," said Fowler, referring to a young couple he assisted with the purchase of a fully rehabbed three-bedroom single-family home with a yard and two-car garage on Francisco Ave. At less than \$250,000, the couple's monthly mortgage payment is only \$120 below what they'd been paying to rent seven blocks away.

What's selling in... HUMBOLDT PARK?

FastSTATS 4th Quarter 2012 (8023)

Attached Single Family Detached Single Family

Units: 8

Units: 37

Median Price: \$70,500

Median Price: \$74,900

Check out neighborhood stats for all 77 Chicagoland neighborhoods and select suburbs at www.ChicagoREALTOR.com.

FastSTATS consists of average sales price, median sales price, market time, units sold and percent change for Chicago and the suburbs.

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD HUMBOLDT PARK



Fieldhouse, Boathouse and a Lagoon



More businesses on West North Avenue



Homes in Humboldt Park.

Fowler said he sells primarily to young couples looking to purchase homes within their budgets and investors looking to rehab and rent properties “because the rents are very stable.” He’s seeing a resurgence of a trend toward purchasing two-flats to live in one unit and rent the other.

Guerrero’s experience is much the same.

“The demographic we’re going after is young professionals, usually a first-time buyer and usually interested in a condo,” she said. “They see an opportunity and, like anybody, they want to be in early in the game. They only have X in their pocket and want to get the biggest bang for their buck.”

In Praise of Humboldt Park

Anyone familiar with Humboldt Park, it seems, is impressed by the city’s recent attention to the park itself. Flanked north and south by Kedzie and California avenues, the park’s hub is a historic field house at 1400 N. Sacramento Ave. The field house ballroom is frequently rented for wedding receptions and graduation parties; whereas a Prairie Style boathouse, designed in 1905 by Danish landscape architect Jens Jensen, is experiencing new life as host to art exhibits and city events.

“The city has invested a lot of money in the park to improve the lighting and facilities,” Fowler said. “Humboldt Park is a key area for the neighborhood.”

Indeed, the park – owned by the Chicago Park District – today includes a fitness center, two gyms, meeting rooms and an inland beach, as well as a soccer field, junior soccer field, replica of the Chicago Cubs stadium, baseball fields, tennis courts and playgrounds. It also includes many more amenities, spanning birding areas, gardens and a stable renovated into the Puerto Rican Arts and Culture Museum.

“I really, really appreciate how the park has been cleaned up,” said Borowski, explaining that she’s seen changes in detail over the past five years while biking through the area to check her properties.

“It’s a big draw for the neighborhood and will certainly draw more people in,” she said, noting specifically the park’s new “jaw-dropping” children’s playground and refurbished tennis courts, which she notes are generally full when weather allows.

Residents also benefit from the Humboldt Park neighborhood’s proximity to I-290 and downtown, making for a relatively easy commute by car or public transportation.

“You can fly downtown. It’s a nice easy shot,” Fowler said, adding that the area’s streets and central arteries into the city are less densely packed than in some nearby communities.

Then, too, there is the magnificent historic building stock.

“Chicago is a rare bird because we have our beautiful greystones,” Guerrero said. **CR**

Photos by Kali Loader of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®

Neighborhood Hot Spots

Adams & Son Gardens

1057 N. California Ave. – garden center and floral shop.

Bullhead Cantina

1143 N. California Ave. – specializing in craft beers, whiskey and tacos.

California Clipper

1002 N. California Ave. – opened in 1937, today a lounge with live music and no television.

Ciclo Urbano

2459 W. Division St. – bike shop with repairs and classes.

Flying Saucer

1123 N. California Ave. – cozy, cash-only diner for breakfast and lunch.

Humboldt Park

1400 N. Sacramento Ave. – Chicago Park District.

Knox Box Cafe

1001 N. California Ave. – coffee shop with specialty beverages, sandwiches and desserts.

Komoda

2559 W. Chicago Ave. – jewelry and gifts boutique.

Rootstock Wine & Beer Bar

954 N. California Ave. – focused on craft wine and beer, and food from local farmers.

Rowe Clark Math & Science Academy

3645 W. Chicago Ave. – a Chicago public high school and 2012 C.A.R. Good Neighbor Award winner