

# Ravenswood/ Lincoln Square

By Brett Ashley McKenzie & Christine Sisson

# Ravenswood/Lincoln Square

The relationship between Ravenswood and Lincoln Square is puzzling to locals. While officially, Ravenswood is the larger area, encompassing Lincoln Square as well as the smaller Bowmanville, Budlong Woods and Ravenswood Manor communities, the size and popularity of the Lincoln Square commercial district have contributed to the notion that Lincoln Square is actually the name for the entire Ravenswood area. In the 1920s, Ravenswood did in fact become officially part of the “Lincoln Square Community Area,” but as rings true throughout Chicago (where many still refer to U.S. Cellular Field as Comiskey and the Palmolive Building as the Playboy Tower), official titles mean far less than local lore.

Sources contradict one another, but the Ravenswood Chamber of Commerce reports that the boundaries of Ravenswood are Montrose Avenue to the south, Foster Avenue to the north, Clark Street to the East, and Leavitt Street to the West. Meanwhile, the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce claims their neighborhood occupies the same north/south boundaries of Foster Avenue to Montrose Avenue, but is bounded by Damen Avenue to the east, and the Chicago River to the west. While there may be a few blocks of overlap between Damen and Leavitt, the majority of residents don't seem to mind being painted with either brush, as over the past century, these neighborhoods have evolved into highly desirable residential communities.

## History: Commuter Suburb and the Celery Capital of the Nation

According to the Chicago History Museum, Ravenswood “was designed to be one of Chicago's first and most exclusive commuter suburb,” according to real estate spectators with the Ravenswood Land Company in 1868. While area residents today may bristle at the notion of their urban oasis as a commuter suburb, the accessibility to downtown is among the best on the North Side. Both El and Metra trains run through the neighborhood, with two Brown Line stations (the newly renovated and recently reopened Damen station at 4643–47 N. Damen and the Western station at the corner of Western and Leland) and the Ravenswood Metra station at Lawrence and Ravenswood. The nearby Montrose Brown Line station can technically be considered a North Center locale, but it's short walking distance for many Ravenswood and Lincoln Square residents.

While Ravenswood painted itself an idyllic residential neighborhood, Lincoln Square developed with the aim of being a commercial hub. Swiss, German, and English farmers took advantage of Little Fort Road

(today known as Lincoln Avenue) to transport goods and crops, and as a result, stores and pubs opened along the road to cater to the flow of traffic. According to the Chicago History Museum, long before the area was known as Lincoln Square, it was known for something else entirely: “The celery crop gained such broad distribution that local growers proudly called the area the nation's celery capital.” Another green local product popped up in 1857, when Lyman and Joseph Budlong opened the Budlong Brothers Pickle factory (the immediate vicinity is now known as Budlong Woods).



## WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

# Ravenswood/Lincoln Square



Chicago Brauhaus



Dessert at Barba Yianni



Barba Yianni

A real estate scandal formed the area now known as Bowmanville, when in 1850, Jesse Bowman created a real estate subdivision and sold the properties—which it turned out he never rightfully owned. Nonetheless, his plan for the area worked, and it has since blossomed into a well-populated but quiet residential area.

Along the Chicago River on the western border of the community is Ravenswood Manor (notoriously home to recently impeached Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich). In the early 1900's, the area residential population grew, and settlers began building homes closer to the river (many historic bungalows remain in the area today). Now, many affluent homes line this tranquil stretch river, with boats docked out back for warmer weather use.

Rosehill Cemetery, which takes up a large portion of the area in the northeast of Lincoln Square/Ravenswood, is the largest cemetery in Chicago and, having been established in 1859, is also one of the oldest. According to the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association, the name 'Rosehill' was the result of an error on the mapmaker's part. The area had been called "Roe's Hill," named for local tavernkeeper Hiram Roe.

An influx of Greek immigrants in the area and the completion of St. Demetrios church in the late 1920's led some to call Lincoln Square "New Greektown," yet the neighborhood only further diversified as years passed: more and more European settlers were drawn to the community's charm. In 1959, the statue of Abraham Lincoln ("for whom the area and its major street were called," says the Chicago History Museum) was erected. Since then, boutiques, restaurants, a movie theater, and much more have occupied the storefronts along Lincoln Avenue, solidifying the neighborhood's reputation as a bustling commercial hub.

## What to Do in Ravenswood and Lincoln Square

They didn't call it New Greektown for nothing: for some of the best Greek food north of Greektown proper, Barba Yianni (4761 N. Lincoln Ave.) is the place to go. For 20 years, Barba Yianni has been serving Saganaki

(Opa!), Mousakas, Gyros and more in a gorgeous, airy building with al fresco dining in the warmer months. Lunch specials make it possible to feast on a generously portioned platter of Greek favorites for less than \$10 a person.

To honor Lincoln Square's German heritage, visit the Chicago Brauhaus (4732 N. Lincoln Ave.), where owners Harry and Guenter Kempf serve authentic Bavarian food with unbridled hospitality and hearty portions. Sausage is a specialty, but if you're expecting a Chicago dog on a poppy seed bun, keep moving: This is serious Wurst territory.

"Folk" may be in the name, but the Old Town School of Folk Music (4544 N. Lincoln Ave.) offers hundreds of classes for every instrument and musical style imaginable, from Brazilian percussion to songwriting. For those who prefer dancing to playing music, from ballet to yoga to salsa, there's something for everyone at the Old Town School.

In the spirit of the old watering holes that quenched the thirst of busy local farmers a full century ago, the Grafton Pub & Grill (4530 N. Lincoln Ave.) is the perfect Irish pub, complete with traditional live music, pints, and a cozy fireplace in front of which to enjoy their homemade Beef and Guinness Stew.

A contrast to the taverns of yesteryear, the Fiddlehead Café (4600 N. Lincoln Ave.) offers the attentive service, wine-savvy waitstaff, and stellar cheese selection you'd expect to find at a five-star West Loop eatery. Not only do they offer exceptional dinner fare, like Lamb Shank Osso Bucco and a Duck Club Sandwich with goat cheese and cherry red-wine jam, but all of the wines and cheeses on their menu can be purchased at the store at jaw-droppingly reasonable prices.

If you find the cost and crowds at a chain cineplexes off-putting, the Davis Theater (4616 N. Lincoln Ave.) has been the Lincoln Square's neighborhood movie theater for more than 80 years and matinee tickets are only \$5.50 per person (after 6:00 P.M., adult prices are \$8 per person; seniors and children tickets are only \$5.50 for all showtimes). Unlike some of Chicago's other older movie theaters, the Davis shows four brand

### What's selling in... Lincoln Square?

FastSTATS First Quarter 2009 (8004)

Attached Single Family Detached Single Family

Units: 28

Units: 11

Median Price: \$269,500

Median Price: \$632,500

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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

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Timeless Toys



Gyros and Fries at Barba Yianni



Daily Bar & Grill

new releases at a time, and with concession prices as cheap as the ticket price, two adults can enjoy the latest blockbuster, a popcorn, and pop for under \$20.

The steady line outside Over Easy Café (4943 N. Damen) on Saturday and Sunday mornings should clue you in: there's something addictive about this egg-centric eaterie. Eggs are their specialty, but the wide selection of French toast, pancakes and sandwiches have the brunch-going crowds clamoring for a seat.

Annual events and festivals abound in these neighborhoods, which play host to the popular Ravenswood 5k Run in April and the quaint Christkindl Market in December. Offering yet another venue in which to indulge in beer and brats is the German-centric Mayfest, which celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary May 28-31 and is among the city's most popular festivals. Heading into summer, The Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce presents a concert series in Giddings Plaza (4731 N. Lincoln) on Thursday nights from June 11 to August 27. For free entertainment year-round, there are three large parks—Welles, Winnemac and Chase—all in close proximity.

### Who's Buying?

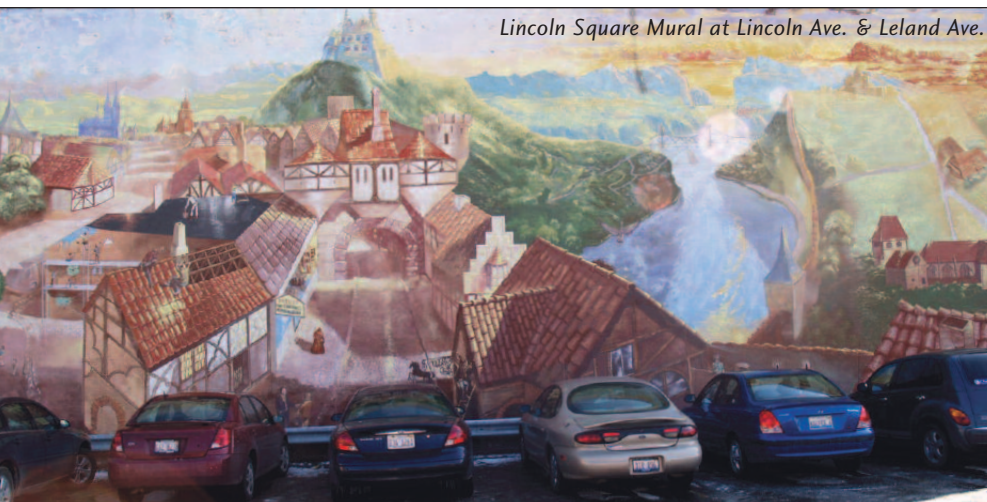
REALTORS® in the Lincoln Square/Ravenswood area agree that once buyers come to the area, they often stay for quite awhile. "What draws many to this fabulous neighborhood, and then keeps them here once they arrive, is that in spite of the popular retail element, the neighborhood has not developed that sort of transient, stopover feel," says Deborah Hess,

Conlan: A Real Estate Company. "It is uniquely positioned for the young and older families as well as singles alike to have a great living experience."

"It's rare to find such a close-knit neighborhood in a big-city, urban setting," says Chris Dwyer, The Kiwi Group at Keller Williams. "It's a great alternative to those who may otherwise forsake the city and make the move to the suburbs to raise a family." According to Dwyer, the neighborhoods have fared well, thanks to first-time buyers. "The Lincoln Square/Ravenswood real estate market has really flourished in the last five years and has held up well in the face of the current downturn." Adds Dwyer, the median price at the end of 2008 was up nine percent from 2007. "The fabric of the neighborhood is its long-time residents," he says, "but there's a new vitality provided by the next generation." **CR**

*"Welcome to the Neighborhood" profiles a Chicago community each issue and highlights the major draws of buying and selling property within that community, as well as local perspectives on the neighborhood and interesting facts for you to share with your clients.*

Photos by Kali Loader of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®



Lincoln Square Mural at Lincoln Ave. & Leland Ave.



Davis Theater