

# Welcome to the Neighborhood

## The South Loop

by Brett Ashley McKenzie

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Chicago REALTOR® magazine will profile one Chicago community per issue and highlight 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.

**B**ooming. Historic. Fabulous. These are the words that Chicago REALTORS® use to describe Chicago's South Loop neighborhood, bordered by Lake Michigan to the east, the Chicago River to the west, and Congress Parkway to the north. While Roosevelt Road has historically been recognized as the neighborhood's southern boundary, development has spilled further south, and by local accounts, "South Loop" now stretches as far as Cermak Road.

### History

Modern skyscrapers tower over the South Loop today, but remnants of the neighborhood's rich history remain. One of Chicago's oldest residential neighborhoods, the South Loop was settled by working-class immigrants in the 1850s. The area soon boasted rail yards, railway tracks, and stations, and a bustle of activity and business.

**Printer's Row**, a former literary haven in northern South Loop, has a unique history of its own. Dearborn Station, with its distinctive 12-story clock tower, is one of Printer's Row's most notable landmarks. In 1885, Dearborn Station opened, offering passenger rail service from Chicago to points west, such as Los Angeles, on 25 railways. Many of Chicago's immigrants arrived to the city through Dearborn Station, which closed to passenger service in 1985, but was named to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1986. Printer's Row was the hub of Chicago's printing presses and publishing houses in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the area has become more residential and retail-oriented, the Annual Book Fair held every summer honors Printer's Row's literary history.

**Museum Campus** occupies 57 acres of the South Loop, and is a major draw for both tourists and Chicago residents alike. The Adler Planetarium, built in 1930 by philosopher Max Adler, was the first planetarium in the western hemisphere and was named a National Historic Landmark in 1987. Steps from the Adler Planetarium is the Shedd Aquarium, also completed in 1930. John G. Shedd, once the president of Marshall Field & Co., turned an area created by a landfill into a world-class aquarium with a dolphin and Beluga whale show, more than 2010 species, and an estimated two million visitors each year. The Field Museum of Natural History, known locally as simply "The Field Museum," is the third jewel in the Museum Campus crown. Guarded by Sue, the world's most complete and largest Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton, the Field Museum opened as part of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Since then, the

collections and exhibits at the Field Museum have educated and astounded the public. It is named for Marshall Field, and was architected by the famous Daniel Burnham.

While more modern means of travel became increasingly popular, the rail business declined, as did the surrounding South Loop. By the 1970s, business owners had become worried about the derelict state of the neighborhood. The City launched a plan to revitalize the South Loop with community redevelopment projects such as Central Station.

### What to Do

From sushi to sweets, fossils to fashion, there is never a lack of activity in the South Loop. Even Chicago's most sophisticated foodies will have their fill of fine dining in this neighborhood.

**Oysy** (888 S. Michigan Ave.), as the restaurant's website explains, is pronounced Oh-Ee-She, is Japanese for delicious, and the food lives up to the name. Following the Japanese concept of an Izagaya, a bistro serving traditional food, Oysy features an open kitchen and stellar sushi. Order the mouth-watering, delightfully packaged Dragon Maki (\$12), and be sure to eat it before it eats you. There is a bar on site, so no need to BYOB.

Save room for dessert! **Canady Le Chocolatier** (824 S. Wabash), right around the corner from Oysy, is full of treats that dazzle your mouth and your taste buds! In cold weather months, owner Michael Canady greets you with

a delicious cup of hot apple cider and a warm smile. While you admire his handiwork through the glass case, he may share a story with you about his time working in Saudi Arabia or studying under chocolate gurus in Switzerland and Belgium. His chocolates, such as the Cappuccino Cups (edible chocolate cups filled with whipped cream "foam") and popular Ganache au Trois truffles, are so beautifully

### What's selling in... The South Loop?

FastSTATS 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2007 (Area 8032)

Attached Single Family

Units: 276

Median Price: \$686,040

Market Time: 57 days

Check out neighborhood stats for all 77 Chicagoland neighborhoods at [www.ChicagoREALTOR.com](http://www.ChicagoREALTOR.com).

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# The SOUTH LOOP



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Adler Planetarium



Chocolates from Canady Le Chocolatier



Shops in the South Loop

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presented that you can barely bring yourself to eat one—but of course, you must. Everything from the Chocolate Mousse cake to the gelato is made on site by Canady.

If you're looking for a more personalized wine shopping experience than at your local liquor store, **Lush Wine and Spirits** (1306 South Halsted) is for you. Featuring both high-end wines and liquors and bargains in their "Under \$10" section, Lush is happy to take your name and record your purchase in their computer, for those moments where you simply can't remember the name of that bottle you bought last week and loved.

**Blackie's** (755 South Clark St.), not to be confused with Boston Blackies further north, has watched the South Loop change and grow around it since opening in 1939. At the height of railroad travel in Chicago, Blackie's served Frank Sinatra alongside passengers waiting for train layovers. Mel Gibson and former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert have also enjoyed meals at Blackie's, which boasts serving burgers and breakfast "free of snobbery and excessive prices."

What major South Loop attraction has had its National Historic Landmark distinction revoked? **Soldier Field** (1410 S. Museum Campus Dr.), home of the Chicago Bears football team, underwent an extreme renovation in 2003, turning the landmark with its distinctive Doric columns into what critics describe as a "spaceship." The modernization of Soldier Field was a necessary "evil", however, to expand

the cramped stands, which now accommodate 61,500 cheering fans.

### *Who Wants to Live Here?*

It is impossible to paint all of the residents of the South Loop with the same brush. The conveniently located luxury high-rise condominiums and trendy loft conversions have attracted a wide range of buyers, from students to working professionals and even seniors. In 2007, *Money Magazine*/CNNMoney.com named Chicago's South Loop one of the best places to retire in the country: "A decade ago, Chicago's South Loop looked tired. Today it's a hot place to retire... Chicago's popular lake-front bike path snakes along the South Loop through Grant Park, and residents can walk to three major museums, as well as Soldier Field for football games."

Columbia College of Chicago and Roosevelt University draw students to the South Loop, necessitating an increase in boutique shopping, restaurants, and nightlife. According to Tom Feddor, Tom Fedder & Associates, "a few groups fueling the market down here are first time home buyers, specifically single woman, and students, whose parents buy the unit."

But the neighborhood is family-friendly too. "My family and I love it here," says Ken Reeder, Baird & Warner, who lives and works in the South Loop. "There is so much to do. I call this area the land of free fun."

"The south loop 'booms' because it truly has something for everyone: luxury, full amenity

condos, loft conversions, townhomes of all sizes, older buildings with character and architectural interest, fabulous views, decks and balconies, lake/park living, not to speak of the 'Cultural Mile' part of Michigan Avenue," explains Keller Williams Sales Associate Stephanie Derderian. "The South Loop is also a prime location for suburbanites who are ready to move to the city. They get lots of space for the money paired with a lifestyle that is hard to beat, and without the congestion of Lincoln Park or the Gold Coast."



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Traveling thru the South Loop



Canady Le Chocolatier



Village Pub

### Work It!

REALTORS® who work the South Loop are crazy about this area. “I have been a REALTOR® for four years and I absolutely LOVE working this neighborhood,” says Tom Feddor, Tom Feddor & Associates, who has lived and worked in the South Loop and Printer’s Row for 17 years. “I have a passion for this neighborhood which has enabled me to grow my business dramatically over the past four years.”

Some REALTORS® have been in the South Loop since before its recent popularity boom. “I started my career in the South Loop 11 years ago,” says broker/owner Colleen Harper, CacciotoreHarper. “I felt it would be the right thing to do, opening and growing with the neighborhood instead of working from an established office outside the neighborhood. We were the first brokerage house to open south of Roosevelt Road... Real estate was moving at a frenzied pace. Selling a house at \$400,000 was pretty much the top of the market; now it’s the mid-market.”

Real estate in the South Loop is unlike that in any other area of the city. “There is a distinct difference in real estate east of Michigan Ave. and west of Michigan Ave.,” says Kevin E. Kelly, ABR, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, who has been working the South Loop since 2002. “People who see Central Station and the Prairie District are amazed by the quaint, suburban-like setting.”

Looking to start doing business in the South Loop? “My best tip for working in the South Loop is to research the history of this area,” recommends Liane Pruchnik, ABR, GRI, ASR, QSC, of Rubloff Residential Properties. “Read some books or explore on line and become and expert on what has happened to this location through the years... My clients love to hear about what has gone on and what is going on in the area they might be living in.”

Some REALTORS® find themselves so happy with doing business in the South Loop that they end up moving there themselves. “I live in the South Loop as a testament to my

endorsing the neighborhood,” says Colleen Harper, CacciotoreHarper. “As a REALTOR® I wouldn’t sell anything I wouldn’t personally buy. Just two months ago I took a client to see a Historic Home in the Prairie District and was determined to sell that home to one of my clients because I knew it was a great investment, the client didn’t buy it, but I did. I closed last week.” **CR**

*Photos by Kali Loader.*



Soldier Field