

THE CULTURAL AESTHETICS OF  
**CHICAGO**



FIE KROGH SOMMER | MYEFSKI ARCHITECTS

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**CHICAGO**

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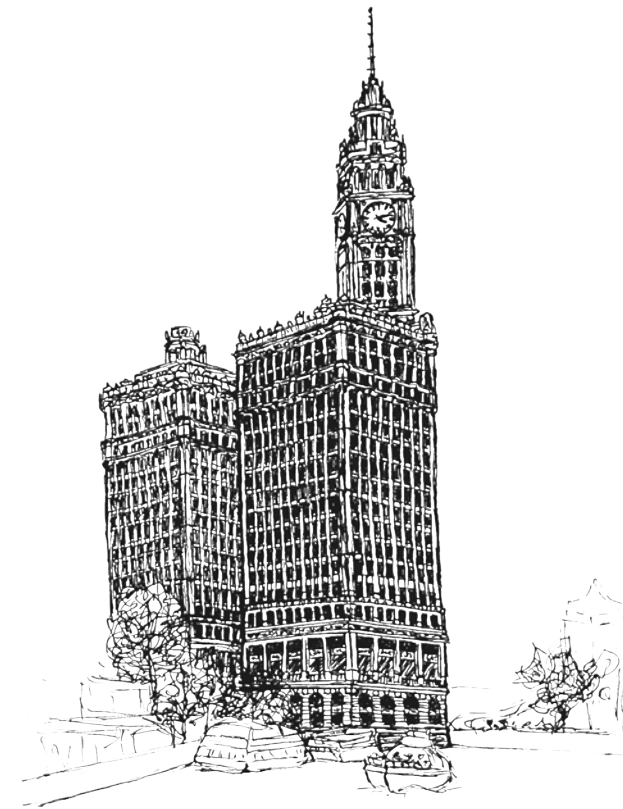
## LOOKING BACK/FORWARD

This past year in Chicago is one I will never forget. I'd like to thank my coworkers and friends at Myefski Architects for making my first gig as an architect such a joyful and educational one.

The Kompas Fellowship has been a great opportunity to delve into some of my favorite architectural realms of psychology, philosophy, and sociology, while learning more specifically about the American, Midwestern, and Chicagoan building culture.

I know I will miss the people and the city, but I am also excited to embark on my Master's degree back home in Aarhus with some new insights and knowledge - academically, professionally, and as an individual.

As one adventure comes to an end, another one begins.



We really should not look  
for explanations, but bring  
the idea of description to its  
extreme consequences.

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Bruno Latour

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# 01

## CONCEPT & THEORY

The foundation of any intelligible research is a common understanding of relevant concepts. While we can assume to agree on the definition of most words, others can contain numerous or ambiguous conceptual meanings depending on context.

This is a collection of brief descriptions of the theories and philosophies that inform and guide my reflections and conceptual understanding within this book.

The word 'culture' has as many as 150 different definitions, and covers anything from broad aspects of society to small social units. In the broadest term, culture is the human-made part of our environment.

Among a group of people, big or small, culture exists as a common core of consensus in beliefs, perceptions, values, norms, customs, and behaviors.

Culture also appears in the physical environment, both reflecting and impacting the social environment. The interrelationship between cultural practices and the built environment involves a complex, ever-evolving network of events, and there is no simple chain of causation that begins with one variable and ends at another.

CULTURE

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PERCEPTION

Physiologically, our experience of the physical environment is based upon an interaction between our bodies and our surroundings, as it relates to our senses. Our perception of space relies on sensory input, largely through sight, but also through hearing, smell, sense of bodily movement and balance, touch, and taste. The relationship between our senses and perception of reality is a concern in epistemology, a main branch of philosophy also called "the theory of knowledge". The issue is the fact that what we see and feel is filtered and compacted into a narrative simply because of the way our physiology works, even before taking other factors, such as culture, into account. It is not possible for humans to comprehend everything or find one truth based on human experience, although we may come close statistically.

Narrative is what all humans use to form an understanding of reality. Culture is a narrative, and narrative is perception. This is where we find identity, structure, and meaning. The better we understand cultural conditions and perception, the better we are able to read an environment, and estimate its human and societal implications.

## THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SEEING

Beyond psychological conditioning through experience, cultural formation, and familiarity, there is still much to explore within the theory of sight and perception. Before aesthetic experience, there is basic instinct and evolutionary physiological circumstance behind the things we see. The human eye and brain developed symbiotically to increase our capacity for processing and interpreting information in the world around us.

Overall, our visual system is built to receive enough information to produce the most appropriate response in the shortest amount of time. For the survival of the species, our cognitive system relies on first input to predict conditions and events and then make rapid decisions and actions. We only need enough detail for recognition to create this first response image. The image then progresses to higher levels of the midbrain, where finer tuned neurons can recognize more complex wholes. The eye and brain focus on the high-information content of an image, such as contours, detail, differentiations, contrast, color, and curvature. Empty and low-information regions are instead reconstructed by

extrapolation and don't induce high engagement in the brain's memory or perception systems.

The primitive eye began as a light sensitive detector, capable of perceiving distance and shadow, but couldn't be used for fast movement or navigation. Finer and finer tuned detectors and neurons developed through evolution; the increasing amount of optical information correlating to an increase in the brain's capacity and function. The more visual stimuli, the more active the brain is.

Our brain contains specialized neurons and clusters for perceiving things such as angles, curvature, contrast, complex shapes, and symmetry. One of our most complex perception systems is the sensation of color. Color perception takes place in both the optical mechanism of the eye and the most evolutionarily developed region of the cortex, the computational and cognitive part of the brain. Three different cone cells in the retina are responsible for the perception of hue and the distinction of color intensity from white. These same cone cells are responsible for perceiving fine detail. The computation happening in the

brain then works to maintain the same experience of color under different circumstances (e.g., lighting) processing our experience of contrast and harmony, while affecting our mood and the physiological state of the brain itself.

The brain is always engaged while seeing, but not only to absorb and perceive individual pieces of visual information. The brain works to order the information and reconstruct an image that makes sense within our conscience. Optical illusions are an example of how our brain doesn't necessarily compute visual information correctly.

The simplest way to structure units of visual information is along a line, very much like how we read letters, words, and sentences in a linear order. A line sketch is also more efficient in capturing the necessary visual details of an object than a more complex, shaded drawing.

Another way for the brain to efficiently organize visual information is through symmetries and patterns. Rather than needing to process every single visual unit individually, the brain recognizes similarity very easily and encodes a pattern of repeated units and their distribution. In the absence

of symmetry or order, our brain must determine the information and position of each unit separately. The pattern is therefore encoded with far more information and is perceived on a higher level of scale than the individual units it contains. Patterns are further encoded into increasingly complex patterns, as we perceive the world in varying levels of scale. The texture of clay in a brick, in a wall, in a building, on a street, in a city – all are examples of levels of scale, structure, and pattern that form our visual understanding.

Being able to perceive pattern or structure is therefore crucial in integrating visual information into an overall form. The brain's incapability to structure visual input, in what is known as visual agnosia, causes an inability to recognize things such as objects, faces, words, colors, movement, or more. Afflicted persons can optically see but can't understand their environment and will identify items differing in only minor detail as different objects entirely.

Without structure and pattern recognition, visual components become isolated fragments and meaningful spatial relationships are indiscernible.



## AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is a crucial concept in my research and one that is easily misinterpreted today, given that the term has acquired a new meaning in the age of social media. Beginning with some of the first image-based platforms like Tumblr, "an aesthetic" is popularly used as a term to describe a person's style, the clothes they wear, the way they decorate their homes, or the look of their Instagram feed.

Aesthetic has become something you have, something defined, simplified, and labeled. You can follow the "cottage core aesthetic", the "clean girl aesthetic", the "dark academia aesthetic", etc.; categories that describe cohesive stylistic properties such as colors, prints, or hairstyles that you may or may not personally identify with. The aesthetic philosophy has been reduced to an actively personal choice - a brand and social media hashtag.

While the popular use of the word isn't fundamentally incorrect, as aesthetics is concerned with taste, style, and culture, the oversimplification negates the purpose of its own philosophy. The full field of what might be called

aesthetics is in fact a very large one.

In its true definition, aesthetics is the theory and philosophical study of beauty and taste. It is not only designated to a type of object, but more so a kind of judgment, an attitude, an experience, and value. Something cannot be "an" aesthetic, and aesthetics doesn't only regard the conventionally beautiful. It is commonly found in paintings, photography, or film that the sensual and aesthetic qualities are gruesome or depressing and maintain high value and esteem. Just as biology must concern itself with disease, death, and decomposition, the theory of aesthetics is incomplete without the concept of ugliness.

Beauty and ugliness are concepts that many artists, musicians, and architects etc. have sought to define and redefine throughout the centuries. Some definitions have been highly mathematical, guided by principles such as proportion and harmony, e.g. the golden ratio or the Fibonacci sequence. Other definitions have been stylistic choices carried by social, historical, political, religious, psychological, and philosophical reflections.

Think of Modernism and its ties to the industrial age, the world wars, and the rise of socialism. Or how the establishment of trading rights with Japan in the 1860's came to inspire the revolutionary art of famous impressionists and post-impressionists such as Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Edouard Manet, and Mary Cassatt, as well as the architectural movements of Art Nouveau and Art Deco.

While these relationships are extremely relevant in the discussion of art and design within culture, it is examined more closely within aesthetics whether reasoning, relations, and facts are relevant in determining whether or not something is beautiful, or if it is a straightforward sensory judgment. This has been a discussion among several influential philosophers since the 18th century and cannot be answered in absolute terms. Most people can agree on the aesthetic value of some things, like whether or not notes were sung correctly, whereas something like the Eiffel Tower was highly controversial in 1890 but became one of the most recognizable and treasured landmarks in the world today.

The world we live in is not purely functional or objective. Our minds react to and process all kinds of sensory stimulation and create an experience and judgment about these sources. Aesthetics examines what happens within the mind when we engage with mainly visual and auditory stimuli, and why some forms of stimuli are deemed more pleasing than others.

What we find on a trip to a museum or in daily conversations about music or films is that taste and aesthetic experience among people is pluralistic. Like any experience, aesthetic experience is strongly influenced by

**Perceiving the structure of an object is one thing.**

**Perceiving its beauty is another.**

prior experiences, factual knowledge, and peer group standards. While many say that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," it is more so in the eye of a social background and ties within society and culture. Some people may appreciate art that others find unimportant, but having a contrary aesthetic standard does not equal having a lack of taste. A question that modern art itself often poses, is whether or not anything can be classified as art, and which elements must be present to alter this perception.

# 02

## THE CITY

One step up from overall philosophies behind the book, it is also essential that I present some facts about Chicago itself. Do note however, that many of these facts are a part of a historical and cultural narrative. This doesn't make them untrue, but it does point out some cultural bias that may exist in and about the city, which influences further research and understanding.

## HISTORY

### INHABITATION

Chicago's first inhabitants were Native American tribes who resided in the region long before European settlers arrived. The area that is now Chicago was historically inhabited by several indigenous tribes, most notably the Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi Nations of the Council of the Three Fires.

The Potawatomi people, part of the larger Algonquian language family, were the dominant tribe in the region during the 17th and 18th centuries. They lived in villages and practiced agriculture, hunting, and fishing to sustain their communities. The Potawatomi tribe had a significant presence along the shores of Lake Michigan and the banks of the Chicago River.

In the late 1600s, French explorers and traders began to make contact with the Native American tribes in the region, establishing fur trading posts and missions. These interactions brought about cultural exchanges and, at times, conflicts between the Native American communities and European settlers.

Over time, as more settlers arrived and urbanization expanded, the traditional way of life for many

Native American tribes in the region was disrupted, and they were forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands.

### FOUNDING

The official founding of Chicago is traditionally attributed to Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a Haitian-born fur trader who established a trading post near the mouth of the Chicago River in the 1780's. He moved from New Orleans with his Native American wife, setting their home at what is now the corner of N Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive.

In 1803, the United States Army built Fort Dearborn near du Sable's trading post to protect the growing settlement. However, in 1812, during the War of 1812, the fort was destroyed by Native American forces following a military evacuation.

After the war, the settlement gradually grew, and in 1833, it was officially incorporated as the Town of Chicago. Settlers from the American Northeast, as well as German immigrants, soon established farms. Along the same water routes and trails that the Potawatomi had used, they built mills, taverns, churches, schools, and stores.

The construction of the Illinois and

Michigan Canal, completed in 1848, solidified Chicago's position as a vital commercial and transportation center, linking the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River watershed.

During this period, emigration to the United States experienced exponential growth. In 1832, 60,000 immigrants arrived, followed by 105,000 in 1842, and a staggering 372,000 in 1852. Many of these newcomers made their way to Chicago from the East Coast by way of the Great Lakes.

Chicago's population and economy saw a remarkable surge in the mid-19th century, due to its strategic location and the flourishing industries of meatpacking, lumber, and grain trading. The introduction of railroads in the 1850s further fueled its expansion, propelling Chicago to become one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, attracting a diverse influx of residents. Native-born migrants were joined by immigrants from Germany and Ireland during the early industrial era, just before and after the Civil War. As the 20th century approached, Eastern and Southern Europeans became part of the industrial workforce, and in the following decades of the 1910s and 1920s, Mexican Americans and African Americans also joined the

ranks.

The American Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865, had a further impact on the industrial and transportation developments of Chicago. During the war, the movement of food supplies shifted away from Chicago's largest urban rivals, which were too close to the front lines during first two years and faced trade disruptions on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. St. Louis lost its prominence as the major grain distribution center, while Cincinnati's status as the pork-packing capital was severely impacted. Furthermore, the city's strategic location and growing infrastructure made it a vital center for supplying Union forces with rolling stock and rails required for troop and supply transportation.

As a result, Chicago emerged as the natural hub for meatpacking, wheat distribution, and related industries.

### THE FIRE

The Great Chicago Fire was one of the most significant events in the history of Chicago and the United States, occurring in October 1871, just a few years after the end of the Civil War. The fire started on the night of October 8, in or around a barn belonging to the O'Leary family at 137 DeKoven Street, spreading quickly

due to dry weather, strong winds, and wooden buildings, and even crossing the Chicago River from the West side to the North side. Over the next two days, the fire consumed about 3.3 square miles/9 km<sup>2</sup> of the city, including over 17,000 structures, and leaving more than 100,000 people homeless (1/3 of Chicago's population at the time).

The Great Chicago Fire exposed the shortcomings of firefighting techniques and fire safety measures of that era. In the aftermath of the disaster, cities across the United States began to invest in modern firefighting equipment, improved water supply systems, and fire-resistant building materials.

Many Chicagoans actively participated in the rebuilding process, contributing to the city's renewal and rebirth. The shared experience of the fire created a strong cultural identity and a sense of pride in Chicago's ability to rise from the ashes.

The fire's impact on architecture, urban planning, and fire safety is often highlighted in educational programs and exhibits, contributing to a shared memory and understanding of the event's significance. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 left an enduring mark on the cultural landscape of Chicago and beyond.

## REGROWTH

Between the Great Fire and World War I, Chicago underwent a defining transformation. It emerged as a global example of infrastructure, industrial power, and population growth, but was consequently struggling with problems such as congestion, noise, and pollution. As a result, many families sought greener, less crowded areas on the outskirts of the city, leading to a continuous outward migration. The city's residential areas showed an increasing segregation and extreme contrast in wealth, from the rich mansions of the Gold Coast to the poor slums and tenements close to the Loop. Meanwhile, the large working- and middle class spread outward in all directions.

Following the devastating fire, Chicago's rebuilding efforts commenced immediately, sometimes even before the architects and engineers finalized their designs.

In the aftermath, new laws were enacted mandating the use of fireproof materials like brick, stone, marble, and limestone in constructing buildings. Unfortunately, this posed challenges for many poorer residents who couldn't afford such materials or skilled masons for reconstruction. Additionally, lacking fire insurance,

thousands of people and small businesses were unable to rebuild and were displaced from the city.

During this period, residential developers played a pivotal role, revolutionizing the housing industry by building large numbers of units and entire subdivisions at a time. This period also saw the first efforts made in systematic urban planning.

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, spearheaded by Daniel H. Burnham, showcased coordinated planning and clean white neoclassical architecture, standing in stark contrast to the chaotic gray city to the north.

This exposition served as a catalyst for the City Beautiful movement, marking a turning point in the development of modern American cities.

Inspired by the success of the fair, Burnham and Edward Bennett crafted the renowned 1909 Plan of Chicago, becoming a model for subsequent planning endeavors in Chicago and across the nation.

## THE WORLD WARS

The time during and between the two world wars had a profound impact on Chicago's society and ethnic landscape.

The large German and Irish communities in the early 1900's tended to sympathize with the Central powers, and German American culture fell under growing scrutiny, i.e. leading to the renaming of the German-sounding "frankfurter" to (the now Chicago street food staple) "hotdog". More significantly, both the first and second world war caused economic and labor force adjustments, as employers were forced to hire women, the physically disabled, and African Americans for jobs that were previously reserved for white men. Chicago's diverse industrial base became second only to Detroit in value of goods produced for World War II, causing a massive economic boom, and attracting hundreds of thousands of heavy industry workers from all over the country.

From 1910 to 1970, over 6 million African Americans moved from the rural South during The Great Migration, many choosing to settle in the largest northern industrial cities like Chicago. Within these years, the African American population in Chicago grew from 2% to 33%, creating a cultural impact that is most evident in cuisine, blues and jazz music, churches, and the Chicago Black Renaissance. Unlike the European immigrants, mainly

African Americans but also Jews and Catholics were met with restrictions and prohibitions on purchasing property in many areas of Chicago and were largely confined to small sections of the South and Near West Side.

By the stock market crash in 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression, communities in Chicago were already deeply divided by race and ethnicity. Since manufacturing was the hardest hit sector in the nation, The Great Depression had particularly severe consequences for the working people of Chicago, especially for African Americans and Mexicans. In Chicago, the time between the wars is also infamously known for Prohibition, and the rise of corruption and organized crime. The efforts to prohibit alcohol in Chicago had existed since the incorporation of the city, but it wasn't until 1919 that Illinois lawmakers created the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, illegalizing the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol in the state. The people, however, were not opposed to the illegal consumption of liquor, giving rise to organized crime through the production and sale of liquor, and operations of secret drinking establishments, also known

as speakeasies. The Roaring Twenties in Chicago is not only remembered for the Art Deco building boom, but also the city's reputation for political corruption, violence, and gangsters such as Al Capone.

### RENEWAL

One of the most significant transformations that occurred in the postwar decades was the development of Chicago's transportation infrastructure, especially for cars and air travel. The region's expressway system, which was planned in the 1930s, received a boost from federal funds through the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 and was built with local support after the war. As commercial airlines developed, a new airport, O'Hare, emerged as the nation's busiest, surpassing Midway. These changes in transportation infrastructure were accompanied by other shifts in Chicago's economic and urban landscape in the second half of the twentieth century, such as the decline of industry, the growth of suburbs, and the implementation of urban renewal projects by civic and government leaders.

Chicago's growth had been driven by industry for a long time, but its decline became increasingly evident throughout the second half of the

20th century. To address these issues, civic and government leaders adopted new planning methods and a bold urban renewal program.

The city underwent major transformations as large areas were torn down and rebuilt, especially in the Near South Side. New residential and institutional buildings emerged, such as Prairie Shores and Lake Meadows, a new Michael Reese Hospital, and a new Illinois Institute of Technology campus. Some of these projects, like the Hyde Park townhouses and the Sandburg Village apartments, helped to keep some middle-income residents in the city and stabilize some neighborhoods. However, other projects, like the Robert Taylor Homes and the Cabrini-Green complex, became examples of massive public housing projects that were plagued by social and economic issues. Meanwhile, some older neighborhoods near the center that escaped urban renewal revived as affluent communities through private investment and gentrification. Private real-estate interests sparked a building boom through the late 1950s and 1970s, rivaling the boom of the 1880s and 1920s. This was the period when some of the world's largest and tallest office buildings

were built in Chicago, such as Sears Tower and the John Hancock Center, both designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, a leading postwar corporate architecture firm in Chicago. The growth of high-level corporate, financial, and legal jobs in the Loop, as well as the development of tourism and culture, fueled another office building boom starting in the 1980s.

Even though the city core experienced a revitalization, the periphery of the metropolitan area continued to see the most dramatic development. New retail establishments, such as shopping centers, strip malls, discount centers, and even large business centers accompanied the new residential districts. The rise of car-ownership, expansion of infrastructure, cheap land availability, and economic developments led to the low-population-growth/high-land-consumption development pattern known as urban sprawl. While Chicago's population only grew by 1% from 1970 to 1990, the geographic extent of the city grew by 24%. Urban sprawl has been correlated with increased energy use, pollution, and traffic congestion and a decline in community distinctiveness and cohesiveness.

## URBAN LANDSCAPE

### PARKS

Since Chicago's incorporation, parks have been a central feature of the dream for the city. In 1837, the emerging government adopted the Latin motto "Urbs in Horto", which translates to "City in a Garden". These aspirations were not only supported by the people but pushed into action through public rallies and protests.

Chicago's park movement of the early 1850's rallied for the creation of the first comprehensive park system in the country, including the first 60 acre section of Lincoln Park; renamed after Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865. In 1869, the Lincoln, West and South Park Commissions were created through state legislation with an overarching goal to surround the new city with green spaces.

The Lincoln Park Commission created the old Lake Shore Drive, once a leisurely parkway for carriage rides, and the Lincoln Park Zoo.

The West Park Commission laid out Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas Park, originally planned by William Le Baron Jenney but taken over by Danish born Jens Jensen in 1895. Jensen later became the superintendent of the entire West

Park system in 1905 and played a prominent role in the creation of Prairie Style landscape architecture.

The South Park Commission created Washington and Jackson Park and the Midway Plaisance, as well as the land known as Northerly Island and Burnham Park – the location of the two world fairs which were hosted by Chicago in 1893 and 1933.

After large areas around Chicago were annexed to the city in 1889, a state act in 1895 allowed the newly annexed areas to create their own park districts. By 1930, Chicago had a total of 22 independent park agencies operating in the city. To reduce cost of operations and gain access to funding through Roosevelt's New Deal after the Great Depression, the Park Consolidation Act established the Chicago Park District in 1934.

The Chicago Park District continued the work on expanding the park systems, now totalling at more than 600 parks, 24 beaches, 50 nature areas, and more than 8,800 acres of open space within the metropolitan area, making the department the nation's leader in providing and managing green space.



## URBAN LANDSCAPE

### THE LAKE

Chicago was created because of its waterways. From native tribes to explorers, missionaries, settlers, and industry, Chicago's location between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River lies at the core of the city's existence and success.

The name of the lake, Lake Michigan, finds its origins in the Algonquin term "Michigami," which translates to "great water." As the third largest of the Great Lakes, Lake Michigan played a pivotal role in the Chicago's economy, serving as a cost-effective means of transportation, as fishing grounds, and facilitating the circulation of goods among communities in the Lake Michigan basin.

The shores of the lake were shaped by market and capital interests, thriving under the illusion that pollution from sawmills, agriculture, and metal fabrication could coexist with fishing, beach resorts, and a healthy city population.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, a growing awareness of cleaner water and environments, coupled with shifting industrial patterns, led to a notable shift towards greater leisure use of Chicago's waterfront.

The lake gradually transformed into a hub of leisure activities. By the mid-19th century, strolling along the lakefront to enjoy the refreshing air became a popular pastime. While the city center witnessed heavy industry, the lakefront offered early green spaces, and recreational sailing flourished with the establishment of yacht clubs and harbors along the shoreline.

The World's Columbian Exposition further enhanced the lakefront, leading to the development of Jackson Park's east side. Architects and planners envisioned a permanent "White City" on the lakefront, and in 1896, Grant Park expanded into Lake Michigan through landfill, serving as a model for future lakefront developments.

Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago laid the official groundwork for a lakefront filled with parks, harbors, and beaches accessible to all, including the first plans for what is now Navy Pier. The 1933 and 1934 Century of Progress fairs arose on landfill south of Grant Park, and the New Deal after the Great Depression funded further improvements enhancing the lakefront's significance as the center of citywide celebrations and cultural institutions.

### THE RIVER

Chicago's river system comprises of a North Branch, South Branch, and Main Stem of the Chicago River, alongside a network of constructed waterways spanning 52 miles: North Shore Channel, the Sanitary and Ship Canal, and the Calumet Sag Channel. Throughout history, the river system has been at the heart of Chicago's development, illustrating the connection between natural resources, and urban growth.

The river was crucial in Chicago's transformation into a major hub for the lumber and meatpacking industries during the 19th century. With access to the Des Plaines River and the extensive Mississippi River system, the city had ample opportunities for trade and shipping across the entire Midwest, contributing significantly to the city's economic growth and prominence in the region. The Chicago River quickly transformed into a bustling array of docks, filled with cargo and passenger ships.

By the 1870s, the accumulation of waste from industrial and commercial activities resulted in noticeable pollution, raising serious concerns about the potential threats the river posed to public health. After a severe storm in 1885 caused the river to empty large amounts of sewage-polluted

water into Lake Michigan, plans were begun to reverse its flow through the construction of the 28-mile Sanitary and Ship Canal, which was completed in 1900. The river now flows inland—through the south branch and into the Illinois Waterway to connect with the Mississippi River. The reversal of the river's flow is still considered one of the greatest feats of modern engineering.

In 1909 Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett reimagined the river as part of their "Plan of Chicago." To address the issue of ship overcrowding in the narrow river, several lakefront piers were proposed, including Navy Pier. Additionally, the riverfront received a makeover with the creation of an esplanade along the Main Stem. The double-decked Wacker Drive, completed in 1926, features neoclassical embellishments on its upper level, including balustrades and obelisk-shaped light fixtures.

Through deindustrialization, a higher sense of environmental responsibility, and the implementation of federal regulations, the Chicago River has experienced ongoing advancements in water quality and accessibility.

Chicago is now rediscovering and appreciating the river's historical significance while also envisioning its promising future.

## THE GRID

The orthogonal grid is the most common planned street pattern, dating back to several ancient civilisations across the world. Even cities without a strong grid structure tend to follow an overall north/south-east/west orientation, and many juxtapose planned and unplanned districts. High-ordered cities can even evolve into entropy as the people carve through blocks, create new infills and reorganize space, as exemplified in Rome and Barcelona.

The development eras, paradigms, terrain, culture, and economic conditions of a city influence the topology of its street networks. The first streets of Chicago were laid out by James Thompson in the 1830's following Thomas Jefferson's nationwide Land Ordinance of 1785, which favored the spatial homogeneity of 1 sq.mi blocks on an orthonogal grid, disregarding topography, natural landscape or cultural precedents.

The orderly system of Chicago's 1830 plan ran into issues following the annexations of surrounding communities when duplicates of names and addresses could be found across the city. This led the private citizen Edward P. Brennan to developing a new planning strategy, and as of 1908, nearly all streets were renamed and new street numbers located property addresses relative to central X and Y axes.

The intersection of State St and Madison St is the zero-point for all addresses in Chicago. State St is the Y axis between East and West addresses, and Madison St is the X axis between North and South. All Chicago street numbers radiate out from that point, increasing by 100 for each block they are from Madison or State. E.g. 400 N Michigan Ave (the south tower of the Wrigley Building) is exactly 4 blocks north of Madison St.

Different from other city blocks, like those of New York City, the Chicago block has a uniform length on all sides of 1/8 mile. This makes it easy to calculate distances not only by blocks, but by actual distances between addresses. Each whole mile from the center (8 blocks=800 street numbers) is marked by a major street. This is slightly askew on the south blocks, which pre-date the naming/numbering convention.

Each typical Chicago block contains 16 lots - 8 on each side with an alley down the middle, providing access to services, garages and more. This makes each lot 25 ft/7.6 m wide and 125 ft/38 m deep. However, lot sizes can vary depending on location, zoning and history of the area. Other lots may also have irregular shapes, such as triangles and trapezoids, due to diagonal streets or natural features.







## NEIGHBORHOODS

Within the seemingly uniform grid system, Chicago is a city of diverse neighborhoods, each with its own history and identity.

In general, neighborhoods are part of larger community areas, which are 77 official divisions of the city that were mapped out by two University of Chicago sociologists in the late 1920s. These community areas do not change over time, so they can be used for consistent data collection and analysis. However, many people identify with more specific or informal neighborhood names.

There are said to be more than 200 neighborhoods in Chicago, each with its own particularities, shaped by factors such as historical development, immigration patterns, natural features, economic growth, and community activism. An overall defining factor for the cultural history of any given neighborhood is the city section in which it is found.

The neighborhoods situated north and east of the Chicago River collectively form the North Side of the city. While economically diverse, the North Side is mainly known for its affluent neighborhoods and iconic skyscrapers after the demolition of Cabrini-Green and other public housing communities. As Chicago shifted from industrial-heavy factories to tech-based companies, the North Side has become a hub for “new economy” innovation.

The West Side, located west of the Chicago River, once served as a gateway for immigrants and lower-income residents, away from the wealthier lakeside and central business districts. Today, the West Side hosts the nation’s largest urban medical district, the largest single-site jail facility, and three of Chicago’s largest parks. Closer to the Loop, the West Side’s former warehouse, printing, and garment districts have transformed into foodie havens and are home to high-tech corporations like Google and Uber.

Initially, the South Side of Chicago encompassed all the land south of the Chicago River, though it has later been decided that the Loop, located south of the river, should be treated as its own district. With the annexation of Hyde Park and surrounding areas, today’s South Side is larger than the North and West Sides combined. The South Side once attracted immigrants due to its massive steel and meat-packing industries, particularly from the 1840s to the end of World War I. Today, the South Side’s neighborhoods boast a rich diversity and have deep-rooted traditions in history, art, music, and dance.

Overall, Chicago’s neighborhoods are the lifeblood of the city, contributing to its ever-evolving cultural tapestry. Each neighborhood, with its own narrative and aesthetic qualities, plays an essential role in shaping the collective identity of the city.

## MAPS

### 01

The extent of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the built environment of the time, and the limits of the 1872 ordinance on building materials.

### 02

The expansion of the Chicago city limits from 1837 to present.

### 03

State, county, city, and township borders. Since 1908, areas within the city of Chicago have not been part of any political townships.

### 04

The "sides" of Chicago. Unofficial directional boundaries originally divided into three sides by the Chicago River: north, south, west.

### 05

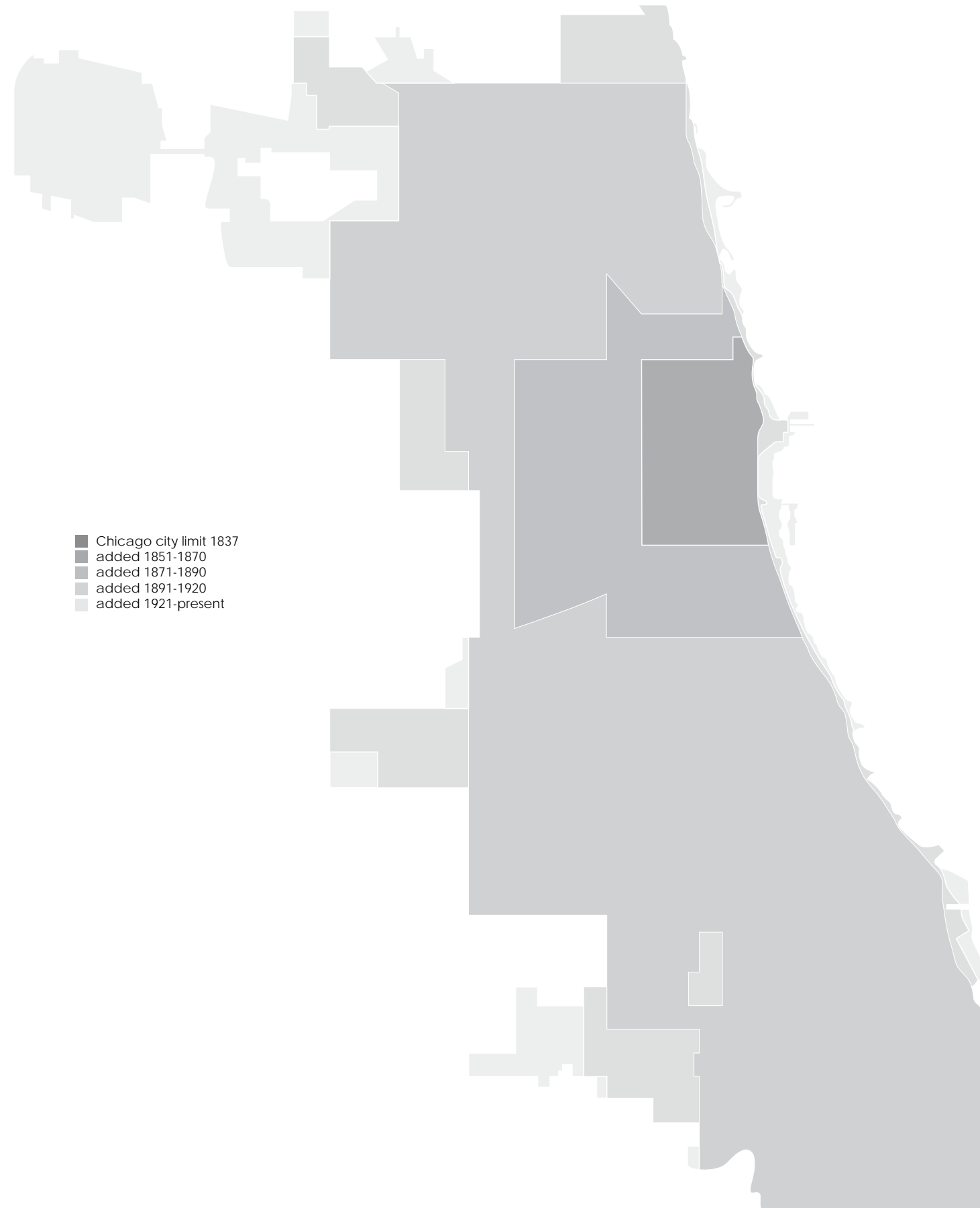
The official 77 Community Areas of Chicago. There are said to be more than 200 neighborhoods in Chicago, but residents differ on their names and boundaries.

### 06

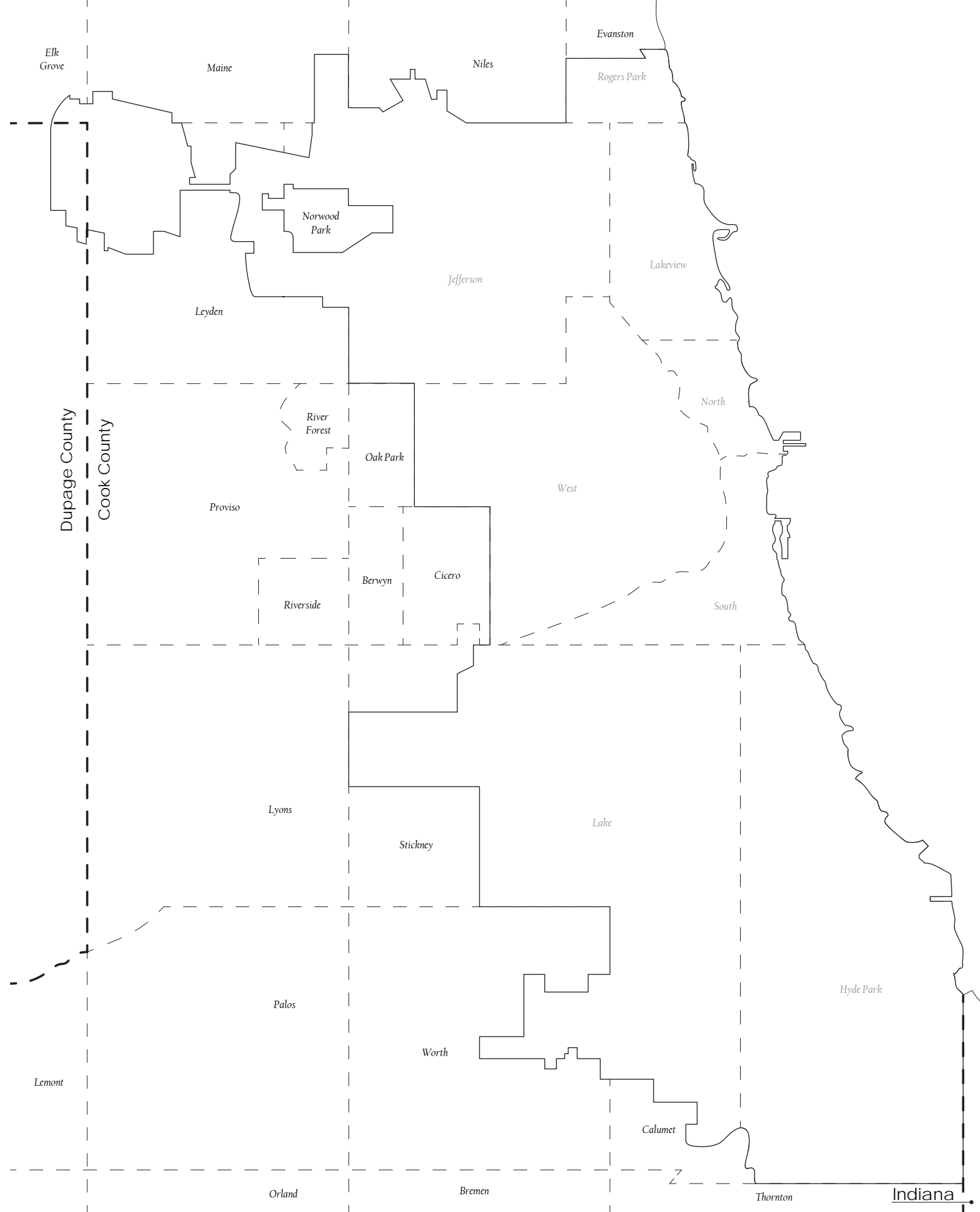
Current green spaces and waterways in the city of Chicago.

- Chicago Fire 1871
- Built-up area in 1871
- "Fire Limits"  
*area where 1872 ordinance  
restricted building materials*





- Chicago city limit 1837
- added 1851-1870
- added 1871-1890
- added 1891-1920
- added 1921-present



Elk Grove

Maine

Niles

Evanston

Rogers Park

Norwood Park

Jefferson

Lakeview

Leyden

North

River Forest

Oak Park

West

Dupage County

Cook County

Proviso

Berwyn

Cicero

Riverside

South

Lyons

Stickney

Lake

Lemont

Palos

Worth

Hyde Park

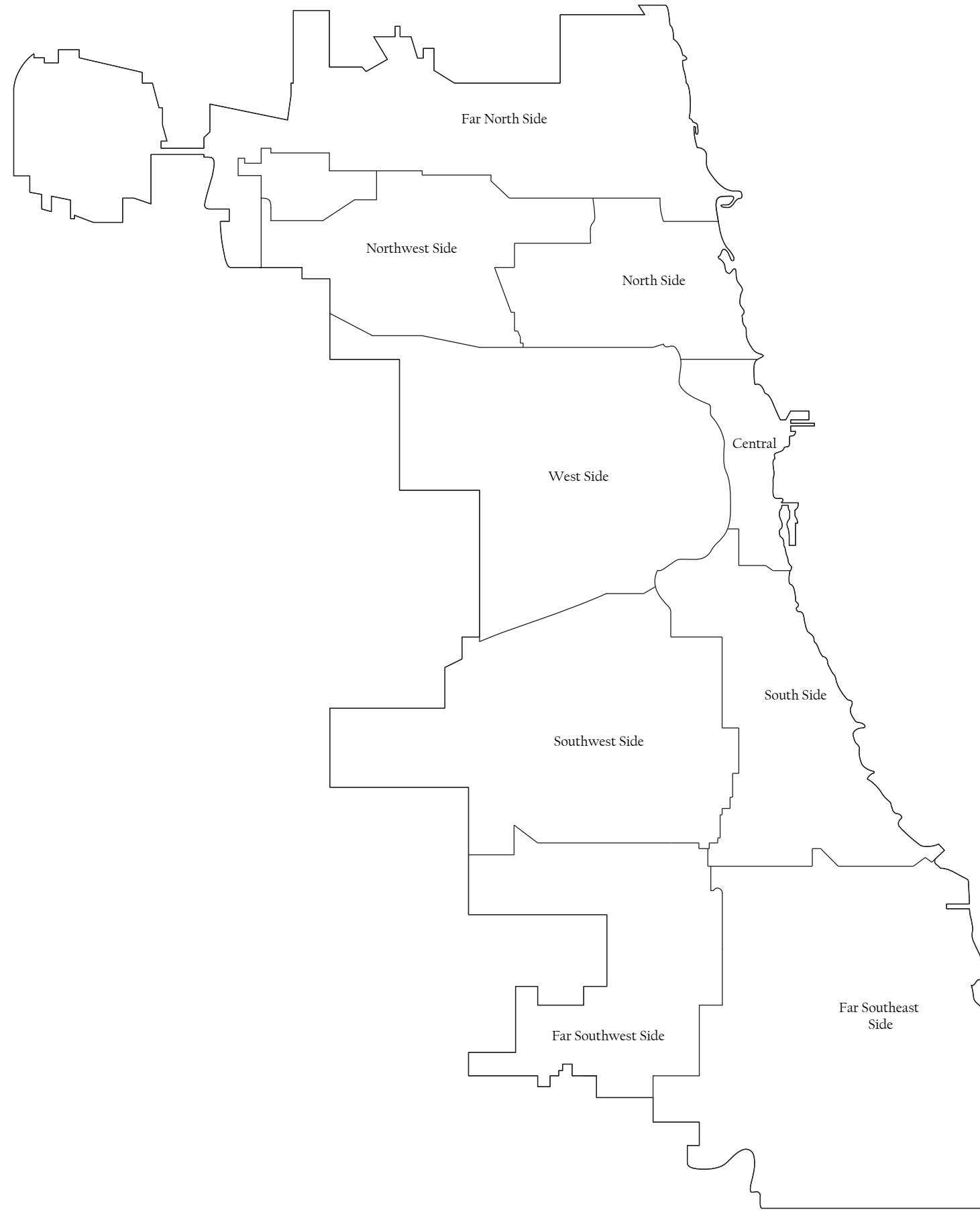
Calumet

Orland

Bremen

Thornton

Indiana



Far North Side

Northwest Side

North Side

West Side

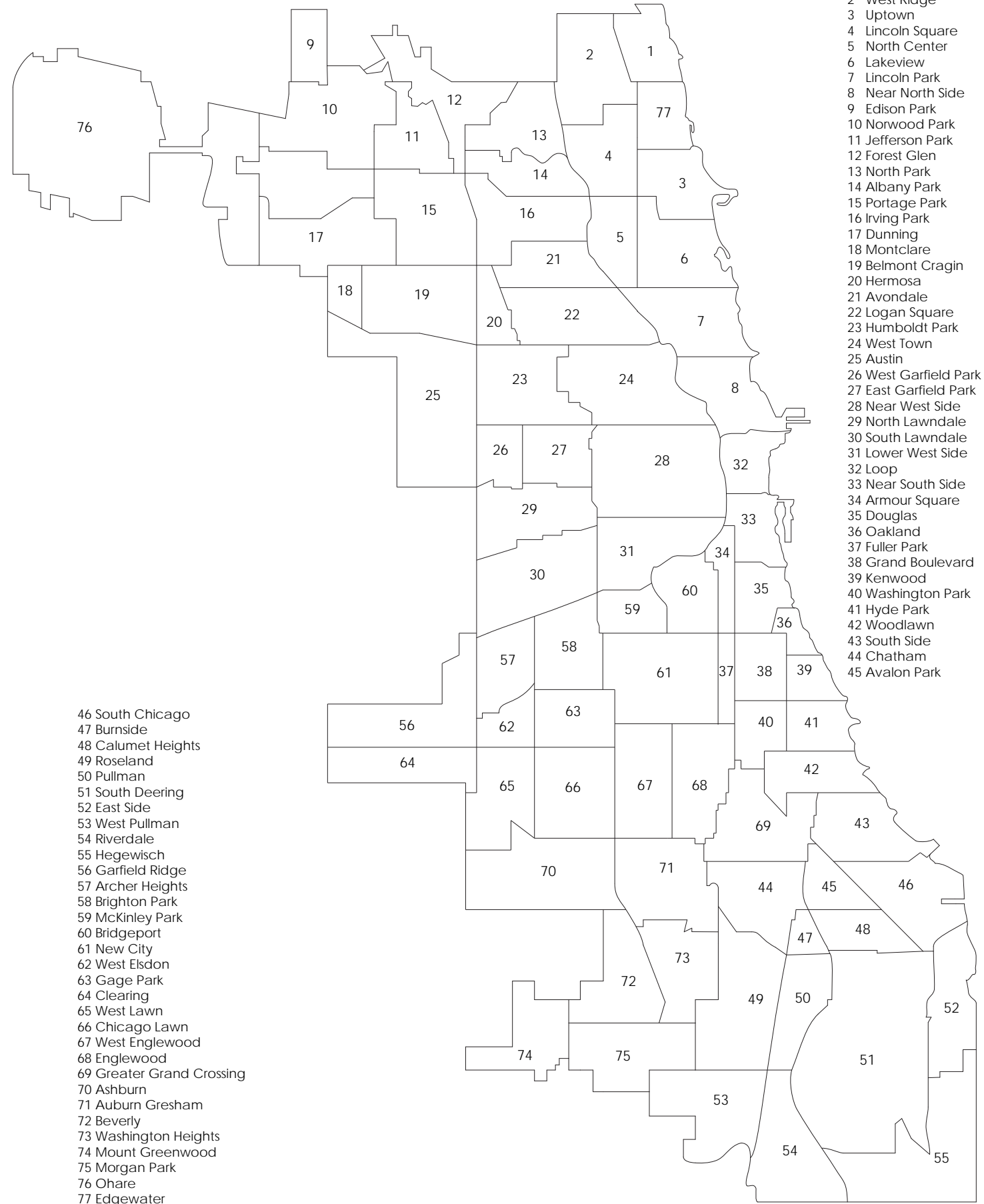
Central

South Side

Southwest Side

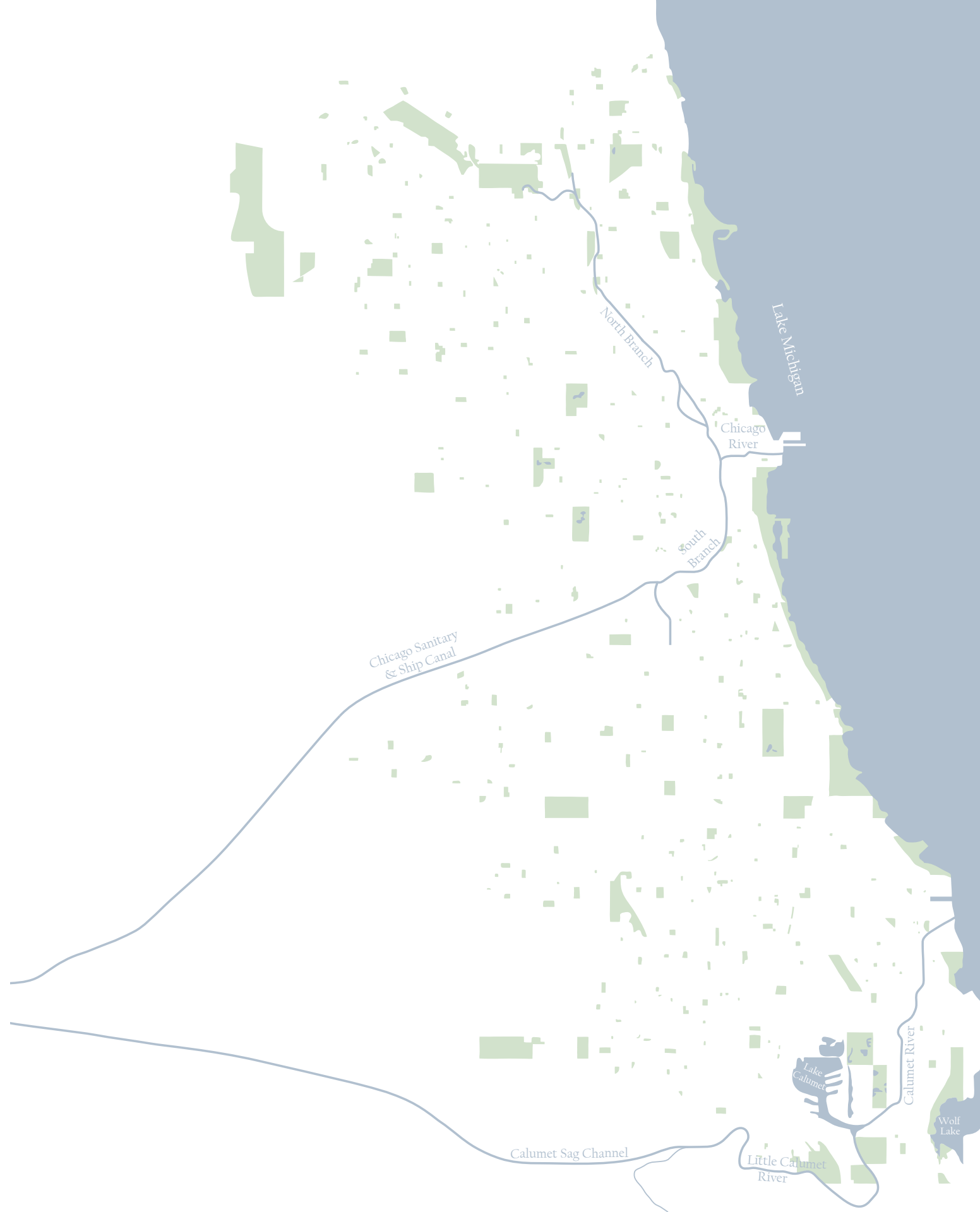
Far Southwest Side

Far Southeast Side



- 1 Rogers Park
- 2 West Ridge
- 3 Uptown
- 4 Lincoln Square
- 5 North Center
- 6 Lakeview
- 7 Lincoln Park
- 8 Near North Side
- 9 Edison Park
- 10 Norwood Park
- 11 Jefferson Park
- 12 Forest Glen
- 13 North Park
- 14 Albany Park
- 15 Portage Park
- 16 Irving Park
- 17 Dunning
- 18 Montclare
- 19 Belmont Cragin
- 20 Hermosa
- 21 Avondale
- 22 Logan Square
- 23 Humboldt Park
- 24 West Town
- 25 Austin
- 26 West Garfield Park
- 27 East Garfield Park
- 28 Near West Side
- 29 North Lawndale
- 30 South Lawndale
- 31 Lower West Side
- 32 Loop
- 33 Near South Side
- 34 Armour Square
- 35 Douglas
- 36 Oakland
- 37 Fuller Park
- 38 Grand Boulevard
- 39 Kenwood
- 40 Washington Park
- 41 Hyde Park
- 42 Woodlawn
- 43 South Side
- 44 Chatham
- 45 Avalon Park

- 46 South Chicago
- 47 Burnside
- 48 Calumet Heights
- 49 Roseland
- 50 Pullman
- 51 South Deering
- 52 East Side
- 53 West Pullman
- 54 Riverdale
- 55 Hegewisch
- 56 Garfield Ridge
- 57 Archer Heights
- 58 Brighton Park
- 59 McKinley Park
- 60 Bridgeport
- 61 New City
- 62 West Elsdon
- 63 Gage Park
- 64 Clearing
- 65 West Lawn
- 66 Chicago Lawn
- 67 West Englewood
- 68 Englewood
- 69 Greater Grand Crossing
- 70 Ashburn
- 71 Auburn Gresham
- 72 Beverly
- 73 Washington Heights
- 74 Mount Greenwood
- 75 Morgan Park
- 76 Ohare
- 77 Edgewater



Lake Michigan

Chicago River

North Branch

South Branch

Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal

Calumet Sag Channel

Little Calumet River

Lake Calumet

Calumet River

Wolf Lake



# 03

## THE MENTAL IMAGE

The mental image of the city is a complex and multifaceted concept that represents the collective perceptions, impressions, and associations individuals hold about a particular urban environment. It is the unique way in which people visualize and interpret a city in their minds, influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and societal influences.

Urban narratives, stories, and media representations also contribute to shaping the mental image of the city. Films, literature, art, and media coverage can either reinforce or challenge existing perceptions, adding new layers to the collective imagination.

Additionally, emotions and feelings are intertwined with the mental image of the city. Positive experiences and cherished memories can create a sense of attachment and affection towards certain places, while negative encounters might influence a more critical or distant perception.

The mental image of the city is a subjective and ever-changing construct, reflecting how people envision and connect with urban spaces. It is a blend of tangible landmarks, intangible experiences, and emotional attachments that contribute to a shared understanding of the city's identity and character.

## CITY PERCEIVED

For anyone with an interest in city architecture, urban design, and planning, Kevin Lynch's "Image of the City" (1960) is unavoidable, especially when it comes to researching the perception of a city.

Kevin Lynch hypothesized that a city's perceived quality was related to the legibility and imageability of the environment. Not only should an environment be easily recognized and understood, it should also have the ability to evoke a strong image and emotional response in the observer - an aesthetic experience.

While Lynch argues that cities not only exist in physical form but also in the minds of the observer, his research focuses more on the legibility and navigability of the urban environment and sets the semantic meaning of places aside. Essentially, Lynch succeeded in creating a useful method of wayfinding for a pedestrian, and analyzing their ability to create a vivid image of their environment.

Yet, an exact image isn't necessarily useful or interesting. His method also fails to take other modes of urban transportation into account, suggesting that the mental image of the driver, cyclist, and railway or subway passenger is distorted rather than different and valuable. As he later acknowledged, his goal to describe a

mental representation and the perception of a city without subjectivity is a paradox.

**People don't only have an intellectual and symbolic conception of place, but also a deeply personal one.**

If we are to understand how individuals or groups respond psychologically or behaviorally to the physical environment, Gaston Bachelard's philosophy on the power of imagination to inhabit and interact with space is a compelling angle to consider. The French philosopher suggested that the relationship between place and personality was so intimate that a topoanalysis (the psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives) could reveal more about oneself than a psychoanalysis.

Rather than only basing our understanding of the world on technical, historical, or social aspects, Bachelard urges us to consider the impact of the image itself, perceived through emotion and imagination. The image is defined in his philosophy as not just visual, but something that is lived. What we imagine becomes our experience and existence. The imagination is both receptive and creative, and the image is constantly remade.

Bachelard's theories on space, poetics, and psychology influenced many subsequent philosophers and sociologists such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Bruno Latour, and laid a major foundation for the theories of phenomenology in architecture, publishing "La Poétique de l'Espace" (The Poetics of Space) 21 years before Christian Norberg-Schulz' epochal "Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture" from 1979. The term "phenomenology" is often simplified to describe sensory qualities, but the studies of phenomenology address a much wider range of experience including perception, memory, imagination, emotion, and social activity. Essentially people's sense of personal and cultural identity is intimately tied to place identity. We all have a cognitive database of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and feelings about specific or types of physical settings against which every other physical setting is perceived.

In North American cities, take Chicago, neighborhoods such as Pilsen, Chinatown, and Andersonville were a materialization of migrants' efforts to maintain a sense of cultural and kin identity in a new place. These spaces of cultural cohesion, usually bounded by physical landmarks, zoning laws and often prejudice, eventually became administrative boundaries - many of which still exist despite demographic and cultural change. Pilsen, named after the Czech city, is no longer known to be a Slavic neighborhood but has been

predominantly Mexican since the 1970's. While the physical location and name of the place remains unchanged, the life that is lived in the place has transformed.

Because of the subjectivity in the identity of place, the perception of a place between the observer and the insider will always be different. While no one can be both, we can come closer to mediating both sides by being conscious of the impact socialization has on the study of place. Embracing subjectivity and personal and emotional responses to places, and not merely attempting to describe them in an objective way, can bridge the gap between observing and living.

The image of the city is far more ubiquitous than one method of physical analysis can describe, especially in today's age of globalization and digital technology. City images today are highly mediated, not only as a strategic marketing ploy, but through film, digital street maps, the geographic locations of events and tragedies; through assisted navigation and digital services, social media images, performances, and reinterpretations, etc. — all of which can be accessed and produced from anywhere on earth.

To investigate the perception of a city through the shape of its physical environment alone is not enough. Actual physical space is no longer the main source of spatial perception.

This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of capes, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text. Is the aleph, that place in Borges from which the entire world is visible simultaneously, anything other than an alphabet?

---

Georges Perec

## DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

Architects are trained to convey design and intention through drawings. From early concepts to construction, drawings are what we read and use to create and formulate ideas through an acquired understanding of symbols and line weights.

Communication through drawing is not only a professional and academic practice; it is a piece of human nature and connected to the development of language. Cave paintings made by Neanderthals at least 64,000 years ago are not only significant in demonstrating an ability to paint, but an ability to engage in symbolism and the use of images to create a narrative. While spoken words don't fossilize, drawings and symbols are physical artifacts of language. Words themselves are essentially symbols conveying meaning.

Creating images has been a part of human history long before the sciences, and no one has ever discovered a culture without a form of art. It is undeniable that we read meaning in images, both consciously and subconsciously, and the way we perceive these images is highly subjective to each person's culture, prior knowledge, and experiences. Because of its range of meanings and the feelings it provokes, an image will always exceed anything that can be said about it.

An image can likewise say a lot about the person who created it. The associations and emotions we read and feel when viewing an image come through our hands as well. Each time we draw something, we subconsciously project our personality onto the piece of paper. Without realizing it, the simplest drawing or handwriting can shed light on our emotions, intelligence, self-esteem, and fears. Graphologists can analyze handwriting to identify anything from physiological conditions to personality traits. Similarly, psychologists have long used drawing tests to assess personality traits and intelligence in children and adults, or to evaluate brain functions in patients with schizophrenia.

While analysis of drawings is a valuable strategy, the method of drawing is in itself a useful tool in research. Drawing involves and stimulates a sensory engagement with the studied subject and data, beyond simply registering and noting.

**While drawing, one is consequently processing, arranging, and rearranging ideas, thoughts, and concepts to produce a conclusive image. Drawing is not only valuable for what may be encrypted in the image, but equally for the process which is closely linked to unconscious thought and understanding.**

## SURVEYS

I have asked residents from Chicago, other parts of the USA, and non-American residents to describe their personal image of Chicago. Some may have lived here for many years, others only visited, and some may never have been at all.

This could be done through drawing and/or writing, as long as it came from the imagination or memory and not copied from an external source. These mental images should provide a sense of the experience and perception of the city and the connection it may have to our lives and personalities.

Additionally, I have provided the participants with photographs of cities around the world, asking them if each image corresponds with their image of Chicago. These images contain elements that are more or less prevalent within the city of Chicago, though they may appear in different ways. Several images are in fact of Chicago, testing which elements are most recognizable to different groups of participants.

Lastly, the survey contains images that represent different architectural styles or types that can be found in Chicago. In this I am examining the participants' most prevalent associations with styles in both Chicago homes and larger Chicago buildings. Although a plethora of styles exist in Chicago, the mental image of a city tends to favor just a few. It is interesting to see whether and how the most dominant styles differ between the different participant groups.

Tall buildings in a close setting. Lots of people and traffic on the streets. Harbour and long beaches along the lake. Hot weather in summer and cold, even snow in winter.

From Denmark  
Has not been to Chicago

A big grey city, that looks similar to New York City, just more grey and cold.

From Denmark  
Has not been to Chicago

When I think about Chicago I imagine a city full of skyscrapers close to an enormous lake.

Even though Chicago is a new city compared to what I think of as a European, I would think it already had a lot of mixture of architecture throughout the times and a culture that is its own, compared to maybe the culture in the rest of the state.

Other than that, I think of Nick Miller from the tv series "New Girl" who has his famous line "I'm from Chicago", that he says in what now for me is an accent from Chicago.

From South Africa, Germany & Denmark  
Has not been to Chicago

All I know about Chicago is from TV shows.

The Bean, or cloud, in a big plaza with high rises all around. Busy roads going under the raised train tracks.

Buildings that mostly look like this:  
Classic child's drawing style.



To me, Chicago seems tall, pressed together, busy, claustrophobic, loud with cars and trains and people. Always on the go, like NYC.

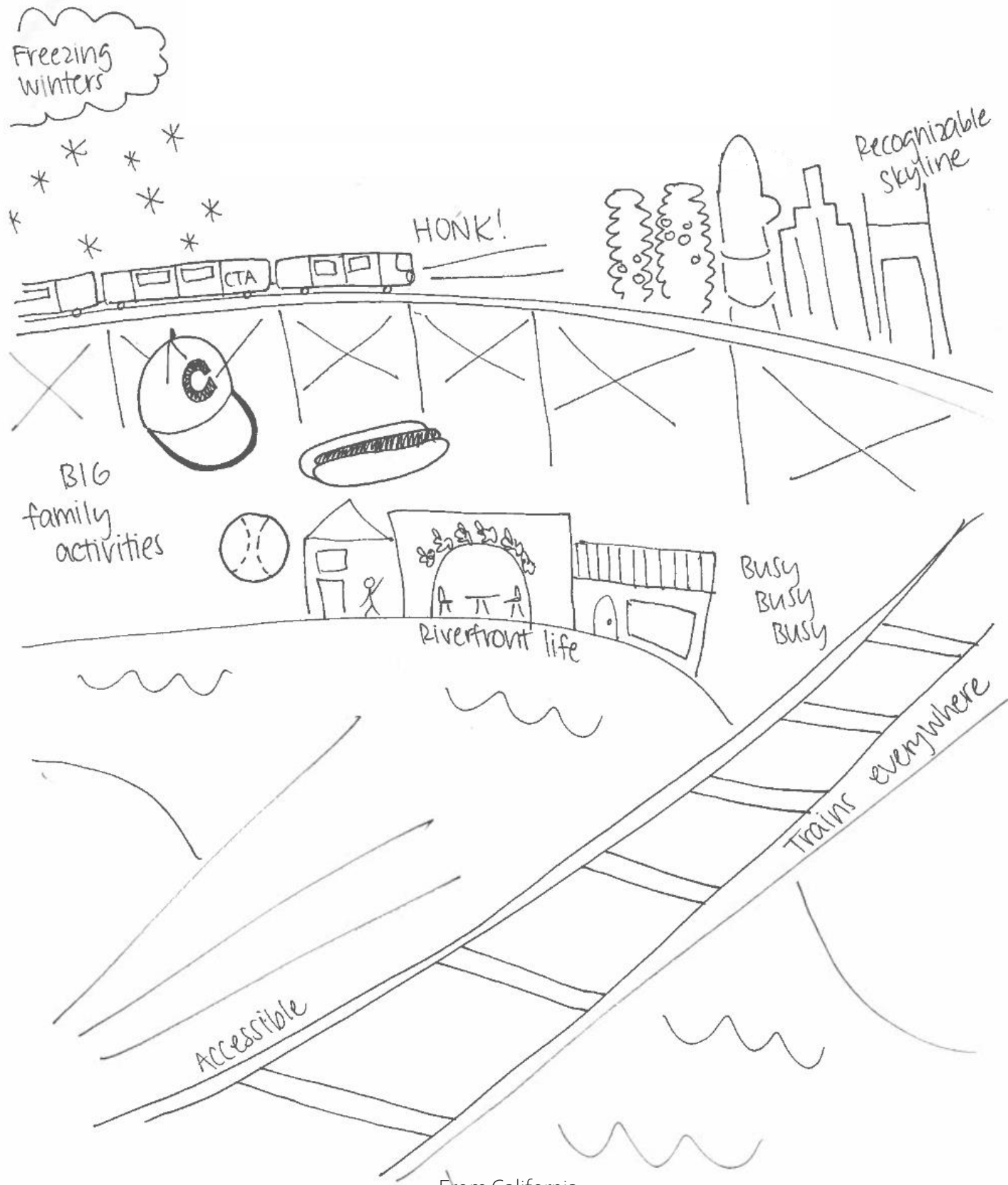
From Scotland & Denmark  
Has not been to Chicago

Remembering a bit of my work-related visit to Chicago in May 2006. We visited Sears tower, went to the topmost visitor level – and I have forgotten specifically what I saw. But it was clear weather, so we have been able to overlook most of the city scape.

I bought a souvenir mug with colored stripes.

On the first evening we went to the center of town, enjoying the skyline of high rises with dotted lights from windows and bill boards. Cars passing on the street, nice weather. And of course, we watched the elevated rail system at a distance with trains passing. We sensed an incredible atmosphere.

From Denmark  
Has been to Chicago



From California  
Has been to Chicago



From Denmark  
Has been to Chicago

My only time in Chicago was for work and it happened around St. Patrick's Day. There was a LOT of traffic and so many people out enjoying the holiday festivities. I remember there being a good buzz of energy.

In the evenings, I enjoyed walks along the brightly-colored, green river, and out to Navy Pier. I remember to biting cold, the crisp air, the light house, the lovely architecture and street art all around Millennium Park.

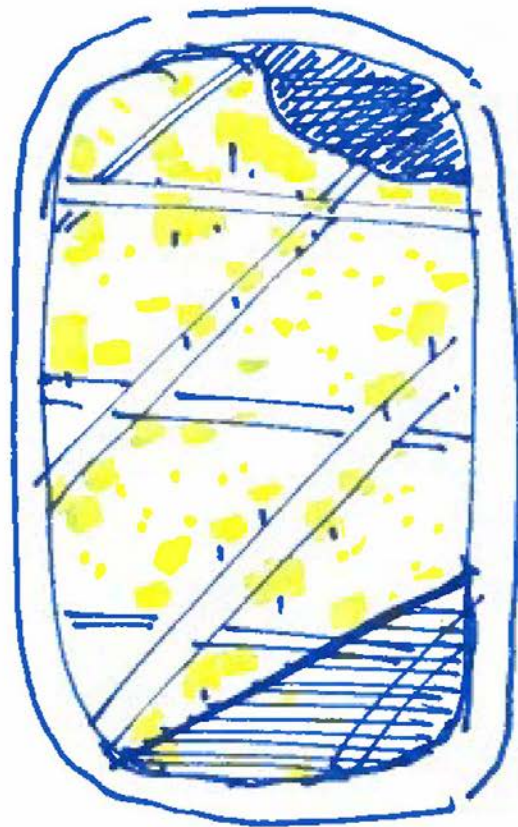
From California  
Has been to Chicago

When I think of Chicago I remember my first time arriving from the flat urban highway system. From the freeway the city looked like waves tall prairie grass sitting on the horizontal planes of the flat topography of the region. The city seemed to grow up from the ground as if it were alive and growing.

The tall buildings are very distinctive close up but not so much from miles away. It feels today like it did then, like someone watered prairie grass and it grew tall in the place we call Chicago.

From Michigan  
Chicago resident for 36 years





if being asked this question. Jumping in my mind right away. it's the view from airplane when entering into Chicago from east (Lake side).

coincidentally, it's mostly during night. the view where a very flat terrain, very beautifully lighted city, very dynamic building typologies, very dense blocks, very planned city grid. very familiar and strange. very foreign & home, which reminds me my 11 years here in a country. I'm considered as immigrant

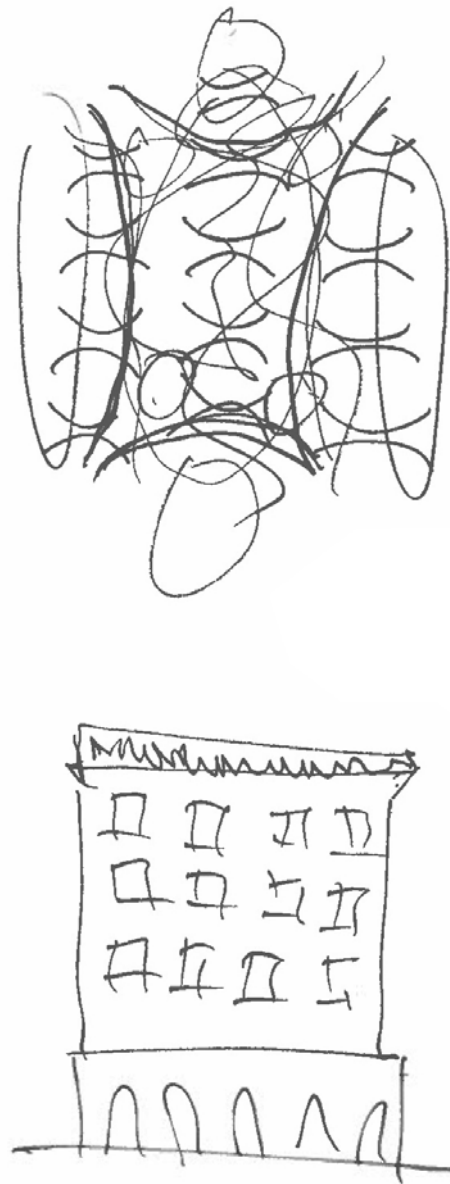
From China

Chicago resident for 7 years

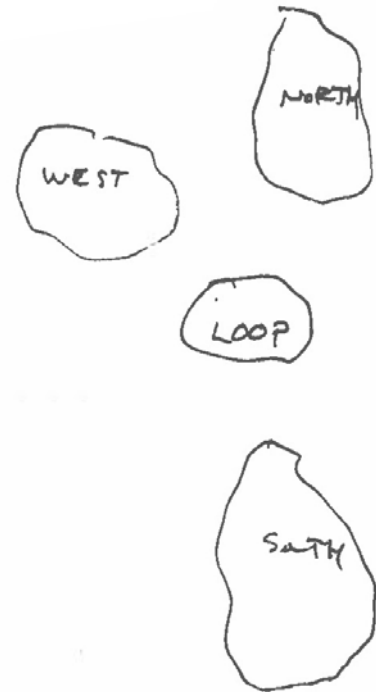
When I imagine something about Chicago the first vision is that which one easily sees as they are landing... that the entire length of the city resides along the shoreline – the sense that at the lakefront there is equity. Every time I see this, I think about the great diversity within the urban streets and how Lake Michigan binds us together as one community.

From Michigan

Chicago resident for 20 years

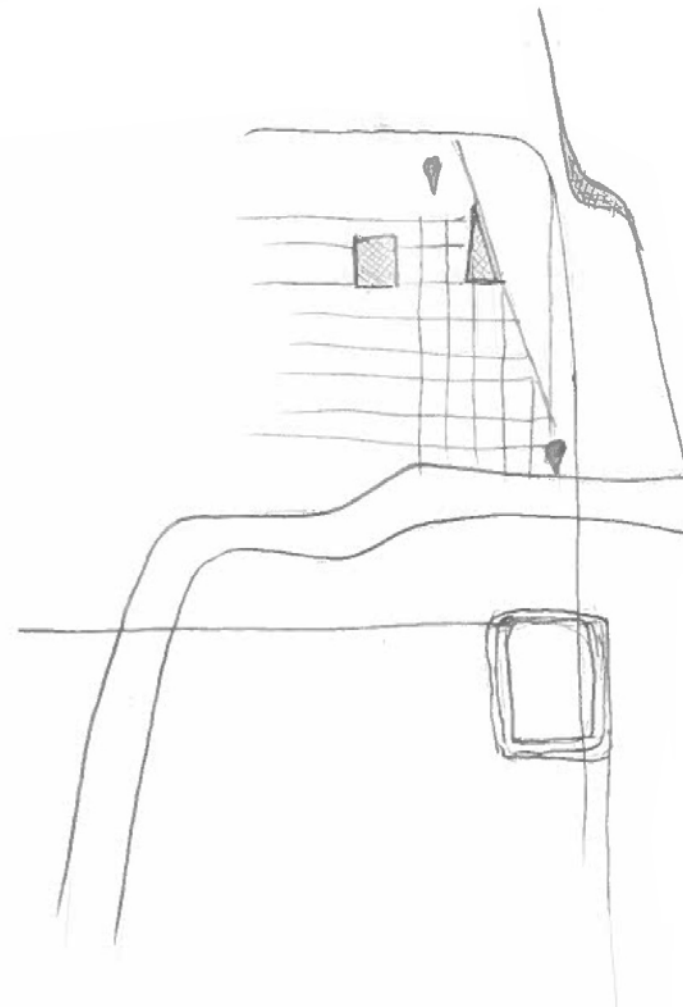


LOUIS  
SULLIVAN  
ORNAMENT



From Minneapolis  
Chicago resident for 1 year

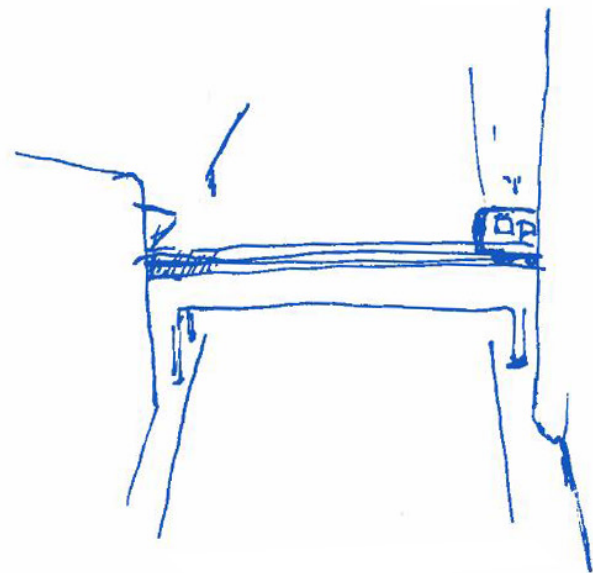
Whenever I think of the city, I instantly picture a map.  
It is clearly not to scale because there are a few particular things that stand out to me more than others, as they have become tools to help me orient myself in the city:



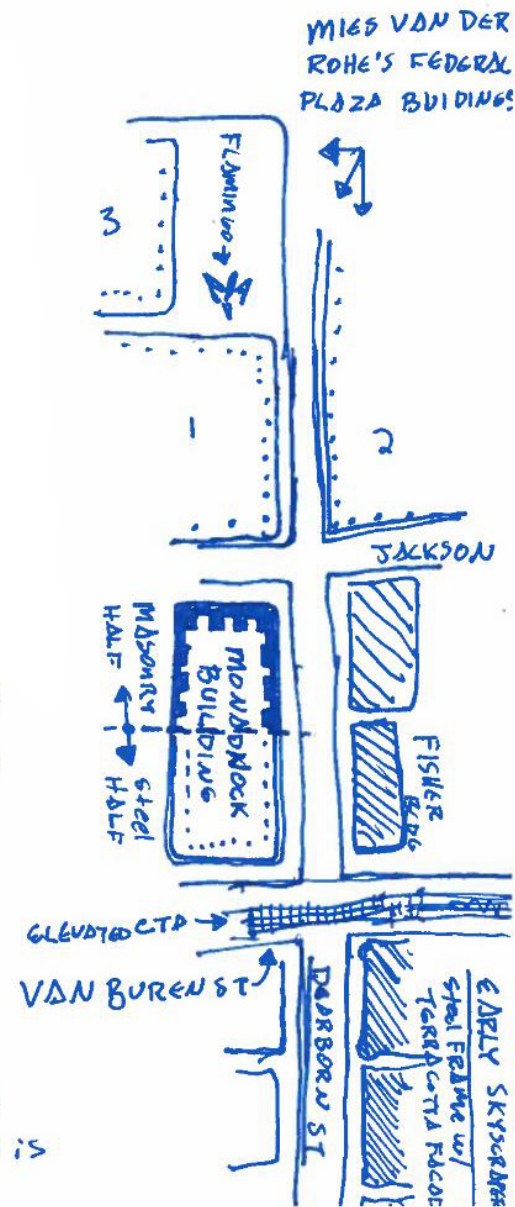
The River  
The Loop  
Oak St Beach  
Viagra Triangle  
Washington Park (near my home)  
and my workplace on  
Michigan Ave.

When trying to picture the whole city, it's hard for me to pinpoint anything specifically memorable. I more so picture places that are familiar to me, no matter how unimportant to the greater image of Chicago.

From Michigan  
Chicago resident for 1 year



THIS STRETCH OF DEARBORN STREET SHOWCASES THE TECHNOLOGICAL + HISTORIC STRUGGLE OF MASTERING THE FIRST SKYSCRAPERS; AND THE TRIUMPHANT + SOARING FEDERAL TOWERS DISPLAY THE END RESULT OF 80 YEARS OF CHICAGO'S DESIGN COMMUNITY WORKING THRU THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING THE WORLD'S FIRST SKYSCRAPER CITY. IT IS AN AMAZING FEW BLOCKS OF HISTORY.



From Louisiana

Chicago resident for 5 years

Diverse community with various ethnic backgrounds, religion, sexual orientation, food, music, "artistic" expression.

I feel safe/home when I'm outside, roaming the streets of Chicago.

Everyone is enjoying their company, time and view.

Chicago resident for 25+ years

I grew up in Chicago, so most of my earliest memories were as a kid and our neighborhood where we would hang out and play with our friends. As an adult, I moved to the suburbs, but when I think about the place “Chicago” the strongest images are of my neighborhood as a kid growing up.

We lived in a typical Chicago street lined with small, Chicago-style bungalow houses, tightly packed a few feet apart from each other. Most houses had a front porch and a tree in front. The houses were all similar in character but each uniquely different. Looking at them now, as an architect, they are very modest and feel very quaint, but I didn't think that growing up.

Streets were one way and narrow, cars parked on both sides of the street, but as a kid they were wide enough to play football on. Every house had a small yard, a detached garage and an alley that we would use as a short cut to meet up with friends from the next block over, which would typically require hopping a few fences to avoid walking around the block. Short cuts through neighbors' yards were common.

We would walk a few blocks to school every day, no parents would escort us or drop anyone off in a car, everyone just walked. In the summer, we would ride our bikes and meet up with friends at the park and play baseball. Street lights came on when it started to get dark, which is when we were told we needed to come home.

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, YES/NO?



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, YES/NO?



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



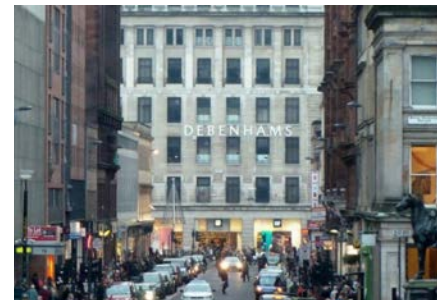
YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO



YES  NO

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



Miami, FL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Water Skyline of high-rises Tones of gray, blue & white
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 60%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	60 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 40%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	40 %	



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	100 %	Main Features Street Lamp post High-rises Tones of gray & beige Jewelers Building
	NO	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	0 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	100 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	0 %	



Lisbon, Portugal

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	Main Features Houses with party-wall Black and white balustrades Pastel tones of pink & yellow
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	10 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	90 %	



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Water Trees Skyline of high- & mid-rise Tones of red, beige, blue & black Sears Tower & CNA "Big Red"
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	100 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	0 %	

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Trees House with corner turret, balcony, and steep hip roof Romanesque revival Brown masonry
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 57%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	57 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 43%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	43 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	100 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	0 %	



San Francisco, CA

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Street Mixed-use buildings with party-walls Tones of brown, gray & beige
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	90 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	10 %	



Glasgow, Scotland

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Street Large mixed-use buildings Tones of gray & brown Half of Duke Wellington Statue
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	



Toronto, Canada

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Water Skyline of high-rises Tones of blue & beige
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 20%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	20 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 80%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	80 %	

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



San Francisco, CA

Never been:	YES	0 %	Main Features
	NO	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	
Local:	YES	35 %	
	NO	65 %	



Gothenburg, Sweden

Never been:	YES	0 %	Main Features
	NO	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	
Local:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	0 %	Main Features
	NO	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	33 %	
	NO	67 %	
Local:	YES	85 %	
	NO	15 %	



New York City, NY

Never been:	YES	67 %	Main Features
	NO	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	33 %	
	NO	67 %	
Local:	YES	70 %	
	NO	30 %	

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



Paris, France

Never been:	YES	0 %	Main Features
	NO	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	17 %	
	NO	83 %	
Local:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	



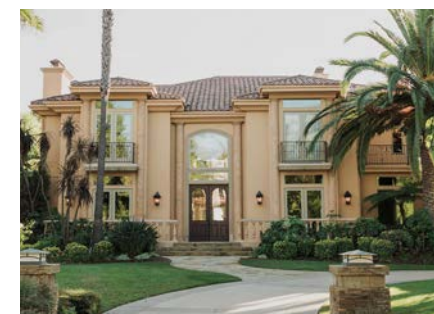
Warsaw, Poland

Never been:	YES	67 %	Main Features
	NO	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	29 %	
	NO	71 %	
Local:	YES	30 %	
	NO	70 %	



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	33 %	Main Features
	NO	67 %	
Visitor:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	
Local:	YES	70 %	
	NO	30 %	



Beverly Hills, CA

Never been:	YES	0 %	Main Features
	NO	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	0 %	
	NO	100 %	
Local:	YES	5 %	
	NO	95 %	

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 75%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	75 %	Main Features Water Street Edge of skyline with high-, mid-, & low-rises Tones of blue, gray, beige & brown
	NO	<div style="width: 25%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	25 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	90 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	10 %	



Singapore

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	Main Features Water Pier Skyline of high-rises Tones of gray, white & blue
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 30%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	30 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 70%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	70 %	



Hamburg, Germany

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	Main Features Villa in classical revival style Trees & shrubbery Tones of white, black & green
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	



San Francisco, CA

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	Main Features Street crossing Mid- & high-rises Flatiron corner building in beaux-arts style The Columbus Tower Tones of green, white, blue & red
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	10 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	90 %	

DOES THE IMAGE LOOK LIKE CHICAGO, RESULTS



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	100 %	Main Features Beaux-arts style building in limestone High-rises in background Chicago Cultural Center Tones of beige & gray
	NO	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	0 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	50 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 50%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	50 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	90 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	10 %	



Brighton, England

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	Main Features Row of town houses down hill Brick chimneys Water Ferris wheel Bright tones of green, pink, plue, orange & yellow
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	0 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	100 %	



Berlin, Germany

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	Main Features Row of contemporary town houses / apartments Tones of gray, beige & brown
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	33 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	67 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 40%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	40 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 60%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	60 %	



Chicago, IL

Never been:	YES	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	67 %	Main Features Row of brick 2-flats Front yards & sidewalk Tones of brown & green
	NO	<div style="width: 33%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	33 %	
Visitor:	YES	<div style="width: 83%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	83 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 17%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	17 %	
Local:	YES	<div style="width: 90%; background-color: #808080;"></div>	90 %	
	NO	<div style="width: 10%; background-color: #ff0000;"></div>	10 %	



WHICH STYLES/TYPES DO YOU ASSOCIATE MOST WITH CHICAGO HOMES? CHOOSE 5



Workers Cottage



American Four-Square



Queen Anne



Art Deco



Greystone



Colonial Revival



Two Flat / Multiflat



Brick Bungalow



Italianate



Tudor Revival



Prairie School



International Style

WHICH STYLES DO YOU ASSOCIATE MOST WITH LARGER CHICAGO BUILDINGS? CHOOSE 5



Commercial Style



Brutalism



Postmodernism



Art Deco



Romanesque



Contemporary



Beaux Arts



Mid-Century Modernism



Structural Expressionism



Gothic Revival



Deconstructivism



International Style

WHICH STYLES/TYPES DO YOU ASSOCIATE MOST WITH CHICAGO HOMES? RESULTS

Never been:



Visited:

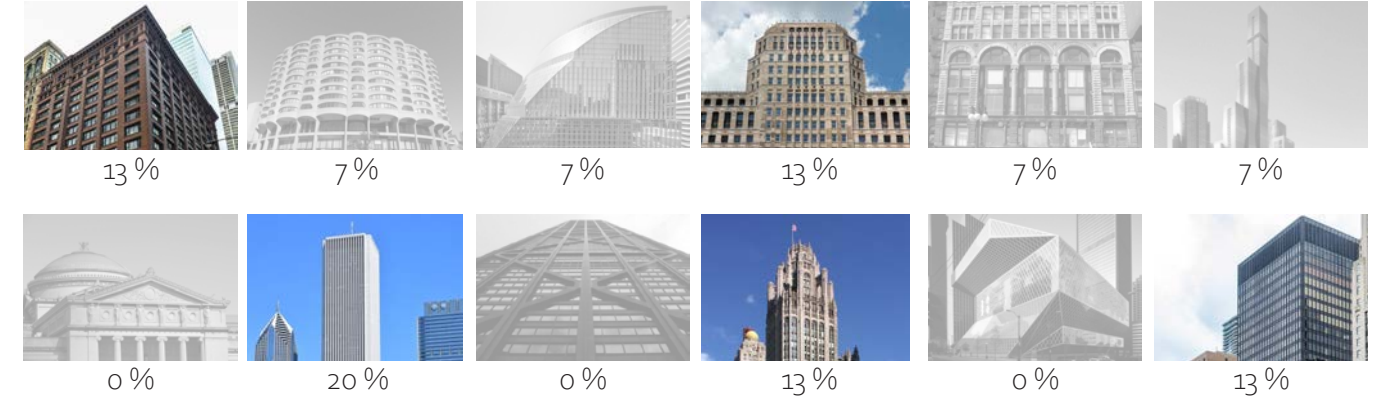


Local:

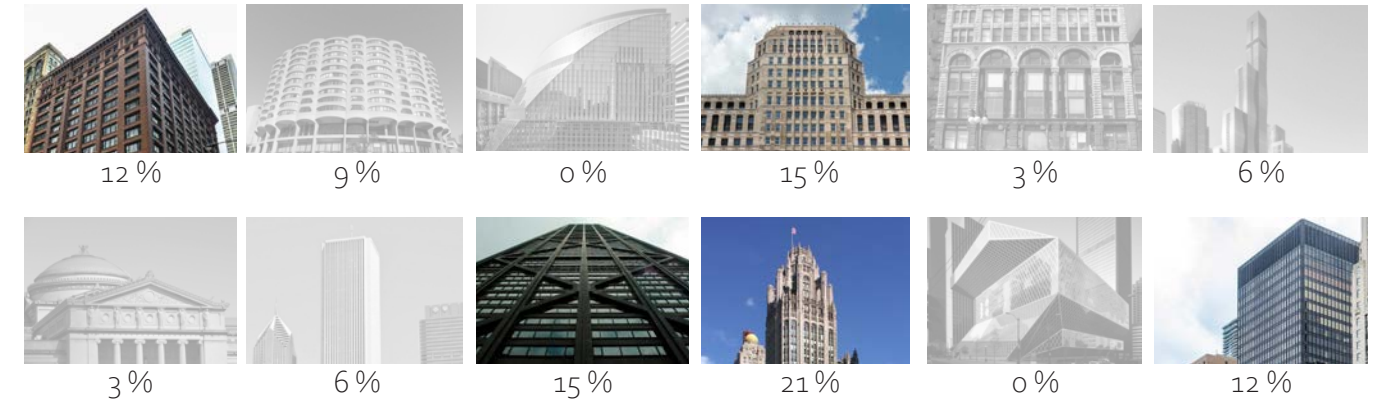


WHICH STYLES DO YOU ASSOCIATE MOST WITH LARGER CHICAGO BUILDINGS? RESULTS

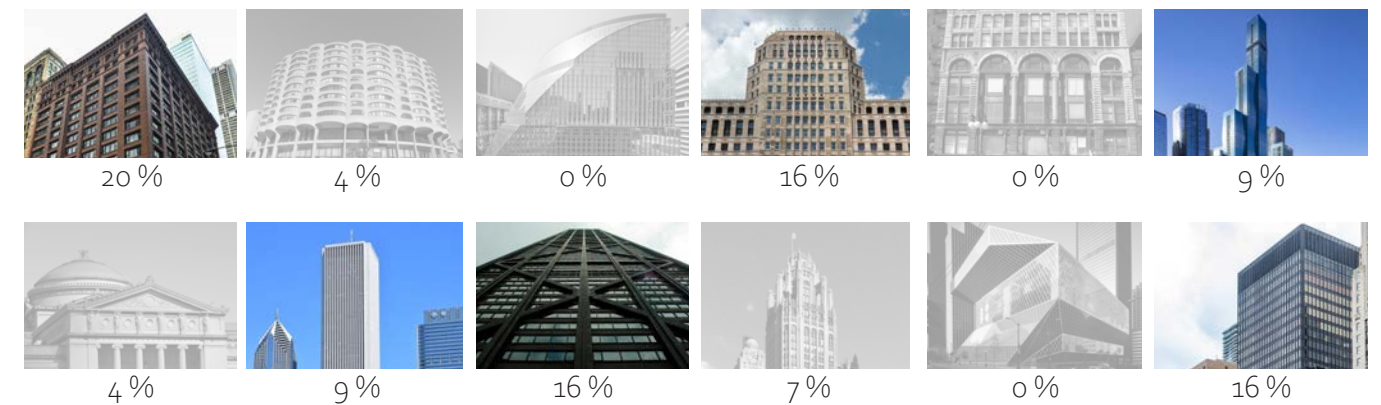
Never been:



Visited:



Local:



# 04

## FIELD STUDY

Inspired by the *dérive* of the Situationists, I wanted to study the city without too many preconceived ideas and plans for my observations. I did not want this book to be another architecture tour, which I would still recommend taking, but wanted my research to look beyond the things that already exist within the brand of Chicago.

The *dérive* was established by Guy Debord as a method for wandering through cities without the everyday causes for movement from a point A to B, but instead letting oneself be guided by atmosphere and intrigue.

Though mine wasn't fundamentally an unplanned journey, following the tracks of a train was an effective way of seeing the city more open-mindedly. It allowed for being surprised by the things I came across rather than hunting to find certain icons or staying on the route that I follow in my daily life, all while ensuring that I wandered across a larger span of the city.

There are far too many structures in the city to choose from, so each selection of my recordings should reflect the variety of architectural styles and typologies that can be found in each area, prioritizing the structures that best reflect my aesthetic experience of the place and that are most present in my memory. Each structure is presented in both linework and color blocking, to visually analyze the architectural use of detail, form, and colors.

In some areas I have come across materials and typologies that tell deeper stories about the city, its people and history, and so deserved some further description. Look for these on the gray pages.

## THE BROWN LINE

Wanting to examine something uniquely Chicagoan, I have been fascinated by the grid structure of the city and the neighborhoods, both boundless and evolving in their nature and sadly too vast to cover in just one year of studies.

Though the streets in the grid are interesting due to their seemingly endless length and span through the city, I've found that the streets lack the ability to form a definitive identity of space for this very reason. The sense of culture forms in a space that doesn't show up on one single street, which in Chicago can be up to 24 miles / 39 km long. In contrast, the walkable street circuitry, dead ends, and plazas of the average European city tend to create more centers and edges, defining spatial neighborhoods, gathering spaces, and local identities.

**My theory is that the spaces of local identities in Chicago can be found along the historic transportation network of the city: the nodes of the elevated train lines.**

From the beginning, Chicago was a city built around transportation. Located between two major waterways, close to many natural resources, as well as fertile farmland, Chicago was founded on the dream of becoming "the gate of the empire" (quote by Robert LaSalle).

Soon becoming the fastest growing city in the world, the vast expansion of the built area encouraged a larger and more efficient transportation system. 1848 brought the completion of both the Illinois and Michigan Canal and Chicago's first railroad connection to the East Coast. This was not only an industrial advantage, but permitted settlements well beyond the urban borders. The network of tracks radiating from Chicago shaped settlement patterns across the region and nation, and the city came to be the most important railroad center in North America, even today.

From boats, to trains, to horsecar lines and cable cars, the decentralization of the city's infrastructure and industrial capacity was what saved Chicago from complete devastation following the Great Fire of 1871.

When the World's Columbian Exposition came to Chicago in 1893, the third-rail electrical power system was one of many new inventions to be presented. The same technology that is used on Chicago's elevated trains today and in many transportation networks across the world, was used to power a train to transport guests around the fair. The electric technology was cheaper to operate than cable cars and could support larger trains, thereby accommodating more passengers. By 1906, all of Chicago's street railways converted from cable to electrical power, including the oldest sections of Chicago's elevated train network from 1892.

Before the construction of the Union Loop, which connected the different lines of the "L" in a circular route around downtown, each line had its own terminal on the edges of downtown and served different areas and communities of Chicago.

Chicago's elevated train system, aka the "L", is the second busiest rapid transit system in the US, following the New York City Subway. Beyond its part in the growth of the city's core, the elevated train network is one of the most distinguishing visual features of Chicago, including on screen. It was even voted to be one of the "seven wonders of Chicago" in a 2005 poll by the Chicago Tribune - ahead of the Willis/Sears Tower.

During the interwar period, particularly during the building boom of the 1920's, Chicago experienced an urban spatial transformation. The Loop, the city's central business district, became denser and more intensive in land use, while the outskirts of the city saw lower-density residential development.

Over time, the expansion of new residential districts and the increasing use of cars also stimulated the emergence of regional shopping and business centers. The most notable centers were located at elevated stations and offered a range of urban services, such as department

stores, specialty shops, movie theaters, and more. They became smaller versions of downtown that catered to the local population, solidifying the impact of public transportation nodes on the urban fabric.

The goal for my field study of Chicago through the elevated train network is not to focus on the train itself, but to follow the train line to find and analyze the visual intersections, connections, and particularities throughout the city. Because of a need of reasonable limits, I have chosen to focus exclusively on the Brown Line, the train that acts as a transition between the two main parts of my daily life: being at home and at work.

Opened on the 1st of August in 1949, the current route of the Brown Line runs between Kimball and The Loop through a total of 27 stops and 7 out of Chicago's 77 official community areas.

The 8 Brown Line stops I have chosen to highlight in this book run through or near the community areas and neighborhoods of The Loop, River North, Sheffield Neighbors, Lincoln Park, Lakeview, Boystown, Roscoe Village, and Albany Park.

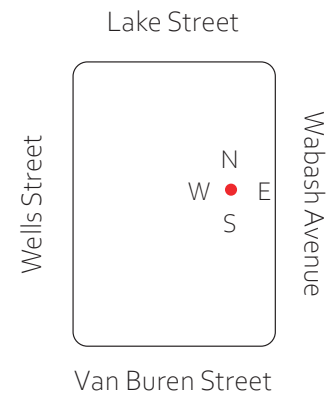
At each stop I have highlighted 5-6 buildings that embody the aesthetic experience of the area.

## THE LOOP

The Loop is a unique area of downtown Chicago defined by a 1.79 mile/2.88 km long circuit of elevated train lines. All 8 Loop stops are found within a small area in the city center where the train tracks run in a literal rectangular loop rather than travelling in one main direction.

Seven out of the eight "L" train lines in the city connect to these elevated tracks, with four lines running the whole loop, and two lines running in subways through the middle with transfers to the elevated stations. Only the Yellow Line does not connect to the Loop.

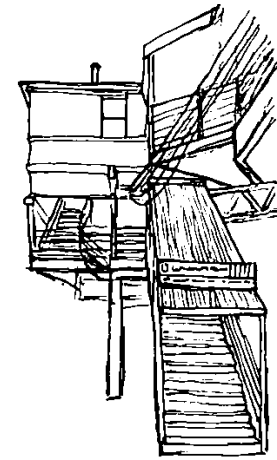
The bounding streets of the Loop tracks are:



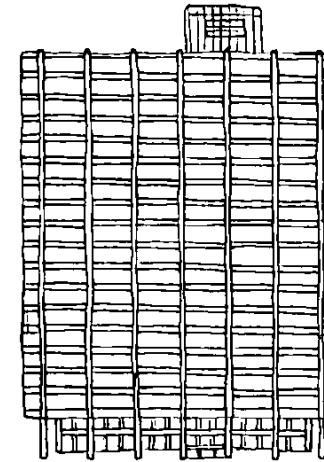
The Loop encircles the intersection of Madison St and State St which acts as the point of origin for all streets in the Chicago grid, making it the directional center of the city. More information on the grid can be found on page 21.

Furthermore, the Loop neighborhood is the city's commercial core and ranks as the second largest business district in North America after Midtown Manhattan in New York City. After most of this area was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1871, the Loop became home to some of the world's earliest skyscrapers. Later, the financial hub boasted the tallest building in the world for many years (Willis / Sears Tower, 1973).

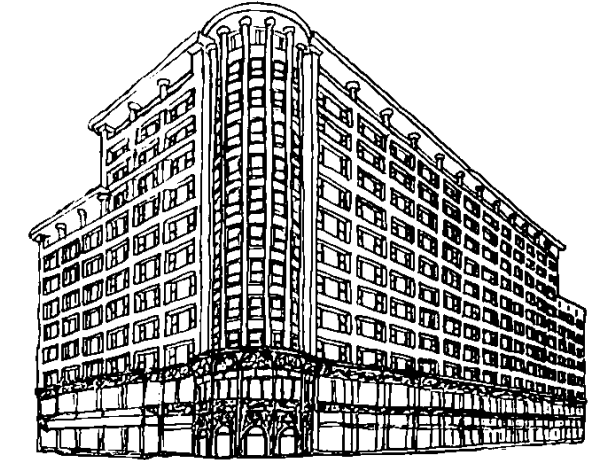
Chicago's Loop is still highly regarded for its architecture, making it a natural starting point for most visitors of the city as well as my field studies. The area and vicinity is famous for the lakefront parks - home to Cloud Gate (aka The Bean), the Theatre District, the cultural center, the Art Institute of Chicago, the eastern terminus of Route 66, the Chicago Board of Trade Building, and much more. The Loop is a pivotal part of the cultural image of the city.



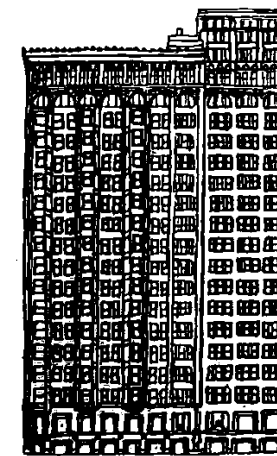
S La Salle St. /  
W Van Buren St.



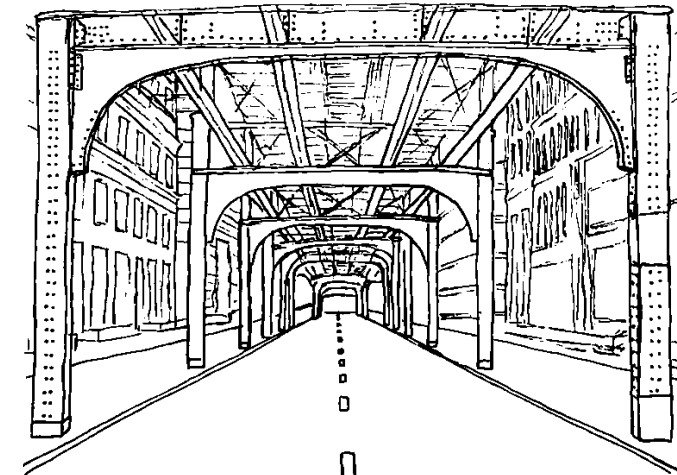
30 W Monroe St



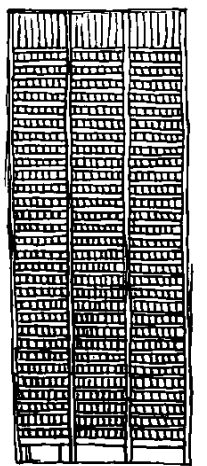
1 S State St



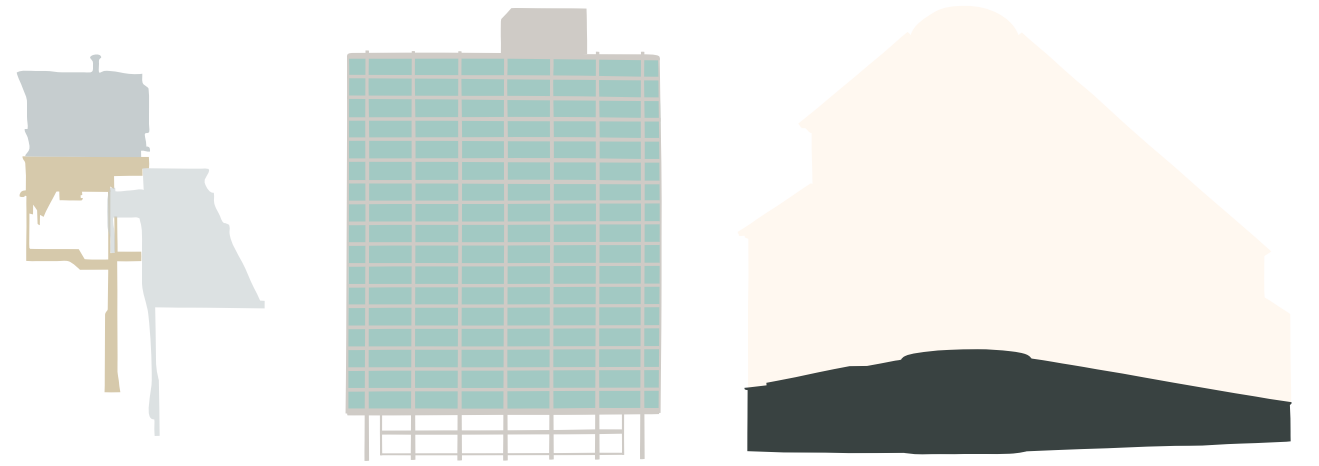
343 S Dearborn St



Wabash Ave



50 W Washington St



## THE SKYSCRAPER

Chicago is famously known for its dramatic skyline of high-rise buildings and is often accredited as the birthplace of the world's first skyscraper. This revolution in architecture did not happen in Chicago by coincidence.

Chicago was among the fastest growing cities of the 19th century, growing from an estimated 100 people in 1830 to being the fourth-largest city in the world by 1895 with a population of approximately 1,420,000.

While the Illinois prairie offered plenty of space to house the growing population, the city's commerce was concentrated in a small district near the Chicago River. The river was expanded by the 96-mile-long Illinois and Michigan Canal (completed in 1848) to connect the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River, offering great trading advantages during the nation's expansion to the west. As the space in the commercial district became a premium, the aspirational feats of engineering and architecture in the city went skywards.

When 17,500 buildings, predominantly in the city center, were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, a third of the city's wealth was reduced to ashes and dumped into Lake Michigan as landfill. The then recent developments in fireproof construction, Otis's safety elevator (1857), and the mass-production of high quality, low-cost steel by the English Bessemer Converter (1856)

gave Chicago the opportunity to restore and surpass its former glory, building higher than ever before.

Until the 1850's, the standard height of commercial and residential buildings topped at five stories. Thirteen years after the Fire, in 1884, the 10-story Home Insurance Company building, designed by William Le Baron Jenney, was completed on the corner of LaSalle and Adams Street (in the Loop). Later accredited as the world's first skyscraper and the first tall building to be supported both inside and outside by a fireproof structural steel frame, the Home Insurance Company Building was the tallest building in the world until the completion of the Eiffel Tower in 1889. Dressed in renaissance style terracotta and stonework, appearing to be a conventional masonry building, the 138 ft/42 m high building weighed only a third of an equivalent solid brick or stone building, giving it a great structural advantage.

The following economic boom and further advances in engineering and architecture meant that the Home Insurance Company building, although historically significant, was demolished and replaced by the 54-story Field Building in 1931, in the popular contemporary style of Art Deco.

In the new age of architecture in the 20th century, style was at the forefront of debate among both architects and the public.

Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, a former assistant to William Le Baron Jenney and later employer and mentor to Frank Lloyd Wright, developed designs for skyscrapers emphasizing their verticality. Sullivan earned such a grand reputation, that he is known as the "father of the skyscraper" and "father of Modernism". Sullivan is also credited with coining the famous phrase "form follows function" which became the ideology of the Modern Movement.

Both Sullivan and Jenney were key members in the First Chicago School of Architecture, whose designs united structural and decorative qualities, particularly of iron and steel with stone and terra cotta, in a stylistic mix of Art Nouveau and Richardsonian Romanesque.

Years later, the Modernist pioneer and director of the prolific Bauhaus school, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, found his home in Chicago 4 years after the Bauhaus' exile from Nazi Germany in 1933 to become the Dean of Architecture at what is now called the Illinois Institute of Technology. It was in Chicago that Mies created his first examples of International Style and came to influence a generation of architects in Chicago and the world. The Miesian style with rectilinear structural materials of steel or reinforced concrete and vast expanses of glass, came to



be known as the Second Chicago School by the 1960's

The first large firm to design steel and glass high-rises in accordance with the Second Chicago School was Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) - most famous in Chicago for the wedge shaped 875 North Michigan Ave (formerly John Hancock Center) from 1969, and the city's tallest building, the 110-story Willis (formerly Sears) Tower from 1974.

In fact, the Willis Tower was the world's tallest building for nearly 25 years until 1998 and remains the third tallest building in the Western Hemisphere after 49 years. The bundled tube structural system, invented by SOM partner Fazlur Khan and first ever used in the Willis Tower, is the very same engineering technique used in

the Burj Khalifa (also designed by SOM) and most worldwide practices in the design of tall buildings today.

Located one street west of the elevated Loop tracks on Wells St, the Willis Tower is visible from many parts of the city and beyond. The interesting visual effect of skyscrapers in a city is the dramatic backdrop they make, both near and far. Their full scale and design is better understood from a distance, setting them apart from a more human-scale low-rise environment.

## MERCHANDISE MART

Located on the north bank of the Chicago River, the Merchandise Mart is the only building on the Brown Line with its own elevated train stop. Once the largest building in the world for over a decade, with more than 4 million square feet/372 thousand square meters of floor space and a footprint of two whole city blocks, the grand example of American Art Deco architecture from 1930 is just one of many famous and architecturally significant buildings that can be found on this relatively short stretch of water.

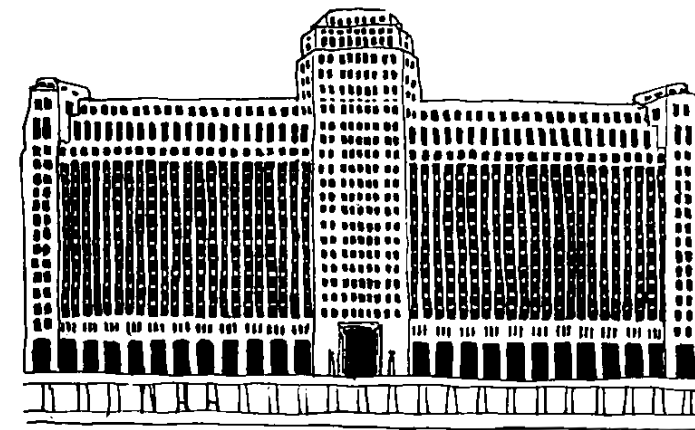
The history of riverfront architecture in Chicago dates back to the city's early days in the mid-19th century when it rapidly grew as a transportation and industrial hub. Initially, the riverfront was heavily industrialized, with warehouses, factories, and bustling ports dominating the scene. However, as the city evolved, urban planners and architects recognized the potential of the riverfront as a prime location for commercial, residential, and recreational development.

Chicago is renowned for its pioneering role in the development of skyscrapers, and the riverfront is a testament to this architectural legacy. The Marina City complex, designed by architect Bertrand Goldberg in the 1960s, is an eye-catching brutalist example of the iconic variety in Chicagoan high-rise architecture.

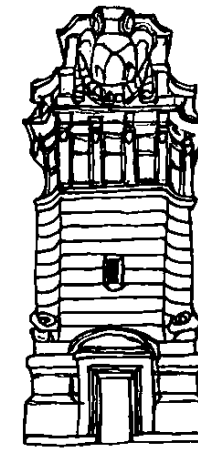
One of the most significant riverfront architectural endeavors was the construction of Wacker Drive in the early 20th century. This project, conceived and led by architect and urban planner Daniel H. Burnham, aimed to revamp the city's riverfront and alleviate traffic congestion by building a double-decker roadway along the river. Wacker Drive became an engineering marvel and showcased a blend of classical and Beaux-Arts architectural styles, with numerous maroon colored bascule bridges spanning the river.

A more recent addition to the riverfront is the Chicago Riverwalk, created throughout the early 2000's as a pedestrian extension of the Wacker Drive reconstruction project. Stretching along the south bank of the river, the Riverwalk offers an array of amenities, including restaurants, cafes, boat docks, and public art installations, making it a popular destination for both residents and visitors.

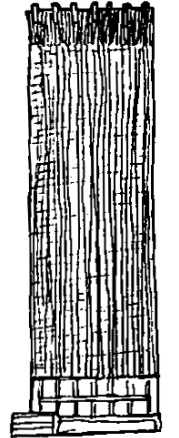
The riverfront architecture in Chicago is not just about aesthetics and functionality; it reflects the city's evolution from an industrial powerhouse to a vibrant and forward-thinking urban center. The blend of historical and modern architectural styles creates a dynamic landscape that remains a symbol of Chicago's cultural and architectural identity.



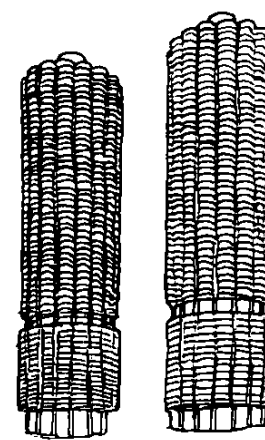
222 W Merchandise Mart Plaza



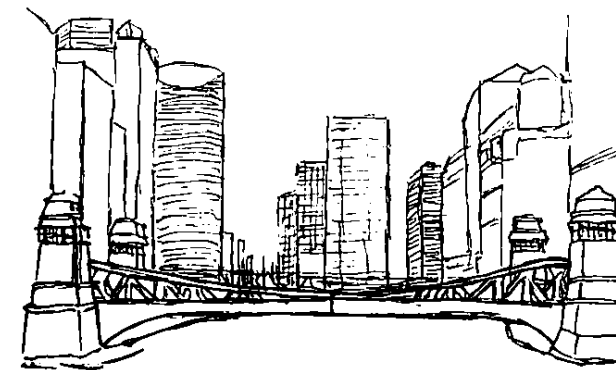
N LaSalle Dr Bridge House



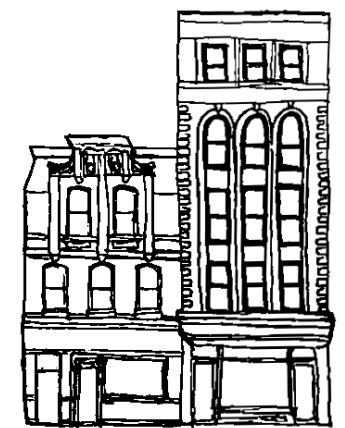
300 N LaSalle Dr



300 N State St

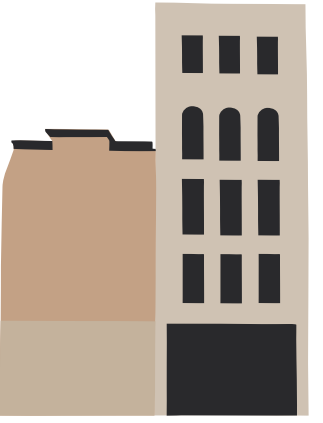
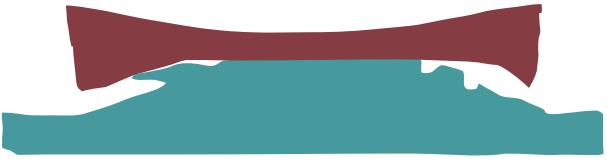


Bascule bridge across the Chicago River



208 W Kinzie St





## TERRA COTTA

The Merchandise Mart is one of many buildings in Chicago with a cladding of architectural terra cotta. Commonly associated with the orange-brown color of natural iron in the clay, the glazed material appears in countless colors and decorative finishes across the city, as it played a significant role in the architectural style of Chicago from 1880 through the 1930's.

After the Great Fire in 1871, engineers began a search for more fire-resistant building materials when it was found that cast iron structures often failed and stone and brick would crack in extreme heat. With skyscrapers on the rise, another criteria for building materials was for them to be light-weight, cheap, and preferably easy to ornament. Terra cotta cladded steel was the answer. Not only is terra cotta flame resistant and far lighter than brick or stone masonry, it is also much easier to sculpt and assemble, making delicate tracery work, like that of the Rookery Building, possible.

The Rookery Building is just one of many examples of the use of terra cotta in the First Chicago School of Architecture, making it a common feature in large scale commercial projects in the city center.

Through glazing techniques, terra cotta could be made in an impressive variety of colors and finishes. Besides pushing architecture towards new stylistic possibilities, it was also popularly used to

convincingly mimick far more expensive building materials and traditional styles. Terra cotta can be disguised to look like granite, limestone, marble and even metals, all without needing polishing to maintain the material's sheen. More than any other material, terra cotta could be tailored and customized to complete a building's architectural expression.

The use of color in architecture slowly transitioned from monochromatic color schemes, to being used to articulate building details, and through the 1910's and 20's being used for its own aesthetic value. Using color to draw peoples' attention popularized the use of colored terra cotta in entryways, street-level facades, cornices and lobbies. Terra cotta motifs and symbols were also frequently used to reflect the function of a building, each piece of decoration molded, fired, and glazed by skilled craftsmen.

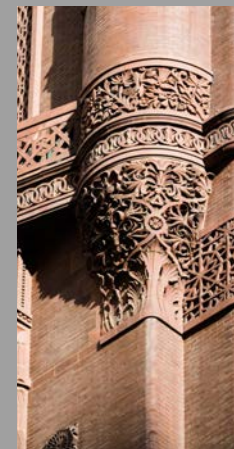
Art Deco marked the beginning of more streamlined ornamental styles, favoring a flatter look that was made possible by machine-extruded terra cotta. These new pieces could be made in larger sizes and required less hand labor, making them both easier to install and cheaper per piece, dramatically reducing the total construction time and cost. By the late 1920's, machine-extruded terra cotta facilitated a use of color on a scale that had previously been impossible, as seen in the bottle green

facade of the 38-story Carbide and Carbon building. The material qualities and versatility of terra cotta enabled the material to adapt to the many styles and heights of the evolving skyscraper.

Until the arrival of the Second Chicago School, that is. Architects like Mies van der Rohe introduced a new style of architecture, favoring the mass-produced machine products of metal, glass, and cement. Though terra cotta could achieve the same unornamented lines, flat surfaces, and even material finishes of metal and cement, these new machine materials were available in much larger quantities and were less labor-intensive in construction and installation. Many former

users also came to reject terra cotta for the fear of being deemed old-fashioned. The majority of architectural terra cotta being manufactured today is replacement pieces used in historic preservation.

Nevertheless, terra cotta is an important feature that can be found in most Chicago neighborhoods. Many older structures, such as courtyard apartment blocks, have decorative terra cotta insets, columns, capitals, parapets, or Sullivan-esque tracery panels. Commercial structures such as old movie palaces are also commonly fully cladded in ornate terra cotta façades.



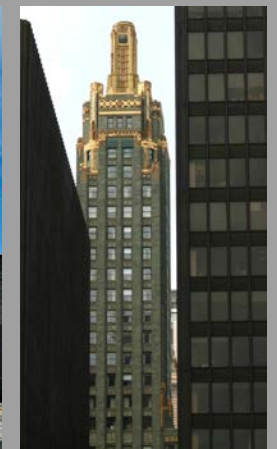
ROOKERY BUILDING  
(1888)



RELIANCE BUILDING  
(1895)



WRIGLEY BUILDING  
(1924)



CARBIDE & CARBON  
BUILDING (1929)

## CHICAGO

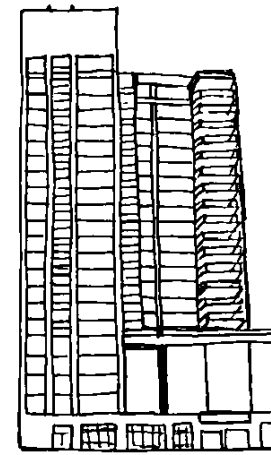
Situated in the heart of Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood on the arterial Chicago Avenue, the area near the Chicago station features a mix of architectural styles, ranging from Victorian homes to modern high-rise buildings.

In the 19th century, the neighborhood was predominantly residential, with a mix of working-class immigrants, industrial warehouses, and vibrant entertainment venues. Over time, the area's character evolved as industrialization and urbanization took hold.

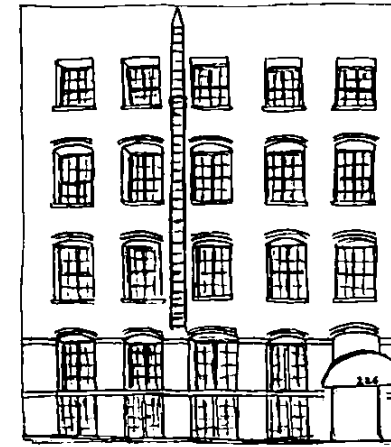
During the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, much of the Near North Side was devastated, leading to extensive rebuilding efforts and architectural transformations. The subsequent decades saw the rise of grand mansions, theaters, and commercial establishments, shaping the neighborhood's identity. The creative spirit of the community truly came to life in the 1970s and 1980s when artists and entrepreneurs repurposed dormant factories and industrial warehouses into inspiring workspaces. This artistic renaissance not only injected new life into the neighborhood but also paved the way for a wave of innovative businesses, solidifying the Near North Side's reputation as a hub of creativity, commerce, and entrepreneurship.

The Cabrini-Green housing development was once part of this neighborhood, though much of it has since been redeveloped. The development was constructed in the mid-20th century as part of the city's efforts to provide affordable housing for low-income families. Initially, Cabrini-Green was seen as a positive step towards addressing the housing needs of the city's poor. However, over the years, it became infamous for its poor living conditions, high crime rates, and social issues. Over time, many of the Cabrini-Green high-rise buildings were demolished, and underwent redevelopment to create mixed-income housing communities. Today, the site of the former Cabrini-Green development has transformed into a mix of public, affordable, and market-rate housing. The redevelopment aimed to create a more integrated and sustainable community while still honoring the history and heritage of the neighborhood.

The vicinity around the Chicago station features a blend of residential buildings, ranging from historic townhouses to converted lofts and modern high-rise apartments. This eclectic mix of housing options creates a diverse community, accommodating young professionals, families, and students alike. The neighborhood's proximity to downtown and public transportation makes it an attractive choice for those seeking urban convenience and accessibility.



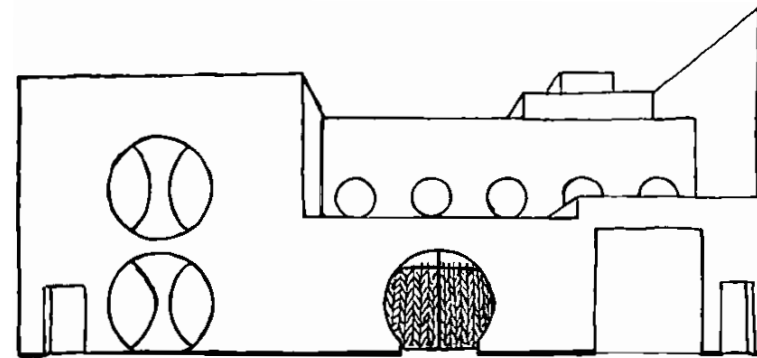
757 N Orleans St



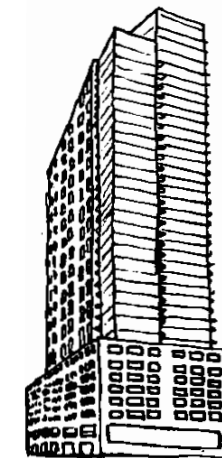
226 W Superior St



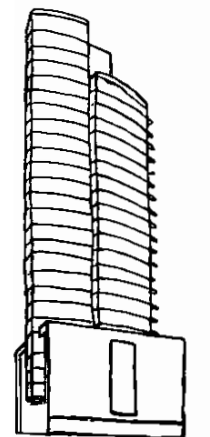
25 E Erie St



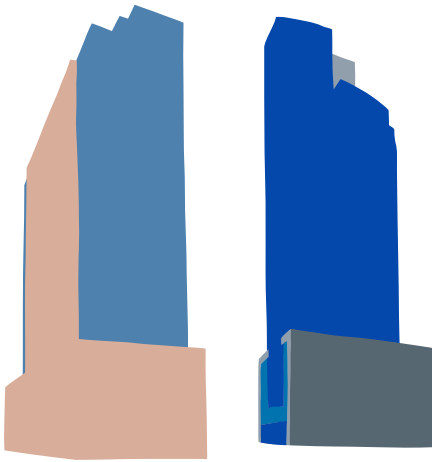
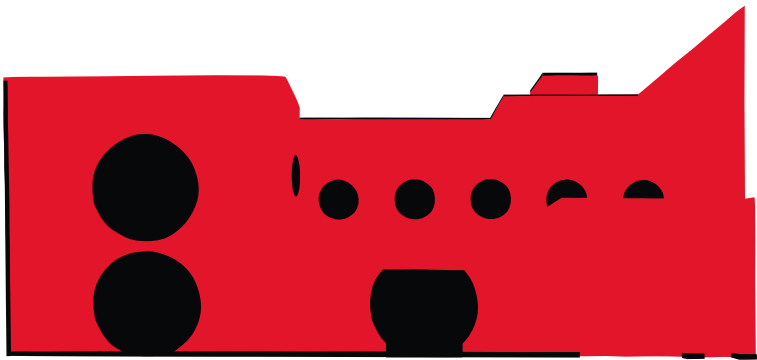
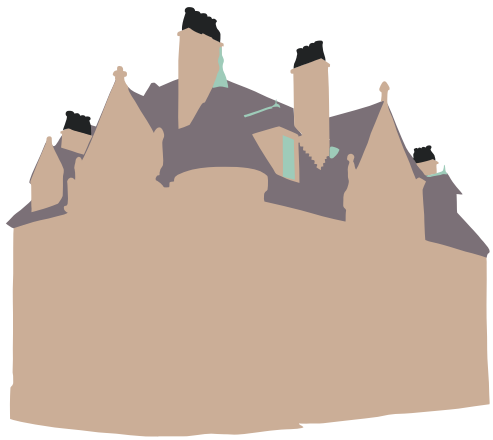
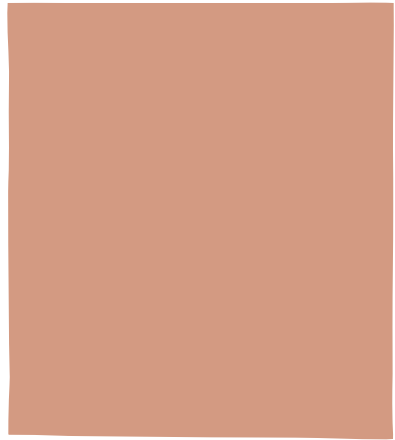
15 E Huron St



637 N Wells St



110 W Superior St



## ARMITAGE

Located in western Lincoln Park, the formal Historic District around the arterial roads of West Armitage Avenue and North Halsted Street is one of the most visually distinctive features for riders of the CTA Brown, Purple and Red line elevated trains. From a somewhat rural neighborhood at its annexation in 1850 to becoming one of the wealthiest communities in Chicago and the nation, the district has a rich architectural, social, and economic history.

Built predominantly between the 1870's and 1930's, the buildings within the district were designed using the major styles of Chicago's commercial development at the turn of the 20th century, including Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, Classical Revival, and Sullivanese. A small number of the buildings are wood-frame construction but most are of brick, given that they were built in the immediate period after the Great Fire.

The value of Chicago street frontage led to the construction of narrow and deep commercial buildings on building lots. In denser shopping areas like the Armitage-Halsted District, party-wall buildings formed a solid wall of buildings, similar to residential rowhouses. Most street intersections in nineteenth-century Chicago neighborhoods had individual commercial buildings, but arterial streets with public transportation had more densely concentrated areas of neighborhood commercial buildings, creating nodes of commerce that benefited from passengers transferring between lines.

The majority of the buildings in the district are mixed-use buildings, with first-floor commercial space and upper-floor apartments. Double entryways provide separate access to retail spaces and living quarters, and large display windows on the ground floor are offset by double hung sash windows in the masonry walls.

The district's commercial development happened mainly during the 1880's and 90's, with most buildings featuring their original cast iron window frames, posts, lintels, and detailing. Many of the buildings are embellished with brick, stone, and terra cotta, but most distinctive is the use of pressed metal in ornaments, bay windows, and turrets, as it was the peak of style in the late 1880's. The simpler buildings feature pressed metal cornices, while the more elaborate were given three-sided pressed metal bay windows or corner turrets facing street intersections.

These elements give the district a distinctive charm and beauty that is hard to find elsewhere in the city. The buildings have mostly retained their original character, and still reflect the different functions and tastes of their original owners and occupants, such as merchants, manufacturers, bankers, artists, and immigrants.



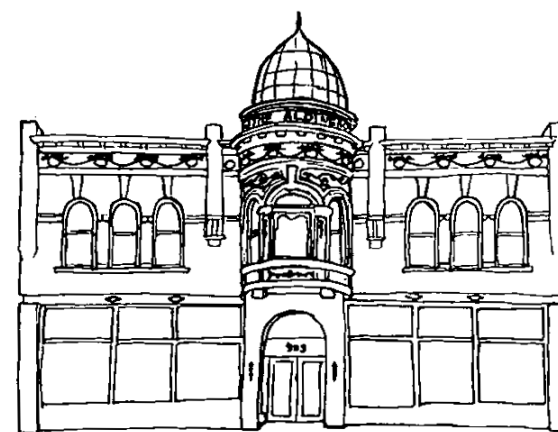
1170 W Armitage Ave.



917 W Armitage Ave.



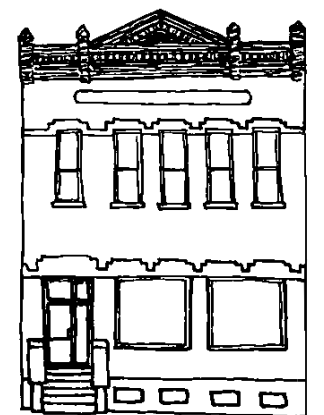
2018 N Seminary Ave.



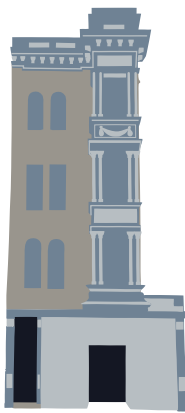
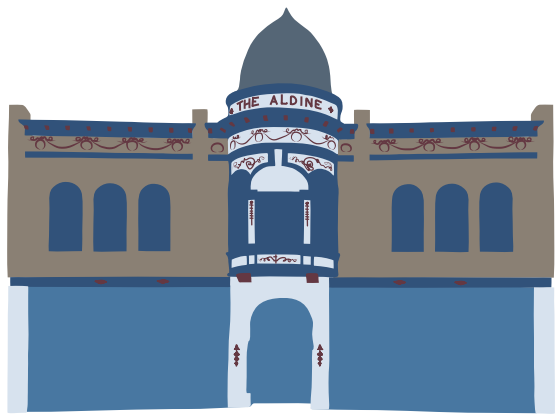
909 W Armitage Ave.



939 W Armitage Ave.



2128 N Halsted St.





## FULLERTON

As a key stop on the Brown Line, the Fullerton station in the Lincoln Park neighborhood plays a crucial role in Chicago's public transportation network. It provides connections to the Red and Purple train lines and several bus lines, facilitating easy travel throughout the city.

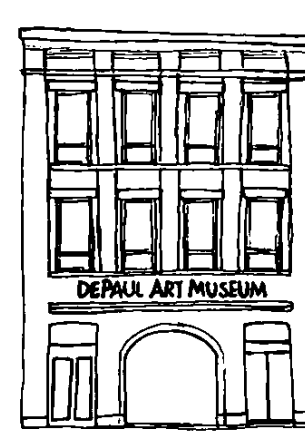
Lincoln Park was historically a haven for artists, musicians, and writers, and is still home to various cultural institutions that enrich the neighborhood's fabric. The DePaul University Lincoln Park Campus, situated by the Fullerton stop, contributes to the academic landscape of the community. Additionally, several theaters and performing arts centers, such as the Victory Gardens Theater, Lincoln Hall, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, offer an array of performances for music and theater enthusiasts.

The architectural landscape around the Fullerton stop is a blend of historic and modern buildings. Lincoln Park is renowned for its well-preserved historic architecture, featuring brownstones, Greystone buildings, and charming rowhouses dating back to the 19th and early 20th centuries. In contrast, the area also boasts modern apartment buildings and condominiums, showcasing the city's progressive approach to urban living.

Right off the Fullerton stop, adjacent to the campus of DePaul University, is a little oasis of McCormick Row Houses (bottom left image). The McCormick Row House Historic District was developed between 1883 and 1889, during a time when row houses were a popular housing choice in urban areas. They offered a cost-effective solution to accommodate the increasing number of residents moving to the city. Examples of row houses can be found across the whole city of Chicago, and several distinctive styles are present near Fullerton.

The older row houses facing Fullerton Ave. were designed in a simplified Queen Anne style by Colton & Son. This style appealed to the contemporary taste as society was turning away from the formalism of neo-classic styles. The American adaptation of Queen Anne homes frequently featured gabled roofs, overhanging eaves, dormers and asymmetric facades. Colton further simplified the style by omitting the large front porches, columns, detailed spindle work, oriel and bay windows, and painted balustrades commonly found on Queen Anne houses.

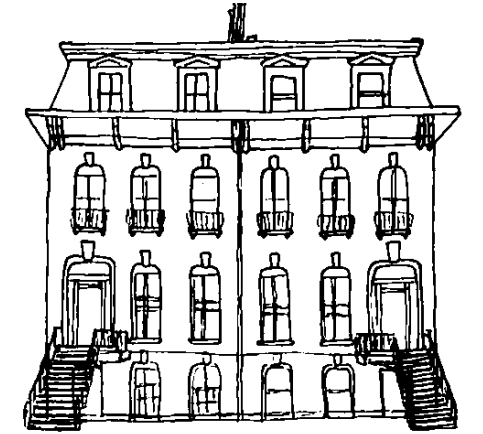
In the late 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhood underwent a period of gentrification and revitalization. The Lincoln Park community actively sought to preserve its historic buildings and green spaces, contributing to the neighborhood's cultural heritage and identity.



935 W Fullerton Ave.



1021 W Webster Ave.



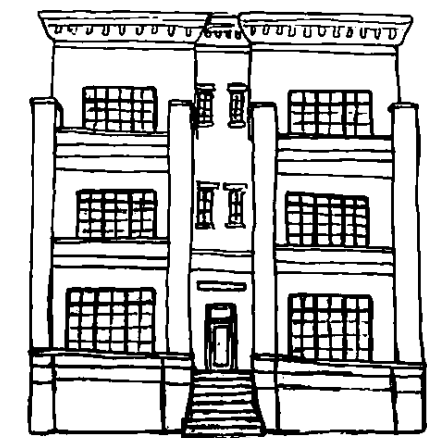
918 W Fullerton Ave.



901 W Fullerton Ave.

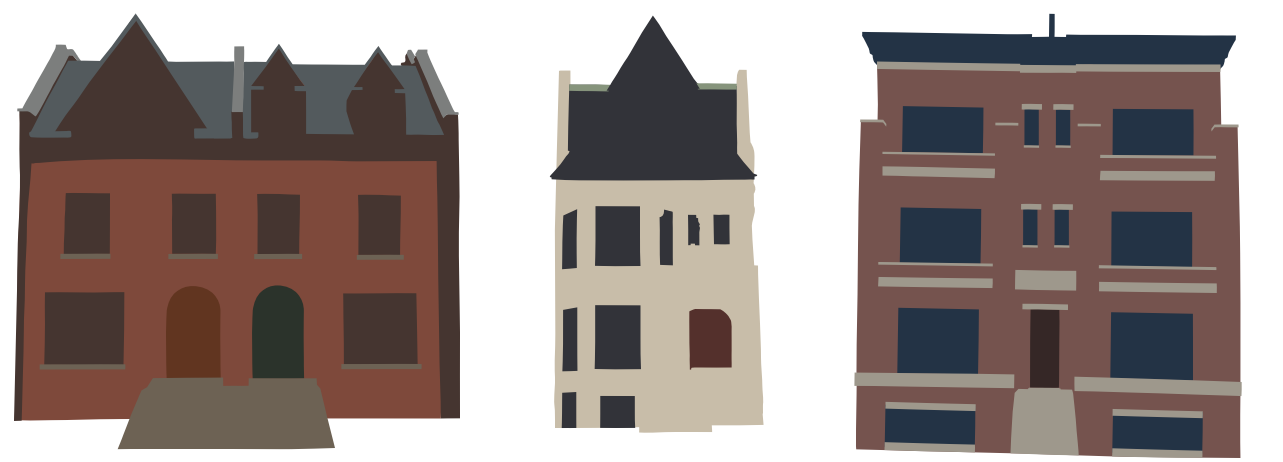


922 W Fullerton Ave.



2219 N Bissel St.





## THE MULTI-FLAT

2–4-unit buildings made up 25.6 % of Chicago’s housing stock as of 2021, only surpassed by 5+ unit buildings (29.8%) and ahead of single-family homes (25.1%) and condominiums (19.5%). While the city is known for its skyscrapers, the multi-flat and particularly the 2-flat is the true archetype of Chicago’s built environment outside of downtown.

Commonly a 2+ story building with a unit on each floor, a partially depressed basement, a round or square bay facing the street, and a façade of either brick or Greystone, this signature Chicago building straddles the line between an apartment building and single-family home.

As Chicago’s population grew throughout the late 1800’s, 1st generation European immigrants made up almost half of the city’s population. Most settlers lived in narrow one-story wood buildings, now named worker’s cottages, but as the population density rose - so did the need for denser housing, especially after many homes were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire.

While density was the priority, the appearance of single-family homes was still preferred in the early 1900’s. By stacking the units and placing the main door at a shared threshold, the multi-flats are hard to distinguish from larger single-family homes, giving a sense of cohesiveness and grandeur

that a street of smaller cottages can hardly match. The units gave the homeowners the opportunity to earn an extra income by renting out the additional space, making them a popular private investment and providing more affordable options for tenants. Furthermore, the consistency of stacked, duplicate apartments made the multi-flat easy to construct and replicate, while only needing small variations in the façade to have each building present as unique – a great advantage for builders, and plans and materials could be bought as customizable kits.

Between 1900 and 1920, the 2-flat came to dominate the predominantly Eastern European neighborhoods, as Bohemians (now part of the Czech Republic) became the lead builders of homes in the city. The money earned from building and renting out property funded a migration to their “Western Paradise” now known as Czech California, in the community areas of North and South Lawndale on Chicago’s west side. North-/southbound streets here were given names such as “Western”, “California”, “Francisco” and “Sacramento”. While the multi-flat is found in nearly every neighborhood outside of downtown, North and South Lawndale still contain the highest concentration of multi-flats at over 70 % of the housing stock and are leading the work in preservation and research of the building type.

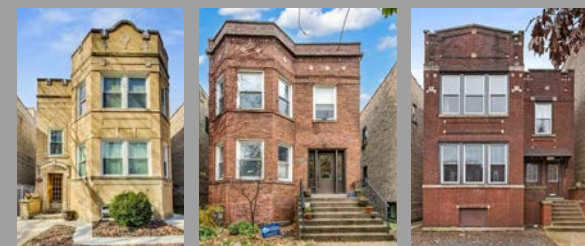
The layout of the two-flat is shaped according to the standard 25x125 foot lot size on the Chicago grid, making the units long and narrow from the front street to the back alley. The alley has always been mainly used for practical household functions like utility work and deliveries, making the back of the house the ideal spot for the kitchen, while spaces for entertaining guests typically face the street.

The partially depressed basement is common among many Chicago housing types as it was a product of the regional climate, geology and zoning regulations. Partially depressed, the basement dips just below the 4’ frost line and sits right above the water table, all while making the floor area more than 50% below the outside ground level and therefore not counting within maximum Floor Area Ratio calculations. The basement type has the additional effect of elevating the floors a half level above grade, creating a grander façade and granting the first floor more privacy from the street.

Though minimal brick facades are common for multi-flats, the more ornate Greystone is especially particular to Chicago.

The multi-flat Chicago Greystones are not to be confused with the Brownstones of New York. While both are townhouses with a similar shape and from around the same time period, the Brownstones were designed as single-family rowhomes for the middle class, standing shoulder to shoulder and traditionally featuring Italianate details, which was in style in the mid 19th-century.

The multi-flats are instead semi or fully detached townhouses built for a variety of classes, with the Greystones traditionally featuring the Romanesque style of the late 19th-century. The usual 2-3 foot gangway between the Chicago multi-flats lets air and light into the middle of the building and reveals that the sides and back of the exterior walls typically switch from the more ornate facade to a cheaper brick. This is a common feature for several housing types across the city



BRICK



GREYSTONE

## BELMONT

One of the most vibrant and diverse neighborhoods in Chicago is the area off of the Brown Line Belmont stop. It is situated in the heart of Lakeview, a neighborhood that was originally a township, annexed by Chicago in 1889. Lakeview was home to many immigrants, especially German and Swedish farmers, who built churches, schools, and businesses in the area. Lakeview also became a center for entertainment, with theaters, music halls, and amusement parks attracting visitors from all over the city, making it a popular summer resort for wealthy Chicagoans.

Lakeview's population and character changed again in the mid-20th century, when high-rise apartments and four-plus-ones (low-rise buildings with four units per floor) replaced many single-family homes and older buildings, mainly appealing to single people and childless couples.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many LGBTQ+ people moved to Lakeview, especially to the area around Belmont Ave and Halsted Street, where they found a safer and more welcoming environment than in other parts of the city. The name "Boystown" emerged in the 1980s, as a strip of gay bars and clubs developed along Halsted Street. In 1997, the city of Chicago officially recognized Boystown as the city's gay district, making it the oldest officially recognized gay neighborhood in the United States, and installed rainbow-colored pylons along the street to celebrate its identity and heritage. Today, this area is one of the most diverse and inclusive neighborhoods in Chicago, with a variety of ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and lifestyles represented.

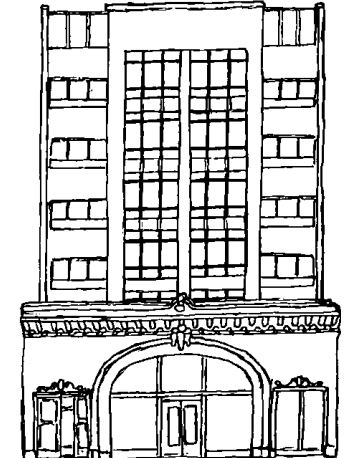
The neighborhood is known for its nightlife, with bars, clubs, restaurants, and theaters catering to different tastes and preferences. The neighborhood also hosts several festivals and events throughout the year, such as the Pride Parade, which celebrates LGBTQ+ culture and rights, the Lakeview East Festival of the Arts, which showcases local artists and performers, and the Northalsted Market Days, which is one of the largest outdoor street festivals in the country.



930 W Belmont Ave



716 W Briar Pl



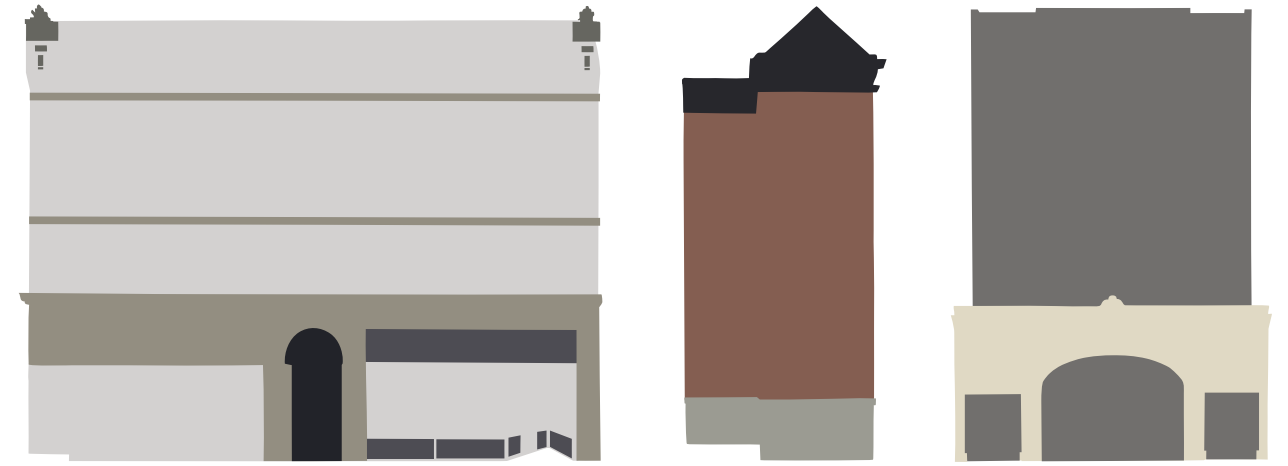
3226 N Clark St



532 W Belmont Ave



3411 N Halsted St



## THE COURTYARD

As Chicago grew rapidly in population and economy throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, many people moved to the city to seek opportunities and prosperity. These people were mostly young, single, or newly married professionals, clerks, salesmen, teachers, and nurses who wanted to live in comfortable and affordable housing near their workplaces and public transportation. Developing into a modern metropolis, new technologies and materials became available and affordable for residential construction in the city.

The Chicago courtyard building is a type of residential architecture that became massively popular in this time period. The multi-unit housing type developed in Chicago after the Tenement House Ordinance was created in 1902 and until the Stock Market Crash in 1929. Different from the high-density tenement buildings of New York City, land was less expensive in Chicago, giving new and unique multi-unit housing types a chance to develop. Because single family residences were still abundant and affordable in Chicago, multi-unit buildings had to have a domestic appeal to remain competitive.

The Chicago courtyard building is characterized by a U-shaped or L-shaped layout that creates a central courtyard

open to the street. It was designed to provide natural light, ventilation, and green space for the residents, as well as a sense of privacy and community. The building type is considered a distinctive feature of Chicago's urban fabric, and many examples can be found in neighborhoods such as Edgewater, Rogers Park, Hyde Park, and Lakeview, given that they are found in larger concentrations near the lakefront, as well as near elevated stations. Therefore, any area in Chicago that had an elevated line is highly likely to have courtyard buildings. Suburbs such as Oak Park and Evanston also have many courtyard buildings.

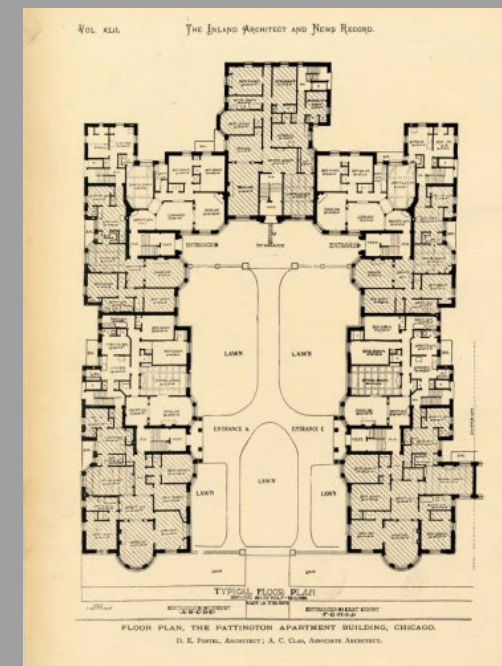
The courtyard building was influenced by various historical and cultural factors, such as the Victorian ideals of domesticity, the emergence of a new middle class, the availability of mass-produced materials, the development of public transportation, and the demand for affordable and comfortable housing. The construction benefited from the mass production of bricks, which were cheap, durable, fire-resistant, and easy to transport. Steel beams and concrete foundations allowed for more flexible and stable structures. The courtyard building also incorporated modern amenities, such as electricity, plumbing, heating, elevators, telephones, and refrigerators.

As Chicago became increasingly crowded, polluted, and noisy, residents and architects looked for ways to bring nature closer to their living spaces. The shape of the building offered residents a compact and efficient living space that provided a semi-public garden space, bringing nature deep into the lot, as well as a visual contrast between the brick facade and green foliage. The courtyard building also gave residents a sense of privacy and community, as they could interact with their neighbors in the shared garden or porch.

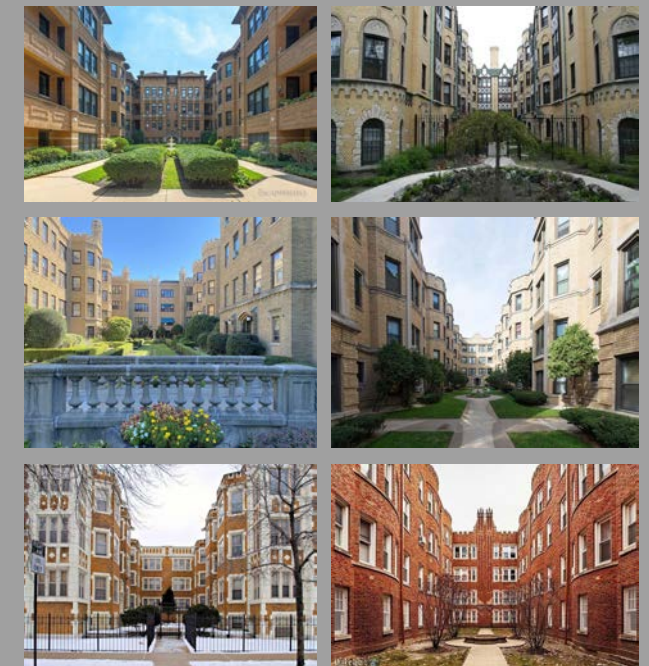
The building type was inspired by various historical and cultural models of

courtyards, such as those found in Islamic, Chinese, Indian, and Southern European architecture. The courtyard building also incorporated elements of popular domestic styles, such as Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival, and Art Deco. Some of the notable architects who designed courtyard buildings in Chicago include Frank Lloyd Wright, Dwight Perkins, Robert Spencer, and Jens Jensen.

Today, these structures continue to dot Chicago's neighborhoods, a reminder of the city's architectural innovation and a testament to the enduring appeal of the courtyard building.



PLAN OF THE PATTINGTON APARTMENT BUILDING,  
CHICAGO



VARIOUS STYLES OF COURTYARD BUILDINGS IN CHICAGO

## SOUTHPORT

Southport station made its debut with the opening of the Ravenswood branch of the Northwestern Elevated on May 18, 1907. The Southport station is located in Lakeview, in between the neighborhood of Roscoe Village and the Chicago Cubs stadium, Wrigley Field.

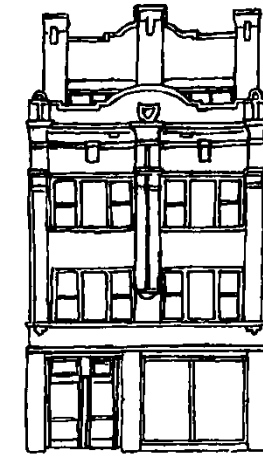
Historically, Southport station predominantly served the working-class neighborhood that surrounded it. However, in the 1990s, a renaissance began, transforming the area. The once humble neighborhood shops and diners along Southport Ave gave way to upscale cafes, coffee shops, and specialized stores, now known as the Southport Corridor. This revitalization sparked a renewed interest in the neighborhood, leading to a marked increase in the station's usage.

The Southport Corridor is a popular regional shopping destination with several locally-owned boutiques, large chain stores, theatres, galleries, restaurants, and bars - all within walking distance. While some buildings still stand as historic commercial establishments, such as the Music Box Theatre from 1929, the area showcases a blend of modern retail structures and eclectic storefront additions to older residential buildings.

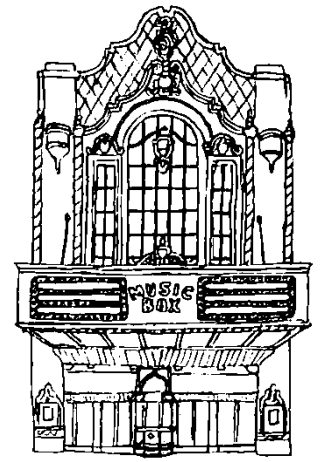
The area's commercial appeal also extends into the neighborhood's residential allure, evident in its walkable streets, tree-lined blocks, and a mix of historical architecture and modern construction. It offers a variety of housing options, including apartments in low-rise buildings, mid-rise apartment complexes, and some high-rise developments, making it home to a diverse population of both students, young professionals, and families.



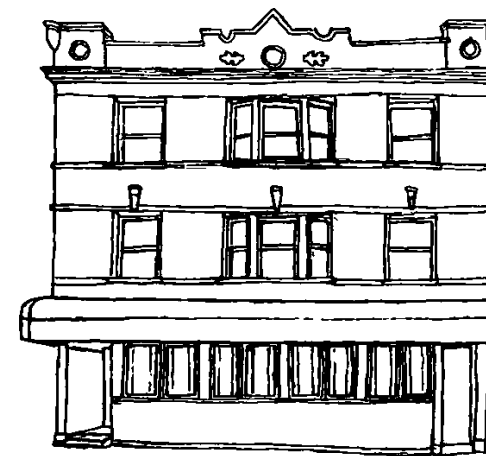
3423 N Southport Ave



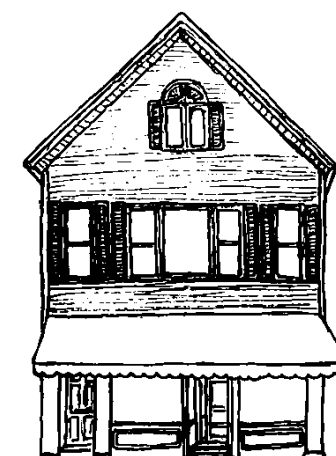
3551 N Southport Ave



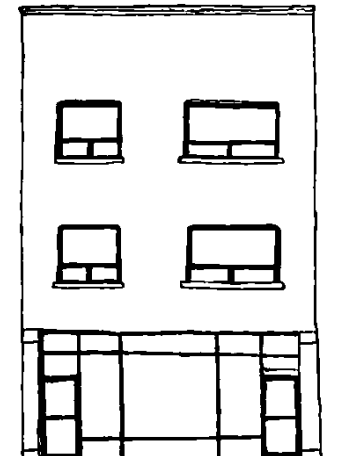
3733 N Southport Ave



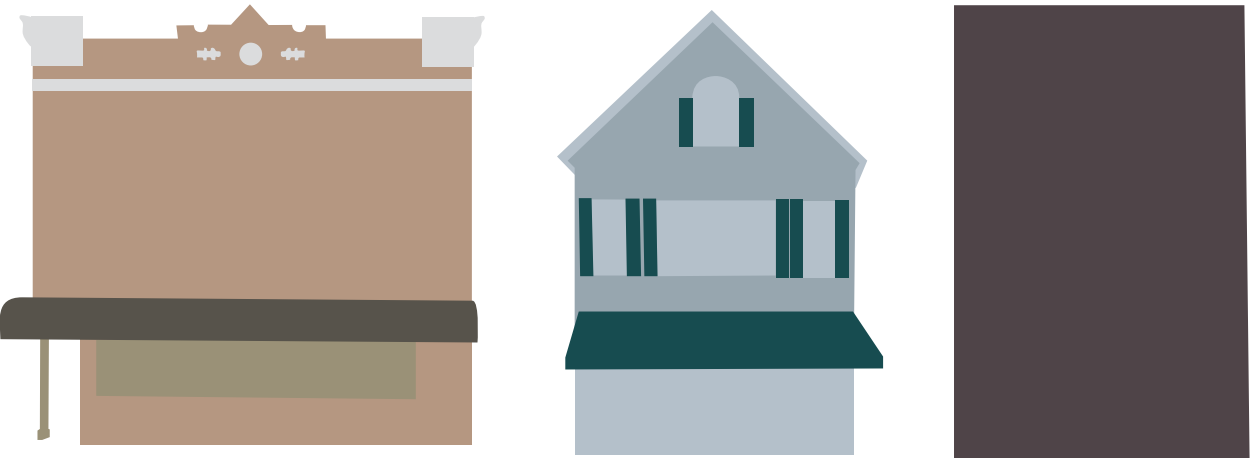
3500 N Southport Ave



3301 N Southport Ave



3448 N Southport Ave



## FRANCISCO

Following the successful construction of the Ravenswood branch of the Northwestern Elevated to Western Avenue, the project continued with the surface level extension to Kimball, opening in the winter of 1907. To better facilitate the extension, the Northwest Land Association enabled the Northwestern Elevated to build grade-level construction instead of expensive elevated tracks. As a result, the tracks on this part of the line essentially run through people's backyards, an unusual feature for a Chicago neighborhood.

One of the first stations on this track, Francisco, is located in Albany Park's Ravenswood Manor Historic District - a residential neighborhood that showcases some of Chicago's early 20th-century architecture. Developed by the real estate salesman William E. Harmon in 1909, the district offers a mix of single-family homes, apartments, 2-flats, and townhouses, in a blend of Victorian and Arts and Crafts styles, including the iconic Chicago bungalow.

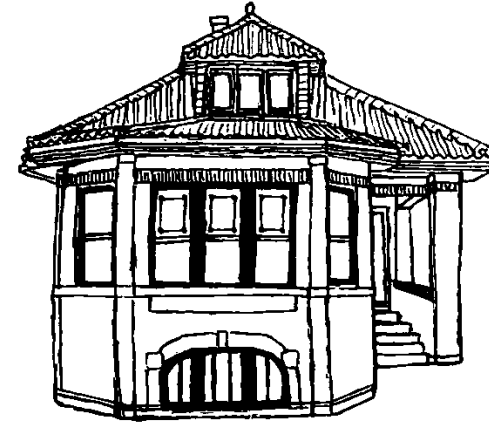
Harmon sought to create a residential area that stood apart from the crowded and noisy neighborhoods prevalent in Chicago at the time. Emphasizing tranquility and open space, Harmon marketed Ravenswood Manor as "The First Suburb Beautiful of the New Chicago" in various advertisements, luring families interested in building their homes in the new community.

Harmon's ambitious project involved breaking ground to build streets, sidewalks, curbs, and essential sewer and water lines, all aimed at making the area habitable for modern city dwellers. Additionally, he designed archways at the main entrances and adorned the parkways with trees, flowers, and shrubs, creating a visually appealing and scenic environment.

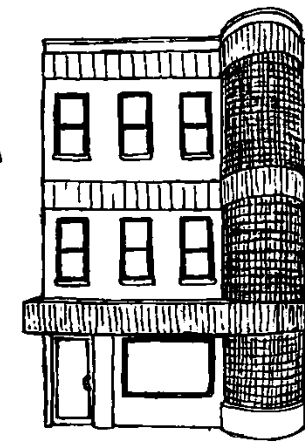
One of Harmon's selling points was the neighborhood's proximity of the North Branch of the Chicago River. He provided residents with a common boat landing, envisioning the river as the gateway to boating on Lake Michigan. While the public boat docking area no longer exists, several properties in the district still feature private docks directly on the river.

Harmon's contributions to the city extended beyond Ravenswood Manor. He played a crucial role in establishing other notable neighborhoods across Chicago, including Ravenswood Gardens, Rogers Park South, Jefferson Park West, Belmont Gardens, and Crawford Square.

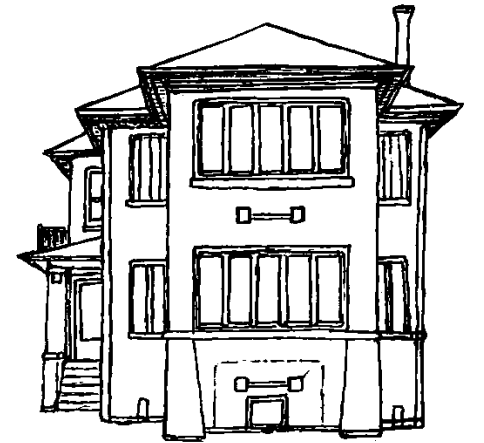
As a historic district, Ravenswood Manor not only represents the unique development of Chicago along transit lines but also exemplifies a distinctive sense of place. The craftsmanship of the homes in the district showcases the architectural ideals prevalent during its development era, adding to the area's historical significance.



2925 W Wilson Ave



4642 N Francisco Ave



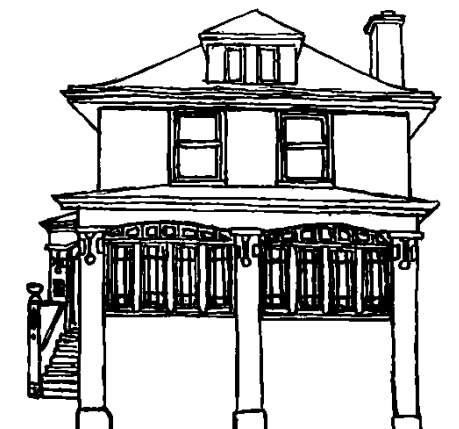
4520 N Francisco Ave



2938 W Eastwood Ave

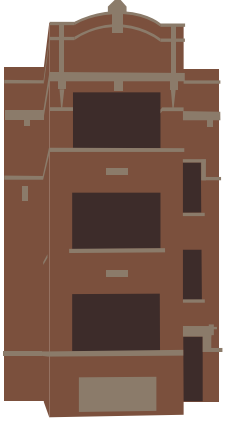
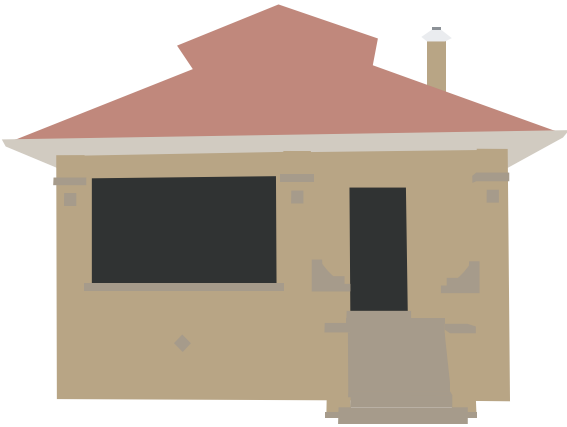
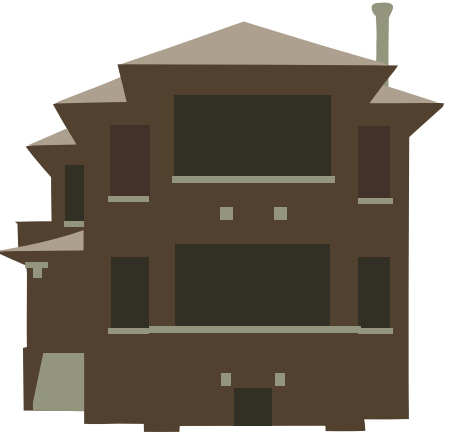
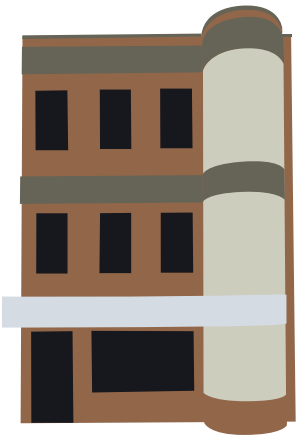
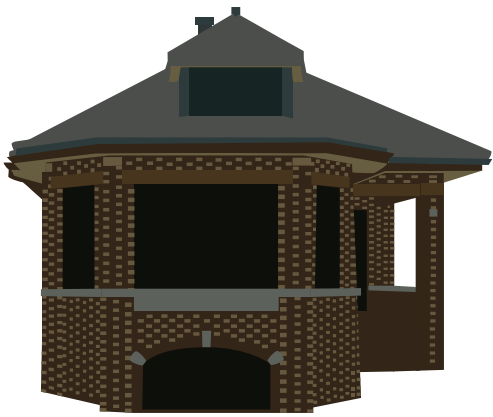


3035 W Eastwood Ave



4515 N Richmond Street





## THE BUNGALOW

The development of Chicago can be traced through its built landscape, which exhibits a series of expanding rings with common features as the city grew. One significant aspect of Chicago's architectural heritage is the prevalence of bungalows, with around 80,000 of them scattered across the city. These homes constitute one-third of all single-family residences in Chicago and form the so-called "Bungalow Belt," which emerged between the 1910s and 1930s.

The term "bungalow" originated in British India, the word derived from the Indian Hindustani word "bangala," meaning "belonging to Bengal". During the 18th century, British military engineers stationed in Bengal created the low, one-story, spacious building with a symmetrical internal layout, with wide overhanging eaves, and a veranda encircling the entire structure. This structure was designed to withstand the hot and sunny climate of India and was first adapted in Southern California when it arrived in the United States in the late 19th century. There, the bungalows were built in the typical wood framed and wood sided, square footprint construction.

In the early 1910s, a handful of architects in Chicago ventured into crafting lavish, Craftsman-style bungalows with inspiration drawn from California designs, positioned in more affluent areas of the city.

However, it was during the housing market boom of the 1920s that the bungalow phenomenon truly took off. Developers across the region recognized the demand for affordable homes among a growing middle-class population, introducing lower-priced "bungalows" to cater to a wider range of families. These new bungalows were equipped with modern amenities such as plumbing, electricity, and central heating, reflecting the changing lifestyle expectations of the era.

The Prairie Style and Craftsman homes gained popularity among the affluent, while bungalows catered to the middle and working class.

In Chicago, historic circumstances, climate, and urban layout led to the bungalow receiving several modifications. To minimize fire risks, brick was preferred over wood. The street grid and alley system also restricted the width of the Chicago bungalow, although many lots within the bungalow belt were widened to 30' from the standard 25' wide Chicago lot.

Chicago bungalows are most recognizable as modest sized single-family homes, with a full basement, first floor, and an attic set underneath a low pitched roof with a centered dormer. The Chicago bungalow roof is traditionally hipped, though some may be gabled, with wide overhangs.

The front façade features a front door off to one side with a small porch, offset by a wide bay of living room windows. The windows may be decorated with leaded glass, while the brick exterior commonly sports simple brick or stone trim, following the design approach of the Prairie Style and Arts and Crafts movements.

The modest scale of bungalows was intentional, making them more affordable and accessible to a wider range of middle-class families. This design choice also aligned with the contemporary philosophy of healthy living, which emphasized spending time outdoors and connecting with the natural environment.

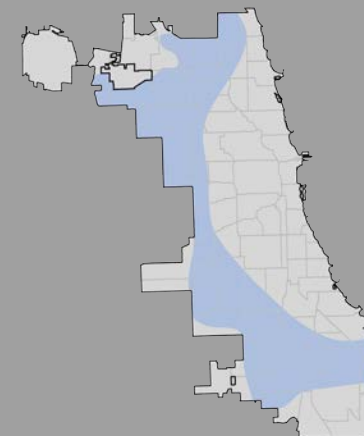
While the bungalow belt in Chicago represented an idyllic new life for many middle-class families, it also carries a

history of exclusion and segregation.

The bungalow belt became strongly associated with white flight, a phenomenon in which white families moved away from urban areas, resulting in the abandonment of these neighborhoods.

Discrimination against African American families in government-administered loans effectively perpetuated segregation, preventing families of color from entering the bungalow belt.

It wasn't until the 1950s and 1960s, as existing homeowners moved to the suburbs, that families of color were able to break through these barriers and start making their way into the bungalow belt.



CHICAGO'S BUNGALOW BELT



CHICAGO BUNGALOW

# 05

## DISCOURSE

Cultural aesthetics is understood as describing the customs, arts, social institutions and achievements of a specific nation, people, or social group.

These aesthetics are deeply intertwined with the history, experiences, and collective memory of the community, shaping the ways of life and influencing perceptions of beauty, meaning, and expression.

My understanding of these perceptions, experiences, and visual testaments is only a small fraction of what can be found about the city of Chicago, or any other city in the world. Rather than rounding up my thoughts as a conclusion, I prefer to name it my discourse.

Discourse plays a crucial role in shaping and reflecting societal values, beliefs, and norms. It influences public opinions and contributes to the construction of identities.

A conclusion is in its essence fixed - a discourse is dynamic, adapting to changes in society and continually influencing our perceptions and interactions.

THE LOOP



MERCHANDISE  
MART



CHICAGO



ARMITAGE



FULLERTON



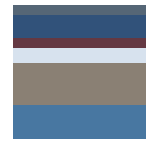
BELMONT



SOUTHPORT



FRANCISCO



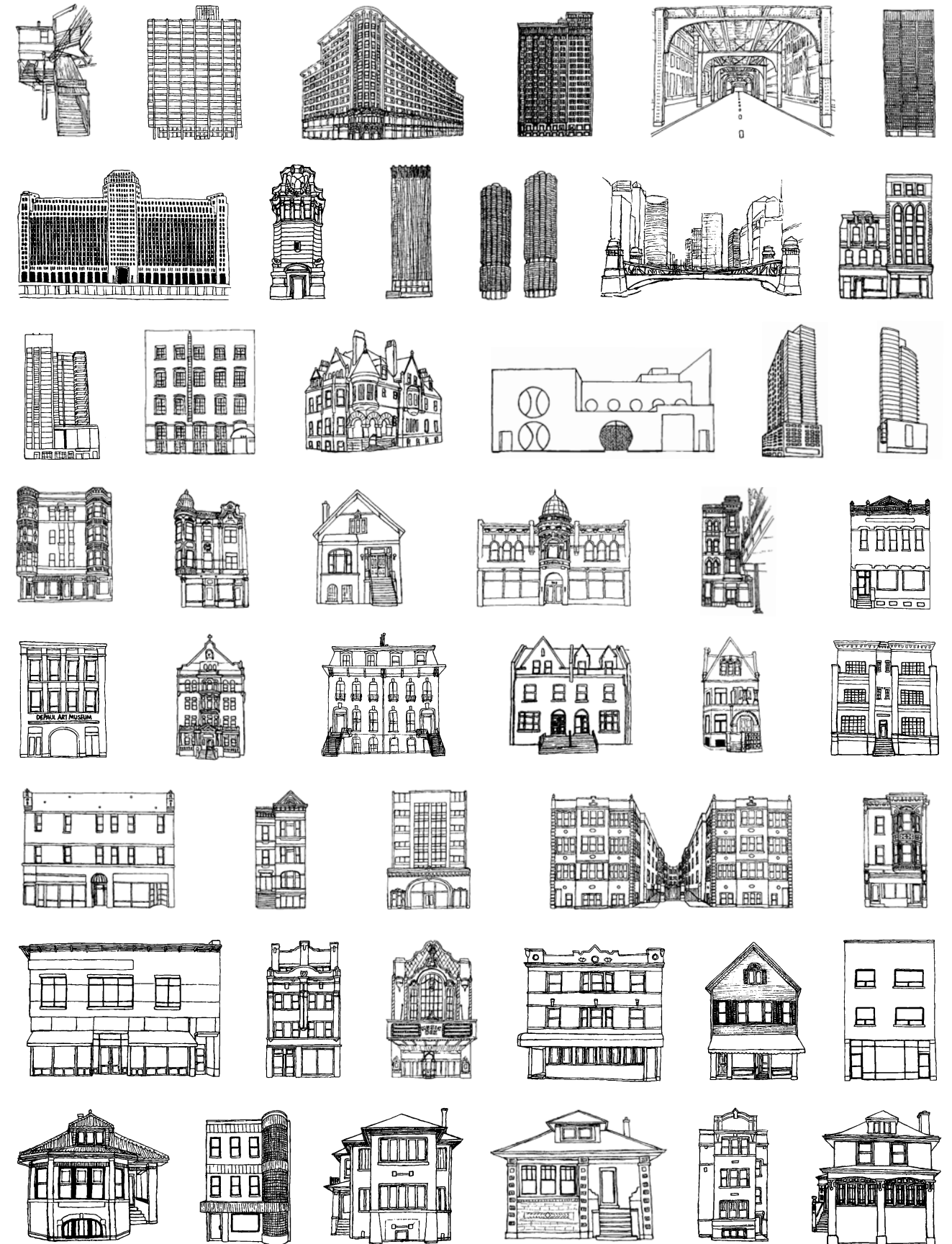
My visual analysis of Chicago reveals a patchwork of building typologies, color, scales, detail, and styles. While the extent and reach of the Brown Line in the city is comparatively tiny, a 45-minute trip from the Loop to Kimball contains an impressive variety of urban architecture and history.

Chicago's urban fabric is a result of political and administrative decisions, industrial growth, public desires, the innovation of engineers, diverse communities of immigrants and migrants, and architects' visions for the future.

Before this year-long journey, I knew very little about Midwestern and Chicagoan architecture and even less about how much of it I was skipping on my daily route to and from work. I am both fascinated and sad to know that there is so much more out there to find.

My one-person field study would only be better if I could compare another's results from the same places, or with an expansion onto other train lines or transportation networks. What would I find when following a network of bike paths? Or only travelling on the expressways?

There is not one way to live in, move through, experience, or imagine a city. It is the variety, both in the architecture and in the people, that makes the city inspiring.



## THE AMERICAN HOME

Growing up in both the U.S. and Denmark, I have come across a strange consensus about Americans not having their own culture. The United States is instead commonly described as a melting pot, which makes sense given the fact that it is incredibly culturally diverse. It is true that American culture has been influenced by nearly every other culture of the world including that of its own indigenous people, but the further trajectory of American culture that has happened within the country borders is very often taken for granted.

While the United States has a very short history compared to other countries, like Denmark, the American influence on music, film, art, clothing, and food across the world is indisputably larger. This may be a reason why American culture isn't always classified as its own thing. It has become nearly synonymous with popular culture, it is commonplace, and

can be picked up by anybody - anywhere. American culture that is promoted across the world is also commonly sellable, commercially driven and highly profitable. Relative to the discussion of aesthetics, it isn't seen as "highbrow" or exclusive and it is therefore perceived to be less significant.

The same hierarchical division and exclusion happens within the fields of architecture and design. I personally love to learn about the big thinkers and revolutionary strides that were made throughout history, but we often neglect to mention the fact that the stories we tell and retell are part of a constructed discourse. We don't focus on the commonplace or the outliers, but the things that are selected to be spectacular and meaningful. Nonetheless, most people in the decades after the 1920's don't live in houses like those proposed by Le Corbusier.

**"It is their (popular) preferences and not architectural theories that will, in the long run, influence much of what happens in the cities."**

**William Michelson (1968)**

A huge part of the cultural aesthetics of cities must be found in the commonplace. The stories and ideas behind the grand and iconic are valuable, but they don't paint the full picture of the cultural life of the city. The typologies of the American, Midwestern, and Chicagoan homes tell their own tales of historic events, demographic changes, geographic locations, and geological circumstances. The fact that something doesn't stand out can be a hint that it is familiar to the viewer and in alignment with its cultural environment.

While many skyscrapers could be placed anywhere in the world and not seem out of place, I have found noticeable differences

between the houses in the U.S. vs. in Denmark and even between the houses in Chicago vs. where I grew up in Northern California. Greystones, Chicago Bungalows, and Worker's Cottages are just three out of many notable housing types that have been a part of Chicago's unique architectural history. Although each individual building isn't particularly distinguishable from another in the way the Sears Tower or the John Hancock Building are, the housing types as a group carry a distinct cultural identity and heritage which cannot be ignored. The ordinary home could possibly be the most interesting part of the city.

Every time you do something,  
make something, it's final in a  
way, but it's not. It immediately  
raises a great set of questions.  
And if you become a question  
addict, which I am, you  
immediately have something  
you need to pursue.

---

Robert Irwin

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