Community Snapshot: Lower West Side
Lower West Side

Three miles southwest of the Loop, the Lower West Side includes two distinct neighborhoods. The older one, more commonly known as Pilsen after the Czech city from which many of its early residents came, was originally an industrial neighborhood that included lumberyards, breweries and foundries. The other, called Heart of Chicago, falls between Pilsen and South Lawndale and was settled by German and Irish immigrants, along with Polish, Slovenian and Italian residents. Beginning in the Great Depression and continuing through World War II and the 1950s, the neighborhood’s industrial anchors started to close down or move to the suburbs. Mexican-American families began to move into the area, which has evolved into the city’s primary point of entry for that immigrant group.

Lower West Side residents have started a number of nonprofit organizations and community development corporations to help strengthen their neighborhood. For example, the Resurrection Project, founded in 1990, is one of the city’s strongest community development corporations and has made community investments of more than $346 million, building owner-occupied housing, rental housing and community centers.

People don’t know about ... the resources available to them. They have the potential to do something very well; we just need a bit of help.

– RUMC focus group participant from the Lower West Side

HIC survey participants asked how common violence is in their community: 72.8% said “extremely” or “very.”
Who lives here?

- **35,353** people live on the Lower West Side. The average household size is **2.9** people, compared to an average Chicago household size of **2.6** people.¹
- Population density on the Lower West Side is similar to that of Chicago overall, with a population per square mile of **12,085.2** people as compared to **11,841.8** people per square mile in Chicago.²
- Between 2000 and 2010, the Lower West Side’s population decreased by **23.1%**. In Chicago overall, the population decreased by **6.9%** during the same period.³

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**⁴

The population on the Lower West Side is mostly Hispanic or Latino.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Lower West Side</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGE**⁵

The population on the Lower West Side is slightly younger than the city of Chicago average, with a median age of **30.0** as compared to the citywide average of **33.3**.

HIC survey participants asked how much neighbors trust and look out for each other: **52.4%** said “a little/none/not at all.”

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¹ Population, Households & Dwellings from the 2010 Census
² Lower West Side and Chicago compared to 2010 Census
³ Lower West Side and Chicago compared to 2000 Census
⁴ Race/Ethnicity from the 2010 Census
⁵ Age from the 2010 Census
What are the potential barriers to good health?

HARDSHIP INDEX

The Lower West Side’s hardship index is 76, based on the following statistics (Lower West Side at left, Chicago at right):

CHILD OPPORTUNITY INDEX

The Child Opportunity Index (COI) assigns a “low” ranking to the Lower West Side’s educational opportunities; “moderate” to health and environmental opportunities; and “high” to social and economic opportunities. This gives the neighborhood an overall COI ranking of “moderate.”

LACK OF HEALTH INSURANCE

Lower West Side residents have health insurance at a significantly lower rate than residents of the rest of the city. Of note: Chicago’s percentage of people without insurance is significantly higher than the percentage in the U.S. overall, which is 13.3% of the population.

CRIME

The Lower West Side is in the lowest quartile of communities served by Rush for its rate of crimes against people, including simple assault, aggravated assault and homicide.

There are a lot of hospitals, but they are not interested in helping us out.

– RUMC focus group participant from the Lower West Side
What is the impact of the barriers?

YEARS OF POTENTIAL LIFE LOST

The Lower West Side ranks 50th among Chicago’s 77 neighborhoods in total number of years of potential life lost annually. Annual years of potential life lost per 100,000 residents aged 75 and younger due to selected causes of death: 6,073.

What resources make life better?

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Some of the Lower West Side’s community assets include the following:

**Public parks**
- Addams/Medill Park
- Baraga Playlot Park
- Barrett Park
- Bosley Playground Park
- Canal Origins
- Dvorak Park
- Florian S. Jacolik Park
- Guadalupe Reyes Park
- Harrison Park
- Hoyne Playground Park
- Kucinski-Murphy Park
- McGuane Park
- Mulberry Playlot Park
- Palmisano Park
- Park No. 571
- Throop Park
- Wilson Community Center Park
- Wilson (John P.) Park

**Community-based health centers**
- ACCESS Cabrini Family Health Center
- ACCESS Pilsen Family Health Center
- Alivio Medical Center
- Alivio Medical Center – Western
- Lower West Neighborhood Health Center

**School-based health center**
- Jose Clemente Orozco Academy

**CHA housing**
- Apartamentos Las Americas
- Senior Suites of Bridgeport

**Nursing facility**
- El Valor Residence

**Mental health center**
- Pilsen Wellness Center

**Childcare centers**
- Chicago Commons Guadalupano Family Center
- Daly Day Care Center
- El Hogar Del Niño
- El Valor: Guadalupe Reyes Children and Family Center
- Fellowship House Day Care Center
- Gads Hill Center
- Lil’ Einstein’s Institute for Scholars
- Rauner YMCA
- Richard J. Daley/AVI-CDC
- Smart Learning Center

**Grocery stores**
- Aldi
- Mariano’s

**Pharmacies**
- CVS
- Walgreens

**Schools**
- City Garden Early Childhood Center (Daycare/Preschool, PK, K)
- Cooper, Everett (Public, PK-5)
- Armour, Holden, Finkl, Jungman, Orozco, Perez, Pickard, Pilsen, Ruiz, Walsh, Whittier (Public, PK-8)
- St. Ann, St. Barbara, St. Paul-Our Lady of Vilna, St. Pius V, St. Procopius (Roman Catholic, PK-8)
- Uno-De Las Casas (Charter, K-8)
- Juarez (Public, 9-12)
- Instituto-Health, Instituto-Lozano, Instituto-Lozano Mastery (Charter, 9-12)
- Cristo Rey Jesuit (Roman Catholic, 9-12)
- De La Salle Institute-Lourdes Hall Campus (Roman Catholic, All Girls, 9-12)
- Latino Youth (Alternative School, 9-12)

**Neighborhood organization**
- Resurrection Project
ENDNOTES

1 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Lower West Side, www.cmap.illinois.gov/.
3 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Lower West Side.
4 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Lower West Side.
5 MetroPulse Community Data Snapshot, Lower West Side.
6 data.cityofchicago.org/Health-Human-Services/hardship-index/792q-4jt.
8 www.chicagopealthatlas.org/place/lower_west_side.
9 www.chicagopealthatlas.org/place/lower_west_side.
11 data.cityofchicago.org/Health-Human-Services/Public-Health-Statistics-Selected-underlying-cause/j6cj+r444.