Near West Side

The Near West Side, two miles west of the Loop, has been a diverse and densely populated neighborhood for nearly 200 years. It was home to the first African-American settlement in Chicago, as well as Irish, German, Czech, Bohemian, French, Russian, Polish, Italian and Greek immigrants. Later, more African-American residents as well as Mexican residents moved to the area. In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr founded Hull House, a settlement house on Halsted Street that grew into one of the most influential social-services organizations in the nation. Its programs, which served thousands of people on a 13-building campus, included everything from child care and a residence for working women to cultural and educational activities.

The landscape of the neighborhood has changed dramatically since the mid 20th century, with the construction of the Circle interchange, the University of Illinois at Chicago and the United Center sports arena. The Near West Side Community Development Corporation, founded in 1988, brings together residents, churches, community groups and government officials to help ensure that the revival of the neighborhood does not displace longtime residents.

This area [has] changed a whole lot. Because I stayed in Rockwell projects right there. ...It looks better down here now. They are opening a lot of new stores and everything, you know? And it looks real nice.

– RUMC focus group participant from the Near West Side

HIC survey participants asked how common violence is in their community: 39% said “extremely” or “very.”
Who lives here?

• **55,877** people live on the Near West Side. The average household size is **2.0** people, compared to an average Chicago household size of **2.6** people.¹

• The Near West Side is less densely populated than Chicago overall, with a population per square mile of **9,828.6** people compared to **11,841.8** people per square mile in Chicago.²

• Between 2000 and 2010, the Near West Side’s population increased by **15.4%** — a significant difference from population change in Chicago overall, where the population decreased by **6.9%** during the same period.³

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**¹

The population of the Near West Side is racially diverse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Near West Side</th>
<th>Chicago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AGE**⁵

The population of the Near West Side is slightly younger than the city of Chicago average, with a median age of **31.0** as compared to the citywide average of **33.3**.

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I think there’s a pretty strong sense of… community; a lot of people have lived in the same area… for a long time, so people are pretty familiar with their neighbors and pretty integrated into their community in that way.

— RUMC focus group participant from the Near West Side
What are the potential barriers to good health?

**HARDSHIP INDEX**

The Near West Side’s hardship index is 15, based on the following statistics *(Near West Side at left, Chicago at right):*

- **CROWDED HOUSING**
  - Near West Side: 3.8%
  - Chicago: 20.6%

- **HOUSHELDS BELOW POVERTY**
  - Near West Side: 19.7%
  - Chicago: 10.7%

- **UNEMPLOYMENT FOR THOSE OVER AGE 16**
  - Near West Side: 12.9%
  - Chicago: 9.6%

- **LACK OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA**
  - Near West Side: 19.5%
  - Chicago: 22.2%

- **POPULATION UNDER 18 AND OVER 64**
  - Near West Side: 33.5%
  - Chicago: 22.2%

- **PER-CAPITA INCOME**
  - Near West Side: $44,689
  - Chicago: $28,202

**CHILD OPPORTUNITY INDEX**

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

**CRIME**

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

**LACK OF HEALTH INSURANCE**

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

If you have a medical card, they’ll only do so much. ...They know what Medicare and Medicaid will pay for. They’re not going to do anything extra, no pro bono, none of that.

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

YEARS OF POTENTIAL LIFE LOST

The Near West Side ranks 39th 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: 6,778.

What resources make life better?

COMMUNITY ASSETS

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

**Hospitals**
- Jesse Brown VA Medical Center
- John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County
- Rush University Medical Center
- UI Health

**Public parks**
- Mary Bartelme Park
- Sheridan Park
- Skinner Park

**Community-based health centers**
- ACCESS Community Health Network
- Mile Square Health Center
- Pacific Garden Mission Health Clinic

**School-based health center**
- Hope Health and Wellness Center
- Mile Square School Based Clinics
- Rush School-Based Health Center at Crane Medical Preparatory
- Rush School-Based Health Center at Simpson Academy for Young Women

**Mental health centers**
- Haymarket Center
- Lawndale Mental Health Center

**CHA housing**
- Jackson Square at West End
- Oakley Square Apartment
- Patrick Sullivan Apartments
- Westhaven Park/Village of Westhaven
- Wicker Park Apartments and Annex

**Childcare centers**
- Laurance Armour Day School
- Malcolm X College Child Development Center
- Easter Seals Gilchrist-Marchman Child Development Center
- The Northern Trust Child Care Center

**Nursing facility**
- Monroe Pavilion Health Treatment Center

**Pharmacies**
- CVS
- Taylor Street Pharmacy (UIC)
- Walgreens

**Grocery stores**
- Costco
- Jewel-Osco
- Whole Foods

**Colleges and universities**
- Malcolm X College
- Rush University
- University of Illinois at Chicago

**Schools**
- Rudolph (Special Education, PK-5)
- Intercultural Montessori Language School (Montessori, PK-6)
- Brown W, Dett, Irving (Public, PK-8)
- Skinner (Classical, PK-8)
- Suder (Magnet, PK-8)
- Chicago Lighthouse (Special Education, PK-12)
- Galileo, Jackson, Stem, Smyth (Magnet, K-8)
- Rush Day School (Special Education, 1-8)
- Simpson Academy for Young Women (Alternative, 6-12)
- Chicago Tech (Contract, 9-12)
- Crane Medical Preparatory (Magnet, 9-12)
- Legal Prep, Noble-Bulls, Noble-UIC, Urban Prep-West (Charter, 9-12)
- Jefferson, Ombudsman-West (Citywide, 9-12)
- St. Ignatius College Prep (Roman Catholic, 9-12)
- Whitney Young (Selective Enrollment, 9-12)

**Neighborhood organization**
- Near West Side Community Development Corporation
ENDNOTES

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