

THE EAST VILLAGE - A HIDDEN GEM

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Just ten minutes from the Loop and a mere hop, skip, and a jump from the Wicker Park and Ukrainian Village neighborhoods lies a small, urban hotspot: East Village.

Following the great Chicago Fire in 1871, the East Village began as a small Eastern European community of primarily German, Hungarian, and Swedish working-class families. Polish immigrants and eventually Hispanics would move to the area as well. But today, this historic neighborhood is undergoing a rejuvenation of sorts, attracting artists, young professionals, and other urban trendsetters looking to escape the congestion of Wicker Park.

With Division Street to its north, Chicago Avenue to its South, Damen Avenue on its west, and Milwaukee Avenue on its east, East Village offers its residents a plethora of entertainment, dining, and shopping options, as well as some unique and affordable real estate opportunities.

Greg Nagel, a realtor with Century 21 Affiliated–Chicago and Accredited Buyer's Representative (ABR), has been living in East Village for the last eight years and is President of the East Village Association. Of the area, Nagel says, "Compared to Wicker Park, East Village is just a lot less

congested, with much easier parking. Residents also get away from some of the physical barriers in Wicker Park, which create eye sores in that neighborhood, like the Blue Line and the old railroad."

In addition to 2 ½-story "cottages," which are a signature of the neighborhood, East Village boasts wide sidewalks, big tree canopies, and one-way streets that give the urban setting a more residential feel. Other housing options for interested buyers include three-flats and four-flats throughout the neighborhood.

Nagel also cites a number of upcoming building developments, which add to the neighborhood's appeal. In addition to a Roots Pizza and Bleeding Heart Bakery on Chicago Avenue, there are also plans for a Chicago Bowl—a 23,000-square-foot complex that will include a 13-lane bowling alley, 700-person concert venue, and a Blue Ribbon restaurant.

Also close by is the recently opened West Town Library at Chicago and Ashland. "I suspect that a lot of people who would not have considered living south of Chicago Avenue or east of Ashland Avenue will begin to rethink the area," Nagel says, "There is a lot of planned development in the next 18 months."

And with a wide-variety of boutiques, ethnic restaurants, and bars already filling the neighborhood's small radius, it is no wonder that generations of families have chosen to make the East Village their home. Its rich history and vibrant future truly make East Village a diamond in the rough.

