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**NEWS ARCHIVE**

**Lincoln Park becomes wealthiest community**

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By **MARK SKERTIC AND SCOTT FORNEK** STAFF REPORTERS

Lucia Blinn lives on a tree-lined street in a 25th-floor condo with a view of gorgeous, green Lincoln Park and beyond to the sailboats bobbing in Lake Michigan.

"To me it has always been very toney," said Blinn, a retired advertising executive who now writes poetry and non-fiction. "Lots of Yuppies--little kids and big dogs. . . . If you don't have a big yellow dog and a beautiful blond kid in a stroller, you are a pariah."

But she didn't know just how toney until Monday, when new census information revealed the North Side community area has the highest median household income of all of Chicago's 77 community areas.

**Median Household Income**

- [Click here to view median household income for Chicago neighborhoods](#)

**WHERE'S MY NEIGHBORHOOD?**

Where's Bucktown in all of this census data? Or Wicker Park or Wrigleyville?

The "community areas" taken from the census and listed here might confuse even some native Chicagoans, who might know places like Bucktown but not be sure exactly where places like Hermosa are.

Chicago's community areas were determined in the 1920s by the University of Chicago's Social Science Research Committee. The aim was to ensure that decade-to-decade comparisons of changes in the city could be made, even as neighborhood boundaries shifted and merged.

After the 1970 census, two areas were added to the original 75: O'Hare and Edgewater. Until then, Edgewater was considered part of the Uptown area.

*Mark Skertic*

spread wealth across the city, from Sauganash and Edgebrook on the north to Beverly and Mount Greenwood on the south.

"Chicago was one of the few places where the prosperity gap between the city and the suburbs closed during the '90s, said Marc Thomas, senior planning analyst with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. "This is part of that. It's good when the wealth is being spread around."

But the good news was tempered by the pockets of poverty and despair that remain on parts of the West and South Sides. Nine of the 10 poorest community areas are more

"It absolutely does surprise me," Blinn said. "I would have put the Gold Coast first: East Lake Shore Drive and Cedar and all those gorgeous tree-lined streets. . . . This is certainly not cheap, but I wouldn't think it is No. 1."

Perhaps even more surprising is the incredible surge in wealth on the Near South Side, where a housing boom in the South Loop nearly tripled the median income over the last 10 years.

"This phenomenal growth right now in the Loop with upscale high-rises, new buildings, condos and apartment buildings is stunning," said Phil Nyden, director of the Center for Urban Research and Learning at Loyola University. "It is a major development in the City of Chicago."

The Census Bureau's look inside people's wallets also showed the booming 1990s



than 94 percent African American.

"Chicago is still exposed to enormous concentrations of poverty, and it is still a major, major problem in this city and other cities," Nyden said. "That's the other challenge. . . . In a sense, we are only as successful and secure as our poorest neighborhood."

Overall, the city's median income for 1999 was \$38,625, up 13 percent from the 1989 figure when it is adjusted for inflation. The data, released this week, are estimates from details provided by about 20 percent of the population in April 2000. It was analyzed by community area, official designations that can include several neighborhoods.

That explains why the Gold Coast is not No. 1. It's a neighborhood that is part of the larger Near North Side community area. Offsetting the Gold Coast's prosperity is what is left of the Cabrini-Green public housing development, which is also part of the Near North Side community area.

But some Lincoln Park boosters did not question for a minute the area's rank. Lincoln Park, with a median income of \$68,613, shot from No. 5 in 1989 to No. 1 in 1999.

Gil Matar attributes the shift to the neighborhood's proximity to everything--from the city's downtown business to hot local restaurants to the park itself.

"People value their lifestyle and now work more time than they used to," said Matar, chairman of the Lincoln Park Chamber of Commerce and a financial adviser and associate vice president with Morgan Stanley. "No one is working 40 hours. Everyone is working more than 40 hours, so no one wants to spend another hour-and-a-half commuting to Bannockburn or Schaumburg."

That lures the high-income crowd, he said.

Suggesting an overall stability, the 10 community areas with the highest median income were roughly the same as they were in 1989, although the order within the top 10 changed.

Forest Glen on the Northwest Side dropped from No. 1 in 1989 to No. 2 in 1999. Beverly dipped from No. 2 to No. 3. Calumet Heights dropped out of its No. 10 spot in 1989 to No. 18 this time around. Lake View, No. 23 in 1989, shot up to No. 8.

Around the Sauganash neighborhood in Forest Glen, signs of the wealth were visible. A pair of antique Jaguars are parked in the driveway of one house, while shiny SUVs dot the road. Overhead, trees canopy the winding streets that make up this Northwest Side area.

Down south, Beverly, home to city workers and some of the city's powerful politicians, is both lavish and low-key. Sprawling homes--some better termed mansions--line hilly, winding Longwood Drive. In other parts of the neighborhood are simple bungalows.

"You see there's obvious wealth, but there's affordability, too," said Sarah Acker, as she walked her year-old twin boys and 6-year-old daughter down 103rd Street. "We just moved here from Oak Park--we rented in Oak Park and wanted to buy a home--and we found a really nice home for not a lot of money, under \$175,000."

The Near South Side remained far down on the list at No. 50 with a median income of \$34,329--well below the city average. But it showed the greatest increase of any city area.

"Nine to 10 years ago, there was virtually nothing here," said Eve Kronen, a managing Realtor for Caldwell Banker, who has watched property values skyrocket with the influx of residents.

"Lincoln Park and the Gold Coast were beyond people's reach," said Kronen, who lives in the South Loop, about six blocks from her office. "And a lot of people were fed up with the commute to and from the burbs."

On the other end of the spectrum, at the bottom of the list was the South Side's Oakland neighborhood, where two people were beaten to death by a mob in July after a traffic accident.

But one longtime Oakland resident and community leader insists the census numbers are wrong.

"I don't believe it for one minute," said Shirley Newsome, chairwoman of the North Kenwood-Oakland Conservation Community Council. "We're not last on the list, mainly because of the transition that the Oakland community has gone through in the last three to five years."

Newsome argues that the \$10,739 median income could have been dragged down by

public housing residents who no longer live in the area. She said the Lakefront Properties and Washington Park Extension and most of the Madden Park Homes are closed, and a number of subsidized housing buildings have gone condo, bringing in doctors, lawyers and other professionals.

"Overall, Oakland has probably fewer problems than a lot of communities that I can think of, yet it has its problems," she said. "It's a gentrifying community, and it has the same kind of pains that any other gentrifying community would have."

Contributing: *Lucio Guerrero, Robert C. Herguth and Curtis Lawrence*



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