

COMMUNITY PROFILE BUENA PARK

Tucked away next to everything

Buena Park a historic, diverse neighborhood along the lakefront

By Mary Lu Laffey
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

"I never considered living north of Irving Park," said Khoi Nguyen, speaking from his three-bedroom condominium in Buena Park. Yet Nguyen and his partner packed up in November and left their contemporary home in the John Hancock Center on Michigan Avenue for a vintage building in historic Buena Park.

"Like most people, I was rigid when it came to looking [for a new home]," he said. "I wanted this, that, everything." The two looked in Lakeview and farther north but were disappointed in the cookie-cutter floor plans that they found. When they finally visited Buena Park, the professor says they were taken by surprise.

"I was amazed even," Nguyen said, referring to the range of properties in the small residential enclave that is bordered on the north by Montrose Avenue and Irving Park Road to the south, and from 1100 west in Graceland Cemetery to Marine Drive to the east.

The two discovered a micro-world of large vintage condo buildings, Georgian-era and Prairie-style single-family homes on tree-canopied streets leading to the lakefront. And not one was a cookie-cutter. Nguyen now says that moving north of Irving provides the best of both worlds—the unique space they had dreamed about and easy access to the buzz of neighboring Lakeview and the rest of the city.

Nguyen's reaction to the neighborhood didn't surprise Buena Park residents Mark Zipperer or Kathleen Hogan.

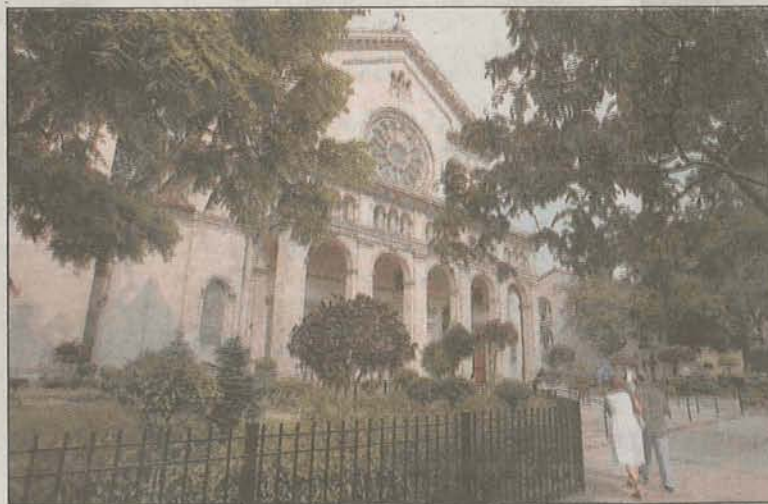
Zipperer, owner/broker at Remax Edge on Broadway, said he felt the same way in 1998 when he bought his condo on Bittersweet Avenue, much to the chagrin of his friends. Hogan, a marketing consultant, experienced a similar reaction when she relocated six years ago.

Zipperer says there is a great stock of older three-story buildings with six to 18 units in Buena Park but not a lot of new construction. He added that there are one- or two-bedroom condos available under \$300,000.

A standard city lot in Buena



Max Dahan, 2, plays with his mother, Rachel Dahan, at Buena Circle Play Lot. In the summer, the Buena Park Neighbors association hosts free monthly concerts in the park. ANDREW A. NELLES/PHOTOS FOR THE TRIBUNE



Parishioners enter St. Mary of the Lake church on North Sheridan Road. Buena Park originally began as a suburb of Chicago.

Park sells between \$600,000 and \$800,000, according to Zipperer.

"An existing single-family home would probably list at \$3.2 million," he said. Of course, some of the homes in Buena Park are 15,000 square feet with large yards and private driveways. While single-family homes are rarely on the market, there are two new homes on Gordon Terrace that are asking \$1.6 million. On Marine Drive, a continuation of North Lake Shore Drive, a vintage home that faces the lakefront is listed at

\$3.9 million.

"I still love my building," he says. When he purchased his condo there was a \$75,000 difference in price between his unit on Bittersweet and a comparable condo in Lakeview. Zipperer pocketed the \$75,000 and never looked back.

"The neighborhood continues to get better," he says. As a newcomer, he joined the Buena Park Neighbors association and served on several committees and as its president.

Founded in 1997, the mission of the association was to improve the quality of life for residents and businesses. That goal is still relevant today as BPN is one of the most active community groups in the city.

In the summer, BPN hosts free monthly concerts in the Buena Circle Play Lot, at Buena and Kenmore. The August concert was co-sponsored by the Chicago Cubs in conjunction with the Chicago Park District.

BPN organizes two neighborhood clean-up days each year that utilize volunteer muscle and help from the city via the Mayor's Clean and Green program, which provides the brooms, rakes, shovels and bags needed to get the job done. The association also sponsors fundraisers and "Buena Pumpkin Neighbors," an annual safe trick-or-treating event for the neighborhood's youngest residents.


Ten years ago, efforts to improve the neighborhood might have meant working on block clean-ups or collaborating with the police to remove prostitutes from neighborhood parking lots—an exercise Zipperer is happy to say is no longer necessary.


"Crime issues have quieted

Buena Park

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The lowdown Nestled along the lakefront just southeast of Uptown, Buena Park was named to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1984. That designation encouraged restoration efforts of the pre-World War II courtyard buildings, six-flats and turn-of-the-century mansions found along the tree-canopied streets. Buena Park was a lakeside suburb well into the late 1800s; it was annexed by Chicago in 1889. For a glimpse of Prairie School homes, visit Hutchinson Street.

Things to consider  **UPSIDE:** Nearly 50,000 residents of Buena Park enjoy the advantages of urban life without the traffic and noise that come with living in many other parts of the city. CTA buses, a Red Line stop, the lakefront path and Lake Shore Drive provide accessibility. Wrigley Field is nearby. Being able to live in a national historic district and walk to a lakefront park for a swim or a game of tennis on the courts earmarked as a site for the 2016 Olympic Games are everyday possibilities in Buena Park.

 **DOWNSIDE:** There is no centralized retail area or even a retail strip in Buena Park. Merchants are scattered along Irving Park Road, on Broadway and Sheridan and, to some extent, Clarendon. There's talk about a streetscaping project on Broadway that would be designed to pull the area together. More foot traffic should encourage more businesses and restaurants.

Who lives there

- 65,544** Population
- 3.1%** Population growth since 2000
- 69.7%** Have lived there 5-plus years
- 33** Median age of owner/renter
- Own **24%** Rent **76%**

ESTIMATED FAMILY INCOME

- Uptown: **\$57,078**
- Illinois: **\$74,622**



Recently sold homes

- HIGHER END**
\$1,350,000
650 E. Hutchinson Street
- MID-RANGE**
\$375,000
840 E. Belle Plaine Ave. (unit 1W)
- MID-RANGE**
\$281,000
4170 N. Marine Drive (unit 19A)
- LOWER END**
\$107,500
720 W. Gordon Terrace (unit 8J)

SOURCE: Record Information Services; Appraisal Research Counselors

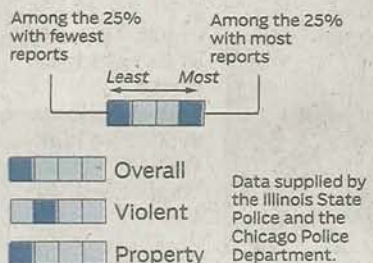
REPORTED RACE-ETHNICITY

21.5% Black 13.0% Asian
 51.5% White 19.9% Hispanic

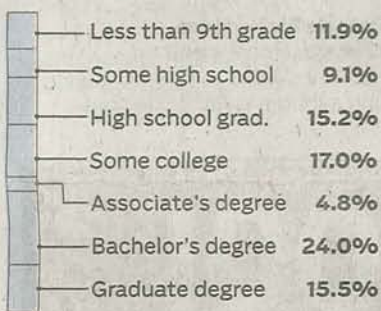
Numbers do not add up to 100% because of multiple race/ethnicity data and rounding. Estimates based on census data.

Crimes

How the number of reports per 100,000 people compares to other Chicago community areas for 2006

**Education**

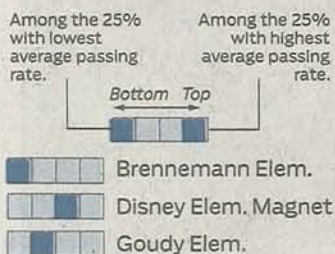
Residents age 25 and older



Numbers do not add up to 100% because of rounding. Estimates based on census data.

Schools

How performance on standardized tests compares statewide



Tucked away next to everything

Continued from Page 2

down," he says, crediting Chicago Police District 23 and giving a nod to citizens who use cell phones to call 911.

Shopping in Buena Park is limited to smaller specialty retailers like florists, and auto repair and convenience stores. Most residents are eagerly following the construction in adjacent Uptown of the Target complex on the northwest corner of the Montrose, Sheridan and Broadway intersection. The Buena Park side, or southeast corner, of that intersection includes a Jewel-Osco, a TCF Bank and a World's Gym.

Within the neighborhood, there are major employers, including Thorek Memorial Hospital and Howard Brown Health Center.

Schools include Brenneman Elementary and Disney Elementary Magnet. The Lycée Français de Chicago, Prologue High School, St. Mary of the Lake School (preschool through 8th grade) and the Day School also are in Buena Park.

Dollop Coffee & Tea and Awake Café offer free Wi-Fi and interesting menus and are great places to stop in any day. Kathleen Hogan likes to walk over to Awake on Irving Park Road for organic tea.

Hogan's move to Buena Park has a bit of personal history attached. Sipping tea, she says that when her mother was a girl she had lived at The Paddington apartment building on Irving Park. It is now a condo complex. Hogan says she never thought she would be living in the same area. It wasn't exactly déjà vu, but she did experience a welcome familiarity when she walked through the neighborhood.

Hogan had checked out Lincoln Park and Roscoe Village, both areas she had lived in before a stint in the Far East. When she returned to the states, she started looking at her old neighborhoods and then included Buena Park.

She says she fell in love with the "hidden gem" that she found along the lake. "I can walk to Wrigley and walk my dog at the dog park at Montrose [Beach]," she said. "I looked everywhere and I was very open to new places.

"When it came right down to it, the home I bought had more square feet for the money. It was fully renovated, air-conditioned, and [included] parking," she said. "It had all the pluses I wanted, and I got it by going just a bit further north."



Barista Brian Rady prepares drinks at Dollop Coffee & Tea, a place for those who like to linger with laptops, newspapers and books. ANDREW A. NELLES/PHOTOS FOR THE TRIBUNE

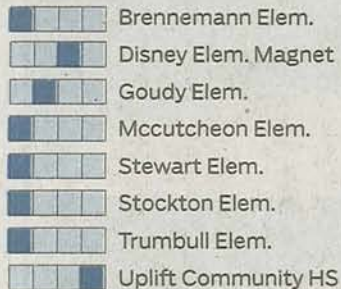


Peace Garden, a limestone fountain and seating area, is along the bike path just east of Lake Shore Drive near Buena Avenue. In 1986, the Greenpeace environmental group designated the spot a peace garden.

Schools

How performance on standardized tests compares statewide

Among the 25% with lowest average passing rate. Among the 25% with highest average passing rate.



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Want to dig deeper? Go online for a wealth of data, interactive maps for any community in the Chicago area including information about crime and schools:

Data represents students' combined average passing rate on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, the Prairie State Achievement Exam, the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English exam and the Illinois Alternate Assessment exam. Schools with multiple campuses are represented by a composite score.

The data on this page is equivalent to the Buena Park community area which includes the neighborhoods Ravenswood and Uptown.

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Hogan has found that there aren't that many trade-offs to living in Buena Park. For theater? Two of the city's independent companies are in Buena Park—Profiles Theatre and the National Pastime Theater. Night life? The Holiday Club rocks in retro seven nights a week and the staff at Bar on Buena is just as friendly to newcomers as it is to locals. And there's Michael's, a pizzeria and sports bar, and Nick's Uptown, too.

Although Buena Park doesn't have a movie theater, on Monday evenings in the summer fans find their way to Cricket Hill for free films. Cricket Hill is just north of Montrose and east of Lake Shore Drive. For Buena Park residents, it is in the "nearby" category. With built-in stadium seating, Hogan says it is the best place in the city to see an outdoor movie.

Hogan also joined Buena Park Neighbors when she moved into the neighborhood. She says living in Buena Park gives her access to the lake, great transportation and terrific neighbors. If she wants crazy, she says she has access to all that in nearby Wrigleyville or at the jazz hot spots in Uptown.



Buena Avenue. In 1986, the Greenpeace environmental group designated the spot a peace garden.

Housing along North Clarendon Avenue in Buena Park. In the neighborhood, vintage apartment buildings blend with high-rise condominiums, town-homes and single-family houses.