

Logan Square Bike Tour



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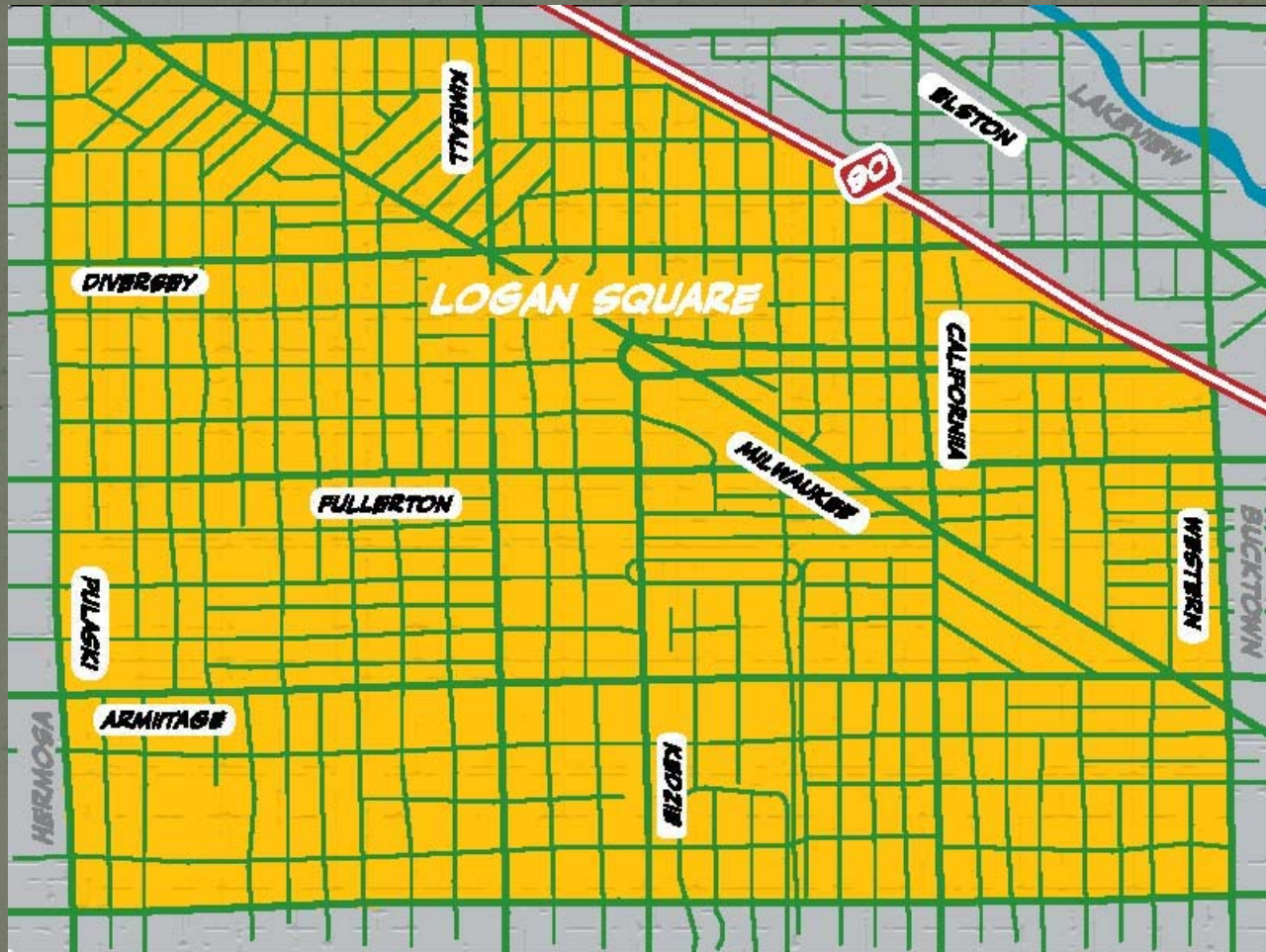
An architectural and historical journey through the entire Community Area known as Logan Square, including its historic boulevards, Bucktown, and Palmer Square



The Bike Tour Route



Logan Square Community Area Map



Maps by Ross Felten for Big Shoulders Realty

Logan Square History and Characteristics

As is the nature of our bike tours, we will learn about the history of the area as we bike through it. We will tell the history in the order on the ride it comes to us and hopefully all told, it forms a better understanding of this area. The term Logan Square is actually four things. It is Community Area #22. It is also a neighborhood whose boundaries actually stretch over the Community Area's Northern boundary of Diversey into Albany Park. It is also this small park we are standing in and finally, it, or rather Logan, is the name of the boulevard we are standing on. All of these are named for General John A. Logan. He was a Union Civil War general who also served in the Mexican-American War. He was a senator from Illinois & a Vice-Presidential candidate who is best remembered as the founder of Memorial Day.

Today Logan Square is a diverse community. It is an area well known for its historic boulevards which are afforded a home in the national register of historic places & are designated a historic district by the federal government & the city of Chicago. Despite the proliferation of boulevards, which were intended to act as gardens within the city, Logan Square is also ironically the community in Chicago with the second least amount of green space. It is a highly-built environment.



Photos along Logan Boulevard by Lisa Winn.

Logan Square History and Characteristics continued

Logan Square is home to many historic homes & mansions, but also contains over 60% renters. It is a study in interesting contrasts, much as Chicago itself is. One of the unique factors regarding Logan Square is that there is a very eclectic style to many of the homes & buildings. Many attribute this to the fact that the original citizens of Logan Square, almost all of whom were immigrants, remembered the castles & buildings of Europe, but merged these elements with the local building techniques & styles. For this reason, we see brick two-flats that closely resemble others in Chicago, but with interesting neo-classical flourishes, more elaborate decorative elements, patterned brick-work evoking old-world craftsmanship and similarly unique touches on otherwise "classic" Chicago architecture.



Logan Square is a treasure trove of unique and beautiful buildings along both its historic boulevards and the small neighborhood side-streets. There are a wide variety of styles, many augmented with interesting flairs and decorative flourishes reminiscent of European castles and classic old world architecture.

Illinois Centennial Monument

Needless to say, this monument was built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Illinois' Statehood. This 68 foot tall marble Doric column is topped by an Eagle, an icon of the state flag. It was designed by Henry Bacon, the same architect who designed the Lincoln Memorial in D.C. The relief of early life in Illinois is the work of sculptor Evelyn Longmann. This Square is host to the Logan Square Farmer's Market every June through October.

The Illinois Centennial Monument on approach from Logan headed West in early May 2008 (left)and piercing the storm filled sky in late March, 2008 (right).



Minnekirken – The Norwegian Church

2614 N Kedzie

Minnekirken means “Memorial Church” in Norwegian. This towering gothic church was built by Norwegian immigrants in 1912. It is the last church to conduct services in Norwegian for a 400 mile radius. This church was designed by Charles Sorenson and is somewhat typical of the Protestant Gothic design.



This impressive apartment building (above) sits on the corner of the square, one building removed from Minnekirken. The picture on the left is a former rectory of the great Norwegian Church, and Minnekirken, is pictured to the right



Some Community Parks

Kosciuszko Park – 2732 N Avers. (left picture)

This park is named after the Tadeusz Kościuszko. Kosciuszko was a hero of both the American Revolution where he fought as a Colonel, and of the Kosciuszko Uprising in Poland. He was a close friend of Thomas Jefferson and appointed the head of engineering for the Army by George Washington. He retired as a brigadier general in the US army, but he was also a commander in the Polish army and a hero in Poland and Lithuania's fight to gain independence from Russia. The park was built in 1911. The Tudor fieldhouse was designed by Albert A. Schwartz.

Unity Park – 2636 N Kimball (middle picture)

This humble park was formed through a partnership of the citizens of the area with the Parks District and city government. The small play lot was formerly a high-crime area parking lot that was built by the Parks District and neighborhood volunteers. Today this small park is well utilized with children and families filling the small space every day.

Neighbors Garden Playlot Park - 2533 N. Sacramento Ave (right picture)

This is a small oasis in the middle of Logan Square, looking almost like an extended garden of the building next door. It is a neighbor tended garden and play area for children that makes the most of its small space



Milwaukee, Diversey, Kimball district

Logan Square was an empty land historically unoccupied until Martin Kimbell, a New York teacher purchased 160 acres 5 miles northwest of downtown Chicago in order to become a farmer. Kimbell happened to pick some very soggy area to settle in, explaining its long history of disuse. Farming proved a difficult toil, but less so than the trip downtown to bring harvest to market. The travel was arduous and marshy, and it wasn't until 1850 that the city laid 3" planks of oak boards upon the flattened earth to form Northwest Plank Road, also called North Plank Road or Old Plank Road. This artery connecting the northwest communities and farms to Chicago is today known as Milwaukee Avenue.

As people began to settle into the area, it became known as Jefferson. Some of the early development of Jefferson, including the area now known as Logan Square actually came about due to Chicago building restrictions following the Great Chicago Fire. Many immigrants arrived to the area very poor, and could not afford to build their homes out of brick as required by city statute. This ban on wood-frame construction led directly to the development of many out-lying communities, where citizens could build as they pleased. Thus a great deal of Logan Square's development occurred in the post-fire years of 1872 to the late 1880s.



This Foot Locker, which was formerly a Woolworth's represents what would have been the Northeast corner of Martin Kimbell's farm.

Milwaukee, Diversey, Kimball district continued



At the corner of the Milwaukee, Diversey, Kimball intersection, the former Goldblatt's department store (top) is currently a Gap Outlet, and the Morris B. Sachs building (bottom) has been vacant for over 20 years, with the exception of Payless Shoes on the ground floor.

The town was finally annexed to Chicago in 1889, and began to respond to citizen demands for amenities and services such as sewers, and of course, fire protection. The city replaced the planks on Milwaukee Avenue with wooden block pavers, and renamed many streets in the area, including the namesake street for the town's unofficial founder, Martin Kimbell, whose street was spelled with an A. Martin's son Charles was so upset by this slight that he once rode through the town on horseback and painted all of the "a"s back to "e"s.

Presently, the area is one of the central shopping district to the area, however, it has suffered a decent amount of neglect. That building is called the Morris B. Sachs Building at the opposite corner from the edge of Martin Kimbell's farm. As an example, it has been vacant for over 20 years and is the subject of a fight between a proposal the city favors for an artists' loft building with 28 affordable housing units vs a plan favored by others that offers nearly 50 affordable houses. This has been the source of great controversy, and in the end this grand building is still sitting vacant, with the exception of the Payless, though word is that there is a compromised plan involving rental units and artist space that is likely to move forward. The building housing the Gap was formerly a Goldblatt's department store.

Logan Theater – 2646 N Milwaukee

A fairly humble example of a theater-block, the Logan Theater is a modest Movie Palace built in 1915. Unlike nearly any other example however, it is still a wonderful place to watch trailing first run movies. The interior is still very lavish and a throw-back to the glory-days of movie palaces. It is a charming place to enjoy a cheap date with a dinner at Lula Café on the square beforehand. In my opinion, it is only fair to warn your date that the seats aren't the best, and that somehow they crammed 4 screens in there, so they are a little, you know, cramped feeling. I still dig it and they have yummy popcorn.

Shot of Logan Theater via bicycle heading down Milwaukee Avenue and a shot of brick work and limestone detailing on the Theater building.



The Boulevard System

The Boulevards of Logan Square are on the National Historic Register and are both a city and national landmark. In some cases, we will travel on only parts of the boulevard system, but in other cases, we will actually travel along the residential side of the boulevard on both sides to check out some great architecture up close and at safer speeds and traffic level.

Logan Square is host to the final leg of the great Chicago Boulevard systems. Early in its existence, Chicago had a logo in Latin, "Urbs in Horto" which translates to "city in a garden", but for much of its early years, Chicago was a dusty and dirty commercial city with very little in the way of gardens or parks. In 1849, real estate speculator and developer John S. Wright proposed the Boulevard system as a way of tying together a new ring of parks to help inspire and appease its citizens and to truly create a "city in a garden".

These boulevards were enormous avenues, 250 foot from sidewalk to sidewalk. The centers were designed for carriage rides, with service roads to the homes. often complete with green medians and parks that form what is commonly referred to as an "emerald necklace", a famous and unique feature of Chicago. Logan Square received a large number of boulevards ultimately intended as turnaround for a boulevard that would occupy Diversey and stretch back to the lake in Lincoln Park, a goal that was never realized. The Boulevard system did leave Logan Square with a unique feature that helps give character to the area, as it is one of the only areas where the boulevards never fell into a state of disrepair. Many of the homes are in immaculate shape and the boulevards in Logan Square have been well maintained.

The entrance to the Apartments for John Gerson designed by Frederick Schock in 1909 (left), and more shots along Logan Boulevard by Lisa Winn.



Kedzie Boulevard Mansions

William Nowaczewski House - 2410 N Kedzie Blvd (left top photo)

Architect unknown – 1897. This is a superbly ornate carved limestone house that has elements of Flemish, Classical and Gothic design. (left top)

Chicago Norske Club – 2350 N Kedzie Blvd. (top right photo)

Built in 1916 by Glaver and Dinkelberg, this simple cottage form used traditional Norwegian architecture such as the dragon ornamentation and heavy brackets supporting the roof eaves.

Peter M Zuncker House – 2312 N Kedzie Blvd. (middle photo)

This Prairie style home built in 1911 by Huehl and Schmid, architects of the Medinah Temple.

2224 N Kedzie Blvd – (bottom left photo)

This home was built in 1915 by Jean B Rohm and Son. It has exquisite limestone carvings, including a highly detailed face in the center of the building.

The Mansion – 2408 N Kedzie Blvd (bottom right photo)

This three story mansion was designed in 1921 by architect Mortiz Stranch. Formerly a Masonic temple, currently it is referred to as the Mansion and has been turned into a special-event venue for private events, corporate events, weddings, concerts, parties and the like. It is over 20,000 square feet inside, featuring a number of banquet rooms and two auditoriums with stages.



Palmer Square



This is what is known as a pocket neighborhood within Logan Square. Here, the boulevard widens to 400 feet. It is a very concentrated area around the 7 acre park known as Palmer Square, which the area is named from, roughly from Fullerton to Armitage and Kedzie to Milwaukee. Every August, there is an Arts Festival in the park and the Parks District is currently using money from its budget and state matching funds from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to redevelop the park, apparently with some sort of Velveteen Rabbit theme. Hmmm.

Boulevard Buildings

(Pictured clockwise from upper left)

Bethel Lutheran Church – 2101 N Humboldt

This gothic church was built in 1907 as the new church for a Norwegian Baptist congregation formed in the area in 18

St. Sylvester's Church - 2157 N Humboldt.

This gothic church was built in 1906 and 1907, the same years as Bethel Lutheran Church was built just down the street. The site of Augustus Schwinn's former mansion is the site of the current St. Sylvester's school. The address would have been 2128 N Humboldt.

Armitage Baptist Church – 2451 N Kedzie

This is formerly the Logan Square Masonic Temple.

Logan Square Auditorium (Gregory Building)

2539 N. Kedzie

Currently incarnated as a live music venue, but it is a beautiful ballroom with offices on the second floor and storefronts on the ground floor, including Lula Café, an awesome local eatery.



Logan Boulevard Mansions



Jefferson Ice Company - 3024 W Logan – (left top row photo)

This is the mansion of John Rustman, owner of the Jefferson Ice Company. He had John Ahlschlager build his home. This is the current home of Logan Square Preservation.



2959 W Logan (right top row photo)

Greystone mansion built in 1909, designed by architect Herman J. Gaul

2947, 2949 and 2951 W Logan (left to right, middle row photos)

All three of these impressive Greystones, standing side by side, were built in 1907 by architect Albert Fisher



Ryan Mansion – 2819 W Logan (left bottom row photo)

Home designed by architect John Ahlschlager on a commission by Anna Ryan, the widow of a former 1st ward Alderman.

2741 and 2715 W Logan (2nd and 3rd from left, bottom row photos)

1905 – Burtar and Gassman

Rath House - 2703 W. Logan (two right bottom row photos)

John Rath was an Austrian immigrant who made his fortune in high-quality coopering, which was barrel making. This apparently was quite a successful venture, as we as able to hire Prairie School architect George Maher to design him this home in 1907.



Bucktown



Bucktown

is older than the rest of Logan Square. It's name means it is a town for goats. The original name for the area in Polish was "kozie prery" which means "goat prairie" and fairly well described the use of the area. Bucktown is part of the eastern section of the community area, Western Avenue to the Chicago River, North from Fullerton to just North of Wicker Park at the dividing line for Logan Square, Bloomingdale.

Though largely residential, there are burgeoning commercial districts along its main arteries, particularly along Damen Avenue. The area was formerly known as the town of Holstein. It was annexed to Chicago in the 1830s. During the industrial age, it was site to many factories which have either since been converted into condominiums or office space or have been entirely demolished and built over. Since the 1980s when artists started gravitating to the area, it has become increasingly popular, and of course expensive. When people discuss gentrification displacing long-term residents, unfortunately, Bucktown is an area where the increased property assessments and corresponding taxes have made this a harsh reality.

Congress Theater

2135 N Milwaukee

The Congress Theater opened its doors in 1926 and was a spectacular example of the movie palace craze of the 1920s. Today, it is primarily used as a concert venue or for the occasional wrestling match, but it was originally built by Fridstein and Company for the Chicago movie chain operated by Bubliner and Trinz. The detailed terra cotta work on the building's exterior is glorious and in wonderful condition. The building is absolutely massive, and also was built to house stores and apartments in addition to the massive auditorium theater. Buildings like this were known as "theater blocks", because, well, they occupied a full block. Some consider the architectural style almost baroque in its ornamentation, but it is truly a marvelous Classical revival piece. Its interior is at least as lavish and ornamented as the grand exterior. The entrance, itself breathtaking, open in turn into the lobby, with staggering height and space and opulent materials and fixtures before entering on the nearly 3,000 seat auditorium, dominated by the dramatic and elaborate under lit dome in the center of the ceiling.



Holstein Park

The land for what has become Holstein Park, named after the former name of the Bucktown area, was set aside with the intent of becoming a park by Real Estate developers who were hoping the city would improve the area and help increase the value of their investment in the area. The city did eventually transfer control the West Park District who built the park. The impressive Prairie Field House was built by Illinois state architect, William C. Zimmerman who was also designed the Pulaski Park field house and several private mansions throughout Chicago in addition to work for the state and government.



St. Hedwig's

2226 N Hoyne

This is the oldest church in Bucktown. Unfortunately, last month it suffered a severe fire and will be closed for several months during repairs. The church was built in 1901 by Adolphus Druiding. This style is known as Renaissance Revival, often used in Polish Catholic churches.

Pictures of St. Hedwig's along the right . The rectory (below middle) and the adjacent shrine (below left).



St. Mary of the Angels

1850 N Hermitage

Built from 1914 through 1920 by Worthmann and Steinbach, this is considered to be the best example in North America of Roman Renaissance style architecture. The original pastor of St. Mary of the Angels had grand ambitions to build the "Polish Basilica" and indeed, the dome in particular were modeled after Michelangelo's rotunda for St. Peter's Basilica. Eventually, this massive structure fell into disrepair and had to be closed in 1987, but then underwent a major restoration led by the firm of Holabird and Root, returning it to its present grandeur.

Pictures of St. Mary of the Angels Church and Schools. Except for the two left-most pictures, all pictures on this page taken by Lisa Winn for Big Shoulders Realty.



Bloomington Elevated Trail

We end our tour by looking at what is possibly going to be one of Chicago's most unique parks. This abandoned train line hasn't been used since 2000. Many citizens of the city hope that the city will fulfill plans to build a 3 mile long, 30 foot wide bike trail park. There is a Logan Square based advocacy group called Friends of the Bloomington Trail as well as a national group called "Rails to Trails" who have worked with others in the community to try to make this goal a reality. It seems an appropriate place to end our bike tour, at the southern edge of Bucktown and Logan Square, with an area, that will hopefully be one we can bike on for the next tour of the area.

