

# Welcome to the Neighborhood | Andersonville

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*Chicago REALTOR® magazine will profile one Chicago neighborhood per issue and highlight the major draws of buying and selling property within that community. If you would like to suggest a feature neighborhood or provide input for an upcoming profile, please contact [Editor@ChicagoREALTOR.com](mailto:Editor@ChicagoREALTOR.com).*

**A** cherry orchard and densely wooded forest in the mid-nineteenth century, the area now known as Andersonville was once populated almost exclusively by Swedish immigrants who settled outside the city limits in order to build affordable, wooden homes (after the Chicago fire, only brick and stone homes were permitted within city lines).

Though remnants of this community's Swedish origin can be found on every street corner, Andersonville has blossomed into a truly multicultural hub and a great Chicago neighborhoods to call home.

Andersonville's pleasantly shaded residential streets make it an idyllic North Side location for families or singles disinterested in the bustle of Wrigleyville or the cost of Lincoln Park living. Close proximity to Lake Shore Drive and public transportation make Andersonville an easy commute for Loop professionals.

## Heritage and History

Andersonville boasts one of the richest cultural histories of any Chicago neighborhood, with the Swedish American Museum (5211 N. Clark St.) and the Edgewater Historical Society (5358 N. Ashland Ave.) alongside numerous long-standing restaurants and shops.

The mission of the Swedish American Museum is "to preserve and present the Swedish American heritage in the United States for the education and enjoyment of all ages and ethnic background." Using archived records or a specialized internet search program, visitors of Nordic descent can peruse records from parishes throughout Sweden to track their genealogy.

Children can board a 20-foot boat and simulate the New World pioneer experience in a log cabin in the Children's Museum of Immigration exhibit while their parents enjoy the museum store and take in traditional artwork or a Swedish musical performance.

Chicago's most famous name in Swedish cuisine has to be Ann Sather (5207 N. Clark St.), and their signature Swedish pancakes with Lingonberries are the talk of the town. If you're unable to stomach the hour-long wait for your breakfast, head west to Pauline's (1754 W. Balmoral), a quaint diner-esque spot nestled in a quiet, residential corner of Andersonville. The bottomless cups of coffee, 5-egg omelettes, and blackboard specials are as delicious as the booths are cozy.

Wikstrom's Scandinavian Foods & Gifts (5247 N. Clark St.) is a great alternative to Starbucks for your morning pastry and cup o' joe. Finnish cheeses, Norwegian chocolates, and Danish jams are just a few of the hundreds of delicious items available at this 40-year old neighborhood favorite.

One of Chicago's most highly-anticipated summer street festivals, Andersonville Midsommarfest features displays of traditional Swedish heritage as well as a celebration of many other cultures. Delicious food, live music, and hands-on activities keep crowds of nearly 50,000 attending Midsommarfest each June.



## Non-Nordic Hot Spots

Just north of the Swedish American Museum is the Gethsemane Garden Center (5739 N. Clark St.), a family-run, city-renowned greenhouse carrying everything from bonsai trees to the largest selection of annuals in Chicago. Less experienced customers can expect personal attention from the knowledgeable staff, who will send you home with detailed instructions on how to best care for your new purchase.

Chicago's premier feminist bookshop, Women and Children First (5233 N. Clark St.), is a welcome alternative to the chain book vendors downtown. A specialized selection caters not only to Andersonville's burgeoning gay and lesbian community, but to women and children as well.

To relieve tension after a day of shopping and strolling, visit Deeply Kneaded Therapeutic Massage (5412 N. Clark St.), a hidden oasis for ultimate relaxation. At \$75 an hour and \$45 for 30 minutes, Deeply







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Kneaded is far more reasonably priced than some of its spa-style neighbors, and owner Denise Theobald, LMT, is one of only two Chicagoland massage therapists licensed in Ashitsu oriental bar therapy.

In such a culturally chic neighborhood, top-notch American fare is a bit of a surprise. Nonetheless, Huey's Hot Dogs (1507 W. Balmoral) and Hamburger Mary's (5400 N. Clark St.) are big local hits. Try one of Huey's deliciously thick milkshakes and fries or enjoy Mary's delicious half-pound burgers with a low-cal root beer float.

Joie de Vine (1744 W. Balmoral), tucked away in tree-lined West Andersonville, may look like your run-of-the-mill wine bar, but one glance inside confirms it is anything but ordinary. Bold yellow, blue, and orange hues cast a luminous glow on the bottles lining the bar, and life-size black and white portraits of the wait staff and regular customers. There isn't a "kitchen," per se, but to tide you over, the bartender will pair your wine flight with a selection of cheeses, meats, olives, and even decadent Vosges truffles for a very reasonable price.

## Whose Buying, Whose Selling?

The Andersonville neighborhood holds tremendous appeal for first time homebuyers and young couples looking to upgrade from smaller spaces in neighboring communities. "A lot of first time buyers come to Anderson-

ville from Lakeview and Lincoln Park to find something nice and large, which is difficult and expensive where they're at," said Steve Acoba, a REALTOR® who frequently represents Andersonville buyers and sellers. "You can still find a nice, big one-bedroom from \$200,000 to \$250,000."

Acoba also pointed out that families looking to upgrade to two-to-three bedroom condominium or single-family homes can find Andersonville properties to suit their needs from about \$350,000 to \$480,000. "There is a really good mix of properties," he says.

Ellen Webber, also a REALTOR® who represents Andersonville clients, agrees. "People are finding small one bedroom condominium for around \$200,000 in the 'sweet spot,' she says. "If you go slightly west, however, in the strip between Ashland and Ravenswood, it's a bit more affordable and your money goes further." She points out that the majority of West Andersonville is a few short blocks from Andersonville's main corridor and serves as a connector to the very desirable Lincoln Square neighborhood. West Andersonville residents have the best of both communities.

Webber sees mostly single first-time homeowners looking for condominiums in the neighborhood, and thanks to the numerous condo conversions in Andersonville over the past six years, many properties have every amenity the buyer requires. "It's a very desirable neighborhood [to these younger buyers]

because of close proximity to a lot of entertaining and different shops and independent retailers," she says. "There aren't a whole lot of chains."

## Your Potential Clients are Already There!

While REALTORS® like Acoba and Webber notice an influx in residents from Lincoln Park and Lakeview moving towards Andersonville, a number of potential clients are already living in the community—as renters.

Twenty-seven year-old marketing professional Kristina Hodgson rents her spacious one-bedroom apartment in the heart of Andersonville's desirable main corridor on Clark St. "I think that if I was going to buy, I would definitely look in Andersonville," she says. "It's a great neighborhood for young adults and young families." Yet Hodgson has no immediate plans to



### We asked you...

Who Wants to Live in Andersonville Now?

1. First Time Homebuyers
2. Young Couples (Married and Alternative)
3. Small Families Looking to Upgrade

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purchase a home, given her knowledge of property costs in the neighborhood. Her perception, shared by many of her young peers, is that, “even the older buildings are being sold for quite a lot,” she points out.

Renters in their mid-twenties, who, like Hodgson, see homeownership as a daunting and expensive venture requiring extensive research could truly benefit from the expert guidance of a REALTOR® in navigating the transition from lessee to owner.

Maurice Ortiz, a REALTOR® with the Chicago apartment search team Apartment People, both sells and rents properties in the Andersonville community. Ortiz has recently seen a number of Andersonville customers who were on the verge of purchasing a home swing back into renting, “just because of the market,” he says. “What I’ve been telling people is that it’s a great time to buy... sellers are willing to do whatever it takes.” Recently, he has seen properties in Andersonville sell for ten, twenty, and even thirty percent less than they were

listed for a year ago.

REALTORS® wishing to engage a new population of prospective homebuyers would do well to market to Andersonville renters. But this hot neighborhood’s personality and charm make it a place to live for virtually any client. **CR**

*Photos by Kali Loader and Jim August.*

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