



WEST TOWNS

HOME TO FAMILIES AND TRADITION

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS

West Towns



A Cicero Home



Freddy's Pizza & Grocery



Cicero Street Signs



Cermak Plaza Shopping Center

“They used to call Cermak Road the ‘biggest mall in America’ because it’s lined with little stores. One of the best things about West Towns is the quaintness of the area,” says Joseph J. Pav, GRI, broker/owner, Pav Realty. Pav, 71, has lived in West Towns since he was 11. He has seen the community through ups and downs but is inspired today by what he calls ‘a Renaissance’ of families moving in seeking affordable, quality homes.

West Towns, as served by the West Towns Chapter of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, is comprised of numerous suburbs near-west of Chicago. With Cicero and Berwyn as its hub, the area extends out to Brookfield, North Riverside, Stickney, Lyons, Park Forest and other nearby communities.

Cicero is the suburb nearest to downtown, bordered on the north and east by Chicago. In a way, Cicero is grandfather to the region. Originally established at 36 square miles, over time it ceded Austin to Chicago, other areas to Stickney and Berwyn, and its northern portion to Oak Park. Today’s Cicero is 5.5 square miles.

Largely established by Czechoslovakian, German, Polish and Italian families whose heritage is still apparent in annual festivals and family-owned businesses, Cicero and Berwyn currently hum with the arrival of Hispanic populations. Pav calls the area’s “melting pot” quality another major asset.

Historically, Berwyn and Cicero’s proximity to several major railroad lines made them hotbeds of commerce and industry at the turn of the last century. A Western Electric telephone equipment plant established in Cicero in 1904 was one of the area’s key employers. Berwyn, which prohibited heavy industry, remained largely residential.

Berwyn’s renowned collection of two-story Chicago-style bungalows, one of the finest in the nation, was built mostly between 1920 and 1929, an era when the town was labeled Chicago’s fastest-growing suburb.

In addition to bungalows, the growth spurt, which lasted up until the Great Depression, saw the rise of larger homes and a variety of two-flats, three-flats and larger multi-family buildings. With today’s economic and sustainability interest in smaller, more energy efficient homes, these properties continue to serve local residents.

“It’s a real nice mix of stock that attracts owners, renters and investors,” Pav says. “We have many different people who are basically looking for the same thing: affordability. We definitely have affordability going for us. Most of the families I work with are coming from the city or from suburbs farther west that they feel priced out of.”

What’s selling in... Berwyn?

FastSTATS Fourth Quarter 2010 (402)

Attached Single Family	Detached Single Family
Units: 6	Units: 66
Median Price: \$76,900	Median Price: \$125,000

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FastSTATS consists of average sales price, median sales price, market time, units sold and percent change for Chicago and the suburbs.

West Towns bungalows are ideal for housing three to seven residents, Pav estimates, because most have attics that can be built out to add more living space. “It works. It never gets too small and it’s affordable,” he says. Pav is selling the same bungalows for \$150,000 to \$160,000 that he was selling in 2005 for \$240,000 to

\$245,000. With price value compounded by low interest rates, he is encouraging more renters to invest in their own homes.

“Why not?” he says. “The costs of renting and buying are about the same and we have beautiful stock, shopping and everything out here. It will never go out of style.”

He feels today’s crop of economy-motivated buyers are creating positive local change and adding vitality.

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West Towns



Cicero Public Library



Gelato from Freddy's Pizza



LaLupita Restaurant

"We're experiencing a Renaissance, with people looking for what they first looked for when they made homes in this community," he says.

Jorge Luna, GRI, broker/owner, Luna Homes Realty, has lived and worked in West Towns for 18 years. He too he is seeing an influx of families that want to move out of the city while home prices are more readily affordable. He cites the area's ease of access to downtown and good public transportation.

In addition to bungalows, many buyers come to West Towns looking for two- or three-flats they can live in and also use for rental income. Luna is encouraging these investments, which can serve what he sees as the area's growing rental population.

"I am strongly recommending the value of income properties right now," he says.

Luna is bi-lingual, English and Spanish, and says his fluency is an asset to doing business in the area.

The incoming rush of families seems to correspond with commercial investment in West Towns. Berwyn's expansive Cermak Plaza Shopping Center (where the Spindle sculpture used to be, at the intersection of Harlem Avenue and Cermak Road) is being fully renovated to revitalize economic activity. In addition, Berwyn and Cicero are partnering with Oak Park to rejuvenate Roosevelt Road from Harlem to Lombard Avenue. Berwyn hosts a growing arts community, with a professional equity theater and an Arts Council. And the "mom and pop" stores along a densely populated commercial strip of Cermak, from Cicero Avenue west to Harlem, continue to thrive.

"This is the kind of area where people like to shop locally," Pav says.

West Towns shops, restaurants and other attractions are rich in local history and special interests. Among the highlights:

- **Brookfield Zoo**, First Ave. between Ogden Ave. and 31st St., Brookfield. Opened in 1934, the zoo has earned an international reputation.
- **Cermak Plaza Shopping Center**, intersection of Harlem Ave. and Cermak Rd., Berwyn. A popular, expansive shopping and eating destination.
- **Freddy's Pizzeria**, 1600 S. 61st Ave., Cicero. Both food counter and Italian grocery, Freddy's offers domestic and imported Italian foods and boasts the best gelato in the city.
- **FitzGerald's**, 6615 W. Roosevelt Rd., Berwyn. A 1940s style-roadhouse known nationally for live music (adjacent to the West Towns location of Chicago's Wishbone restaurant).
- **Gina's Italian Ice**, 6737 W. Roosevelt Rd., Berwyn. A beloved seasonal storefront for more than 30 years.
- **Horrorbles**, 6729 W. Roosevelt Rd., Berwyn. Need a monkey's paw, giant monster replica, animal skeleton or amazing spider baby? Check out this cult classic shop specializing in horror and sci-fi movie memorabilia.
- **La Quebrada**, 4859 W. Roosevelt Rd., Cicero. This understated Mexican spot specializes in authentic dishes from Oaxaca, Guerrero, Acapulco and Teloapan.
- **Riverside Family Restaurant**, 3422 S. Harlem Ave., Riverside. Czech specialties like plum dumplings, duck and goulash abound at this longstanding, affordable family diner.
- **16th Street Theater**, Berwyn Cultural Center, 6420 16th St., Berwyn. Berwyn's first professional equity theater. **CR**

What's selling in... Cicero?

FastSTATS Fourth Quarter 2010 (650)

Attached Single Family **Detached Single Family**

Units: 2

Units: 73

Median Price: \$60,500

Median Price: \$85,000

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