THE CITY OF Chicago Heights

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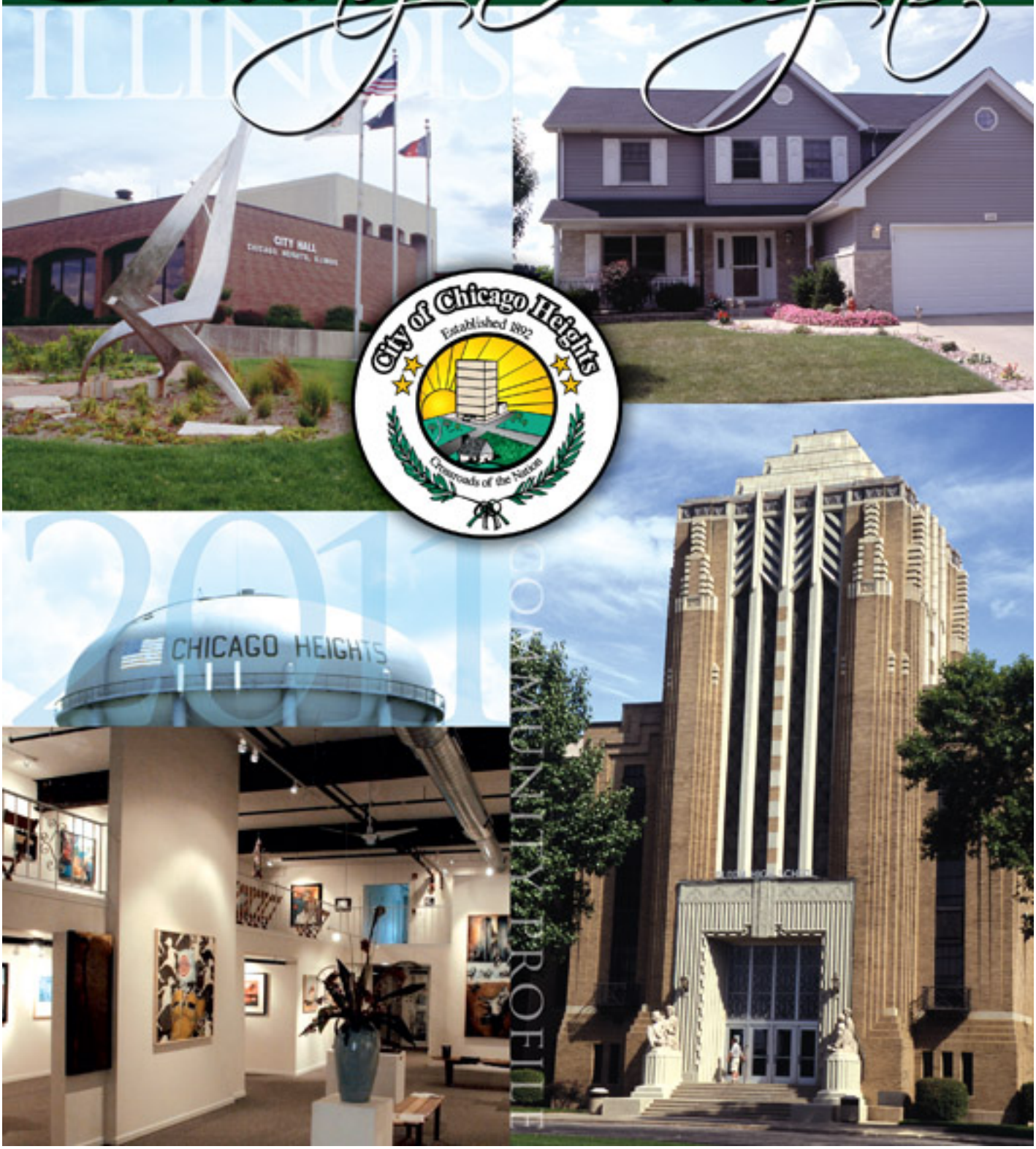


City of Chicago Heights
Established 1892
Crossroads of the Nation

2011 COMMUNITY PROFILE

On behalf of City Clerk Lori Wilcox, City Treasurer James Dee and our Chicago Heights City Council, it is with great pride that I extend a heartfelt “Welcome!” and hope our city’s Village Profile booklet will help serve as a guided tour through our community.

Chicago Heights has always been known for being a hard-working, industrial and manufacturing town and our mission is to keep honoring our past heritage while moving forward to create new opportunities. Our city is proud of the good working relationships we have with our citizens, businesses, service organizations, neighboring communities and state, county and township elected officials.

Positive results are evident when we see improvements in our streets, roads and bridges; better schools; environmental technology; more affordable housing and housing options for our senior residents, with the assistance of Programs and Awards, such as:

• The F.I.N.D. Program (Financial Incentives for Neighborhood Development)-a $1.6 Million Grant via Cook County and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Neighborhood Stabilization Program earmarked for the city’s East Side Redevelopment

• A $1 Million Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources earmarked for the Old Plank Trail

• A $280,000 Grant from U.S. Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. earmarked for Storm Water Improvements

Additionally, our continuing goal is to maintain essential city services — such as our full-time Police and Fire Departments — while remaining fiscally responsible. Positive change does not happen overnight, but it does happen through hard work, dedicated planning and an economic-development friendly atmosphere, which we

already have in place, to support our vision for a better, stronger future. There is still much to do, but cooperation among residents, businesses and government has never been greater. This “teamwork” shows and you can see it in the pages that follow. I want to thank the many local businesses and organizations who continue to show their support of Chicago Heights and I encourage you to support them, as well.

Once again, on behalf of Clerk Wilcox, Treasurer Dee and our City Council, I welcome you to learn more about Chicago Heights as we continue to Move Forward.

Sincerely,
David A. Gonzalez
Mayor, City of Chicago Heights, IL

Community Overview

Chicago Heights, Illinois, is a diverse city that cherishes its history as it makes strides to ensure continual progress and prosperity today and tomorrow. Its heritage as a quiet farm town of the 1800s and a growing suburb of the 1900s remains fresh in the minds of current residents and visitors, who can experience local history in the well-preserved architecture of structures around town.

The city's first settlers came to the area in the 1830s, locating their homes along the banks of Thorn Creek. These settlers initially dubbed their new hometown Thorn Grove, which changed to the Village of Bloom by 1849. The area began to prosper between the 1850s and 1880s with the coming of the railroad. First came the Joliet and Northern Indiana Railroad in 1853, which eventually linked Bloom to Chicago by 1869. Next came the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railroad in 1887, a route that proved to be a boon, resulting in a surge in local industrial and residential development. Bloom became the City of Chicago Heights in 1892, a name chosen to honor its relation to Chicago and to note its elevation as one of the highest points in the county.

Today, Chicago Heights boasts a population exceeding 31,000 residents. The Chicago Heights Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (CHHPAC) has made great strides in preserving the distinct architectural and historical qualities of the city. Local neighborhoods display thoughtfully restored Victorians, Craftsman-style homes and vintage post-war/mid-20th century homes. Several residences, as well as various other sites throughout town, are designated local landmarks.

The city's historic character blends well with its formidable industrial and commercial environment. In addition, the city features fine schools, cultural outlets, recreational diversions, advanced healthcare and an all-round tight-knit community spirit. This unique mix makes Chicago Heights an enviable place to call home for both residents and businesses.

Come and discover Chicago Heights’ unique character for yourself!

The quality of life discovered within Chicago Heights is exceptional. The city hosts great schools, an outstanding hospital and plenty of opportunities for recreation, shopping, dining and culture. And if that's not enough, its proximity to the vibrant city of Chicago places a long list of world-class attractions at the fingertips of residents.

Friendly and welcoming neighborhoods dot the map of this attractive suburban community, featuring an assortment of home styles and prices. The selection of homes discovered in Chicago Heights is represented by a mix of well-kept historic dwellings and newer homes developed over the last two decades. The many architectural styles in Chicago Heights reflect the city's growth during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Potential homebuyers will find Queen Annes, Victorians, Colonial Revival styles, Craftsman Bungalows, Italianate, 50-year-old vintage styles and more, ensuring that growing families, young professionals and empty nesters will find a home to suit their taste. There are also options for rental properties and affordable apartment units for those not in the market to own.

From early childhood education through college studies, Chicago Heights has it covered.

The majority of local primary school children attend one of 11 campuses within Chicago Heights School District 170. Accompanying its K-8 academic programming is the district's new, tuition-free, all-day preschool program offered through the Griffin Early Childhood Center. Pre-K through 8th grade students also attend schools within Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163, Flossmoor School District 161, Brookwood School District 167 and Speed School District 802.

Graduating eighth graders move on to Bloom Township High School District 206, enrolling at either Bloom High School or Bloom Trail High School. Both facilities are continually at the forefront of secondary education in the south suburbs, offering a comprehensive academic program conducive to student growth and development.

Chicago Heights is also home to the nationally-recognized Marian Catholic High School, a college-preparatory, co-educational high school that draws a student population from more than 70 surrounding zip codes. The high school has earned two recognitions as a Blue Ribbon School, has been named one of the country's top schools by U.S. News & World Report and leads all Southland schools in academic assessments.

College-bound students don't have to leave home to continue their education post high school. The city hosts Prairie State College, a two-year community college offering transfer degrees and technical and career-oriented certificate programs in a variety of areas. The college also provides noncredit adult, corporate and continuing education courses.

Further higher learning options within 15 miles of Chicago Heights include Governors State University, South

Suburban College, Chicago State University and Purdue University-Hammond.

In its earliest days, Chicago Heights hosted an agrarian-based economy. The character of the community transformed with the presence of railroad lines and the rapid growth and development of the nearby city of Chicago. Industrial businesses piled into Chicago Heights, as did commercial ventures, together diversifying the local economy and strengthening the community as a whole.

Today, businesses of all kinds, from international industrial corporations to locally owned enterprises, continue to discover the benefits of doing business in Chicago Heights. The ethnically diverse and highly educated workforce is an important draw for many businesses, and the city's location just outside of Chicago and near major interstates, airports and the Port of Chicago has proven a significant asset. In addition, the area continues to grow, notably in the downtown community, which is experiencing ongoing improvements and commercial development. Updated streetscaping and fa•ade projects have been implemented in recent years, and new facilities are springing up alongside the city's restored historic structures, creating a unique environment for businesses and consumers.

The city's Department of Economic Development has a strong presence in the community. Day in and day out, the department works to enhance the economic vitality of Chicago Heights by offering a host of beneficial tax incentives to assist with business retention, expansion, development and recruitment, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Cook County Property Tax Incentives, Cook County Community Development Block Grants and more. As a home-rule municipality, the city has the opportunity to design specific incentive packages for developers, which comply with the comprehensive plans for the entire community. Additionally, the city is a designated Illinois Enterprise Zone, which presents state incentives and distinct local incentives to encourage development efforts.

Businesses and investors also take advantage of the resources provided through the Chicago Heights Business Council (CHBC). The CHBC works closely with the City of Chicago Heights to retain existing businesses and

attract new businesses by investing in a number of advantageous services and programs. Members participate in informational workshops and forums, various activities revolving around the enhancement of the downtown district, luncheons, networking after hours and monthly meetings in conjunction with city representatives. The CHBC urges you to “Invest Today for the Future of Your Business.” More information on joining is available by contacting the CHBC: call 708-309-7229, email chbc@chicagoheightsbusinesscouncil.org or visit online at www.chicagoheightsbusinesscouncil.com.

Opportunities for area businesses do not end there. Chicago Heights is the proud home of Prairie State College, a comprehensive, two-year college that not only offers an array of degree and certificate programs, but also supplies outstanding community and corporate services. Among the offerings are customizable corporate training and business solution programs, free business counseling through SCORE, informational seminars and a number of specialized noncredit business courses. The college also offers customized conference services at the modern Business and Community Education Center (BCEC). The center is equipped with a 486-seat auditorium, several well-appointed meeting rooms, full-service catering and state-of-the-art technology.

Location

With a strategic location approximately 30 miles due south of downtown Chicago, Chicago Heights has access to all the big-city amenities while maintaining a tranquil suburban lifestyle. The city sits at the crossroads of Lincoln Highway (Route 30) and the Dixie Highway, just a few miles from the Indiana border.

Its position on the south side of Chicago places the city in the heart of the Chicagoland's extensive transportation network. Interstates 57, 80, 294 and 394 are all close by, offering convenient and efficient regional and national travel. Cost-efficient public transportation options cater to both commuters and visitors, as well. Pace offers several bus routes through Chicago Heights, which includes a new regional transfer station downtown, and those looking for a link to the Loop access nearby Metra commuter rail stations in Olympia Fields. As for commercial air travel, flyers utilize the Gary/Chicago International Airport (22 miles from Chicago Heights), Midway International Airport (23 miles from Chicago Heights) and O'Hare International Airport (49 miles from Chicago Heights).

There is much to see and do in the Chicago Heights area…

Cultural & Historical Gems

Artists and art enthusiasts of all kinds don't have to look far to access some of the Southland's finest cultural outlets. Chicago Heights hosts its own community theatre troupe, The Drama Group, and the world-class Union Street Gallery. This facility hosts two floors of public gallery space and individual artist studios on the third floor. Throughout the year, the gallery hosts juried exhibitions, workshops and arts education programming.

The Chicago Heights-based Prairie State College offers another avenue for arts and culture in the community. On campus, students and guests are invited to visit the Christopher Art Gallery, which hosts several shows a year featuring student works, as well as the works of local, regional and nationally-known artists.

The city is also renowned for its architectural qualities, with a number of sites designated as local landmarks. The Chicago Heights Historic Preservation Committee works to maintain these sites and offers historic housewalks, bus tours and public seminars highlighting the heritage of the community. For more information, visit www.chhpac.com.

Recreation

Chicago Heights' location puts it in the midst of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's system of trails and preserves, which gives way to a number of excellent recreational diversions. Multi-use trails are great for bikers, hikers, cross-country skiers and horseback riders, while lakes are ideal for boaters, swimmers and

fishers. Other activities include birding, nature viewing, golfing, picnicking and several wintertime sports.

Residents also have access to Lake Michigan (about 20 miles away), as well as the resources of the Chicago Heights Park District. The district operates a multi-purpose facility in the community, offering a wide variety of recreation programs for people of all ages. Included in the list of offerings are fitness services, group exercise classes, dance, music and art lessons and more. The park district also oversees two nine-hole golf courses in town – Golf Course East and Golf Course West.

Shopping

Retailers of all kinds, from grocery and drug stores to office suppliers and clothiers, have made a home in Chicago Heights. The Lincoln Highway corridor offers a large concentration of stores, as does the developing downtown district, which is quickly blossoming into a prime commercial neighborhood in the Southland. Closely surrounding areas offer even more opportunities for shoppers. Notable sites include Matteson's Lincoln Mall, the Frankfort Historic District and several destinations in the Orland Park area.

Dining

More than 100 restaurants are located in the Chicago Heights area, offering an eclectic array of menus. Casual, family-friendly eateries, fine dining restaurants and fast food and carry-out establishments are all available, serving up pizza, pasta, steaks, hamburgers, salads, ethnic dishes and much, much more. Locals and visitors take advantage of both homegrown restaurants and national chains, which are all sure to serve up the best in fresh foods and customer service.

St. James Hospital is celebrating its 100th Anniversary with a new name – Franciscan St. James Health – and a new logo, but is still 100% committed to providing the same quality healthcare and services to the community, just as it has been doing these past 100 years. Franciscan St. James Health remains a vital healthcare provider in Chicago Heights, operating one of its two campuses right in town. The hospital's comprehensive list of services includes advanced diagnostic imaging services, a 24/7 emergency center and an exceptional joint program. Unique to the Chicago Heights campus is the Center for Rehabilitation, the Sleep Disorders Lab, the new Women's Unit and Lullaby Birthplace and the St. James Health & Wellness Institute – a 71,500-square-foot facility featuring a multi-court gymnasium, an indoor track, an aquatic center, group exercise studios, fitness and wellness services and outpatient rehabilitation services. Additionally, St. James serves as the primary teaching hospital for medical students enrolled in Midwestern University's Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine.

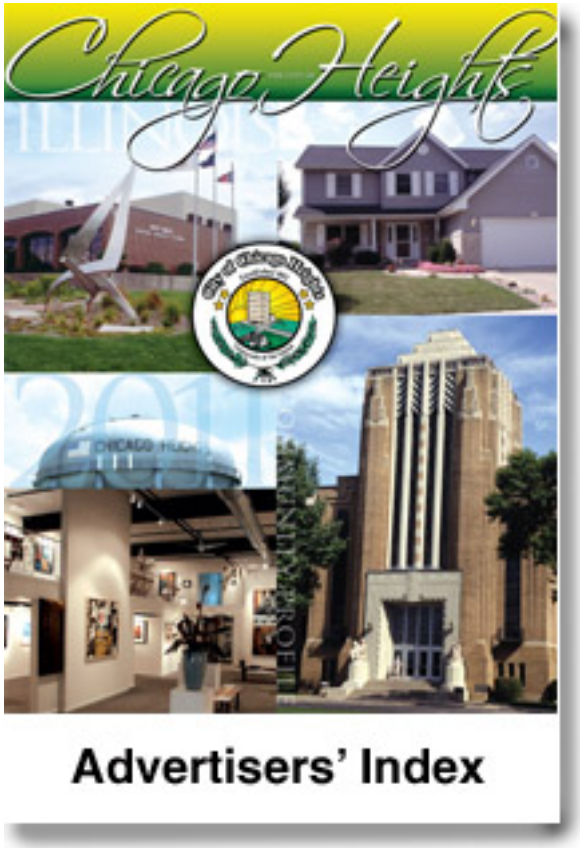
The system also operates several outpatient centers in Chicago Heights, including the St. James Surgery Center (an outpatient, same-day surgery facility) and the St. James Community Health Center of Chicago Heights-North (a center housing the Occupational and Environmental Health Center, the Orthopedic and Occupational Rehabilitation Center and a professional pharmacy).

Accompanying the hospital campus is a medley of primary care physicians, specialty clinics and other medical resources. Further nearby hospitals include St. James Hospital and Health Centers' modern Olympia Fields campus and Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey.

Government

The City of Chicago Heights is governed by a group of forward-thinking leaders, who are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors through high quality programs and services. The City Council is composed of a mayor and seven alderpersons who represent each ward in Chicago Heights. The council meets regularly to discuss various issues and current and future planning in the city.

The municipality oversees several departments, committees and boards, which cover a host of community facets, including public safety, housing, historic preservation, economic development and community relations, among many others. Community members are encouraged to participate in City Council meetings and on city committees and boards.



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