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CHICAGO TRIBUNE ONLINE

RITZY GOLD COAST RICH IN HERITAGE, CHARACTER Everything you need in one giant package

The Gold Coast is a neighborhood of contrasts. It is a tiny, quiet neighborhood of historic brownstones intermingled with high-rises nestled along Lake Shore Drive on the Near North Side. And it is home to residents with a big appetite for culture, chic shopping and high-voltage nightlife generated by clubs, bars and upscale restaurants.

Near the east end of the neighborhood, the Museum of Contemporary Art applauds what's new; further inland, the Newberry Library reveres the old. Logos from Chanel, 900 North and Barney's grace the sides of shopping bags. As do Ultimo, Prada and Ralph Lauren.

After-work cocktails are still shaken and stirred at Jilly's Piano Bar on Rush Street and beers of the month are drawn at Butch McGuire's, the Irish pub credited with starting the bar corridor along Division Street.

A laundry list of storied restaurants such as Gibsons, Tavern on Rush and Hugo's Frog Bar draws diners from around the planet and around the neighborhood. As do smaller establishments like Bistrot Zinc and deeper into the Gold Coast at Table Fifty-Two on Elm Street and Mario's Italian Ristorante at Goethe and Dearborn.

In real estate parlance, the Gold Coast is the epitome of location, location, location. If what you want isn't within the boundaries of North to Chicago Avenues and Lake Shore Drive to Clark Street, it is nearby.

Gabrielle Weisberg says that people who move into the Gold Coast rarely move out. Weisberg is a Realtor with Prudential Preferred Properties. Once they settle in, she says they stay.

One of her recent clients is an empty-nester couple—one son in college and the other on his way. They moved from a 5,000-plus square-foot condo in one area of the Gold Coast to a 3,300-square-foot co-op in another. The couple did not want to look at properties anywhere else in the city.

Weisberg says that outdoor space is very important in today's market. Terraces and balconies are sometimes a deal maker, as more people like to entertain at home and want access to the outdoors, especially Lake Michigan.

Lake Michigan is the eastern edge of the Gold Coast. Many of the high-rises that flank the lake are architecturally significant. On Lake Shore Drive, residential skyscrapers like Mies van der Rohe's 860 Lake Shore Drive apartments (built in 1951) helped to set the tone of Chicago's skyline.

Buildings on the side streets have struck a balance between vintage and new construction as much by chance as by design.

With a nod to the architectural heritage of the city, architect Lucien Lagrange designed Ten East Delaware, a new high-rise condominium in the Gold Coast, to blend in. One of the goals of the building, according to Alan Draht, project manager for the development, was to have it look as though it has always been at the corner of Delaware and State. "Chicago is an architectural city," Draht said. "There is longevity with architecture."

Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Charnley House, the first modern house in America, in 1891-92 and it still stands at 1365 N. Astor St. Today, it is called the Charnley-Persky House and the Society of Architectural Historians uses it as its headquarters. It is one of the few surviving residences designed by Sullivan.

Along the tree-lined streets in the historic Gold Coast area, examples of period architecture reign. Turrets on massive Romanesque town homes loom over Astor Street. Over on Schiller Avenue, Georgian revival-style brownstones line the street. The finest example of Queen Anne architecture in the neighborhood is

the Cardinal's residence at 1555 N. State Pkwy.

Single-family homeowners covet their gardens while their high-rise neighbors delight in spectacular views of Lincoln Park. This section of the Gold Coast was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, a moment not lost on the Gold Coast Neighbors Association (GCN).

Bill Ketchum is president of the GCN. Ketchum gets on his bicycle each morning and takes the underpass at North Avenue to access the bike trail at North Avenue Beach. He rides north to the turnaround at Hollywood. It's a great way to start the day, he says. On the way out, Ketchum zips between the drive and the beachfront.

On the way home, he coasts onto quiet, tree-shaded streets lined with residences that he and his neighbors call home. In his building, almost one-third of the residents are families. "I'd say the children range from 9 months to 17 years," he said. Access to schools is one reason that families stay.

Schools, both public and private within the Gold Coast or nearby, include Latin School of Chicago, The Catherine Cook School, St. Chrysostom's Day School, Walter Payton College Prep and Francis W. Parker School.

Knowing that the neighborhood will be home to future generations was an added impetus for him to get involved with GCN. "The mission of the Gold Coast Neighbors Association is to help preserve and protect our unique historic neighborhood," he said. The group works closely with the city, Ald. Vi Daley (43rd) and Ald. Brendan Reilly (42nd), the 18th Police District, the North Dearborn Association and dedicated volunteers.

GCN volunteers were responsible for the landscaped parkways at Goudy Square Playlot Park on Astor Street. They also organize the annual street fair, Evening on Astor, now in its 27th year.

Members of the North Dearborn Association organize the annual Dearborn Garden Walk and Heritage Festival.

The neighborhood actively supports the Chicago Police Department's CAPS program with a CAPS meeting held every other month at the Ambassador East Hotel.

When a spate of criminal activity does happen—like gaining unlawful entry in a vestibule building—Ketchum says the association blankets the neighborhood with alerts. The Chicago Police Department's online CLEARMAP reports of two cases of larceny in the Gold Coast area from March 18-31.

Newcomers or returning residents find the neighborhood and the real estate stable. Weisberg says the range in price for properties (with over two bedrooms) that have recently sold in the Gold Coast is between \$900,000 and \$2 million. An online search shows some one-bedroom condos in the area listed in the high-\$300,000s.

What does all that investment get? Ask Mary Frances Fagan. When she relocated from Springfield to Chicago 20 years ago, Fagan knew little about the city except for the areas around North Michigan Avenue. That may have been a good thing.

"I found an apartment in the Gold Coast that was perfect," Fagan said. "I could walk to work, Lincoln Park and the lakefront. After renting for several years, I bought a condo just four blocks north."

Like others before her, she just couldn't leave the Gold Coast.