

# Understand Chicago

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Downtown booms with new skyscrapers and a culinary revolution, but the rest of the city struggles to catch up.

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Cows, infernos, hog-squealing slaughterhouses, gangsters and corruption comprise the storyline.

## ARCHITECTURE ..... 244

Cloud-poking towers are just the beginning of the fabled skyline that spans Prairie, beaux-arts and art-deco styles.

## SPORTS ..... 249

Windy Citizens are passionate about their five pro sports teams, filling stadiums throughout seasons.

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High gastronomy meets deep-dish comfort food, spiced with Mexican, Polish and Asian fare.

## MUSIC & THE ARTS ..... 255

Public art, poetry slams, improv comedy and homegrown electric blues star, all offered in a populist tradition.

# Chicago Today

**Downtown is thriving, with new skyscrapers, ambitious renovation projects, burgeoning technology industries and a celebrated restaurant scene. The rest of Chicago, which got hit fairly hard by the economic recession, is struggling to catch up. New leadership after 22 years has helped freshen the city, though the old problems of corruption and segregation linger. In the meantime, Chicago continues its quest to be the nation's greenest metropolis.**

## Best in Film

**Ferris Bueller's Day Off** (1986) A teen truant discovers the joys of the city, from Wrigley Field to the Art Institute. Classic Chicago locations.

**The Untouchables** (1987) Native son David Mamet wrote the screenplay for this nail-biter about Eliot Ness' takedown of Al Capone.

**The Blues Brothers** (1980) Second City alums John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd star in the cult classic of two bluesmen on the run.

## Best in Print

**The Man with the Golden Arm** (Nelson Algren; 1949) This tale of a drug-addicted kid on Division St won the 1950 National Book Award.

**The Lazarus Project** (Aleksandar Hemon; 2008) Chicago's police chief kills a poor Russian-born Jew and tries to cover up.

**The Adventures of Augie March** (Saul Bellow; 1953) Huck Finn-esque story of a destitute boy growing up in Depression-era Chicago.

**The Jungle** (Upton Sinclair; 1906) Immigrant life in Chicago's brutal South Side meatpacking plants.

## Boom & Bust

Between 2000 and 2010, Chicago's downtown added residents faster than any other urban core in America. Developers built stacks of glossy condos, and despite the housing crash, vacancy rates for high-end ones currently stand near a 10-year low. Add in the new companies that have moved downtown, and you have a shining zone of affluence.

But there's a flip side. In outlying neighborhoods, especially on the south and west sides where mostly ethnic poor and working-class Chicagoans live, 62,000 properties stand vacant and the population is dwindling. Part of the decrease has to do with the demise of the troubled public housing high-rises, which have all been razed. Chicago's headline-grabbing violent crime and murder rates mostly come from these areas.

So there are two Chicagos, and the ever-present issue is how to bring the peripheral city on par with the booming core.

## Changing of the Guard

After 22 years Mayor Richard M Daley left office in 2011, saying it was 'time to move on.' He had been the city's longest-reigning manager. The previous record holder? His dad, Richard J Daley, who was mayor for 21 years.

Enter Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's former chief of staff. He ran for mayor and crushed the competition, pledging change, transparency and an end to corruption. Unfortunately, he got handed a whopping budget deficit and began his term by cutting or consolidating city services like garbage collection, which irked the labor unions, traditional backers of his Democratic Party. He also ticked off the teachers' union by canceling contracted pay increases and lengthening the school day. Teachers staged a massive strike in 2012 that garnered nationwide media coverage.